CONSTRUCTING THE CITY: SPATIALIZING THE REAL AND IMAGINED HAVANA IN VISUAL CULTURE (1933-2010)

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the School of Modern Languages, Literature & Cultures at Royal Holloway, University of London for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Hispanic Studies
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September 2011
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, James Clifford Kent, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is clearly stated.

Signed: ____________________________________

Dated: 30th September 2011
Dedication

For David Vilaseca – ‘més que un profe’
ABSTRACT

Whilst images of the city of Havana are well documented worldwide, the actual state of the city’s image is one which has been steadily misconstrued and idealized in visual culture over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. My doctoral research project engages in exploring alternative ways of reading Havana as both a construct, and as a cultural product, ultimately aiming to provide an understanding of how and why we see the city as we do. By examining spatial representations of the city on a number of levels (geopolitical and metaphorical) this thesis endeavours to explain how image-makers and cultural producers present the city, through photography, material culture and documentary film, whilst also surveying the processes and effects which manifest these visual constructs. The aim of this thesis is to consider these different modes of representing Havana, by challenging the representation of various spaces, and through interrogating the different forces which affect these spatialities.
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I am also indebted to the magnificent research community at the Cuba Research Forum, based at the University of Nottingham. My thanks to Prof Antoni Kapcia, for getting me involved in the first place and for introducing me to all number of Cubanists, established academics and brilliant young thinkers as a result. Of these, I would like to single out Dr Christopher Hull for his enthusiasm towards my own project, his friendship and his invaluable insight into pre-Revolutionary Cuban history. I am also grateful for the advice and guidance I have received from Dr Jill Ingham, who has helped me to re-think my own theoretical framework in relation to visual constructions of Havana. My thanks go also to the Center for Latin American
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INTRODUCTION

Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose our own personal form on them. In this sense, it seems to me that living in cities is an art, and we need the vocabulary of art, of style, to describe the peculiar relationship between man and material that exists in the continual creative play of urban living.

Jonathan Raban – *Soft City* (2008: 2)

With cities it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.

Italo Calvino – *Invisible cities* (1978: 44)

The aim of this thesis is to reconsider constructions of the city of Havana that have developed within the global imaginary between 1933-2010, and to elaborate on the representation of the “real-and-imagined” city-space in these constructs. My focus in this project has been on the role of the external image-maker and cultural producer, and therefore on constructs that emerge from outside of Cuba. Theories of spatialization, imagining the city and notions of performance are central to these readings. Primarily, this thesis is concerned with the misconstruction and idealization of the city-space in visual culture. Moreover, by exploring alternative ways in which the city has been constructed through the visual, and through considering Havana as a cultural product, my readings will aim to provide an understanding of how and why we ‘see’ the city as we do. By investigating spatial representations of the city on a number of levels (geopolitical and metaphorical) this thesis also endeavours to explain how image-makers present the city, through photography, material culture and documentary film, whilst also surveying the processes and effects which manifest these visual constructs. This thesis also will aim to explore different modes of
representing Havana, by challenging the way in which different visual spaces are constructed, and through interrogating the different forces that affect these spatialities.

Furthermore, this project also aims to identify some of the patterns that have defined constructions of the city of Havana in the global imaginary between 1933-2010. As my readings will elucidate, the eclectic selection of primary texts employed in this thesis span a series of critical historical moments. These, I will suggest, affect the way in which image-makers and cultural producers represent, reconstruct and reconceptualize the city for the viewer in this period (1933-2010). These moments of transition, crucial points in the history of the Cuban capital and the nation, characterize dramatic stages in which social change alters the representation of the city in the global imaginary. Therefore, by interweaving analytic and experimental scrutiny of the primary texts, focussing on both the abstract and the concrete constructions of Havana, this thesis will aim to reveal imaginative and cognitive readings, and understandings of the city. It will also aim to provide additional ways of examining texts that have already been scrutinised within the field. Furthermore, where texts have not been analysed, I hope to offer exciting and exploratory interpretations that will contribute both to the fields of Cuban and visual culture studies.

Theoretical framework

The framework of this thesis will draw from multiple theoretical angles, through which I will frame my readings of photographic replicas, documentaries and reconceptualized spaces. By making parallelisms between the built environment of the actual city, Havana, and representations and reconstructions of the imagined city, this thesis will offer a new method of scrutinizing the ways in which space is at the same time lived, imagined (conceived), and perceived as both “real-and-imagined” across different cultural and social contexts, ranging from the actual city to its representations. My readings and interpretations in this thesis aim to occupy the contradictory spaces of the city, as envisaged by key thinkers on space, including Edward Soja, Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre. The project will consider constructs that emerge from both inside and outside the city and will attempt to apprehend different constructs of the city, for analytical purposes, with a focus on the visual. The developments of the aforementioned key thinkers perform a crucial role in the structure of the project and their theoretical insights are crucial to my readings of
the spatialities that materialize in the respective texts discussed in the following chapters. In appropriating these different perspectives my readings will aim to recognize visual constructs of the city of Havana in a range of contents.

Contents

This thesis consists of three main sections: Part One: Havana and lived space, Part Two: Havana and imagined-space, and Part Three: Havana and Thirdspace. Chapter One will introduce the general theoretical framework outlined above. It will provide an overview of the theories of space used in the thesis, focussing on both spaces in the real world and those represented within the confines of photography, material culture and documentary film. It will also present the key theories on space of those theorists outlined above, with reference to Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel Foucault and clarifies a number of noteworthy definitions that are used throughout the thesis, including “place” and “space,” and the expression “mental construct”. The chapter will then outline the theoretical approaches that apply to the relevant parts of this thesis. Parts One, Two, and Three are also inextricably linked by the representation of the city within the confines of a series of historical moments, outlined below.

Part One: Havana and lived space (Chapters Two, Three and Four) consists of three readings of photographic texts which span the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These primary texts coincide approximately with three critical moments in the Cuban capital’s history, the 1933 and 1959 Revolutions, and post-Special Period Havana (focussing on visual projections of the city after 1989). In Part One, my interpretations of the primary texts will focus on the representation of the lived spaces of the city and, therefore, apply to Lefebvre’s notion of social space, and space as a social product. By drawing upon photographic texts, my readings will explore the depiction of the city-dweller in Havana, focussing on the representation of the habanero/a (the Havana citizen) in order to further understand the development of constructions of the city within the global imaginary.

Chapter Two comprises a study of the American photographer Walker Evans’s Havana portfolio from 1933. In this chapter, my readings will locate the specific sites and sights that the photographer is drawn to in Havana, and will focus on a selection of images that encourage multidimensional interpretations. In this chapter, I will highlight two specific spaces (the barber shop and the street) in my analysis of the photographer’s representation of the lived and social space of the city, captured in
the documentary mode. Chapter Three contains a detailed analysis of the American photographer Burt Glinn’s photo-essay documenting Havana for the Magnum photographic agency at the moment of Revolution, recording the first days of 1959. Again, the focus here lies in the photographer’s representation of lived space in the photojournalistic context, within which I will highlight the role of the city-dweller in the spaces of the street, the hotel and the park. Chapter Four, the final chapter of Part One, will examine David Bailey’s post-Special Period photobook *Havana* (2006). In my analysis, my interpretations will focus on the synergy of different photographic styles in the text, highlighting the spaces that emerge within these images, that include depictions of abstract space (the street), absolute space (the sea and the graveyard) and tourist space (La Habana Vieja).

Part Two: Havana and imagined-space (Chapters Five and Six) interrogates the way in which the outsider is involved with the consumption of “imagined space”. These primary texts constitute more contemporary examples of the reconceptualization of Havana within the public imaginary, drawing upon the role of the advertising image and the reconstructed space. In this second part of the thesis, my interpretations of the primary texts focus on the representation of the imagined city-space. By drawing upon both advertising discourse and the theming of space, my readings will explore these Havana imaginaries as demonstrative of the representational space and the space of representation outlined by Lefebvre.

Chapter Five contains a study of the Havana advertising campaign *Nothing Compares to Havana* (2010), in which I will draw upon reconceptualizations of city-life within the advertising image in order to interpret the way in which these visions contribute to constructs of the city of Havana. In my analyses, I will highlight the way in which advertising images tend to focus on spaces synonymous with photographic representations of the city seen in Part One, and elsewhere in this thesis, concentrating on the typecasting of the city-dweller and the urban environment. Moreover, I will imply in my readings that the advertising images scrutinized constitute the recycling and repetition of images of Havana in a way that fetishizes the city-space. Linking with this discussion, Chapter Six will shift my interpretation of the imagined city-space to an analysis of the way in which Havana is reconstructed abroad, focussing on the portrayal of a “hyperreal” representation of the city that exists in Little Havana, Miami.

Part Three: Havana and *Thirdspace* (Chapters Seven and Eight) focuses on analysing new staging of the city and performance in the documentary-film. These
chapters will draw upon two documentary texts that represent a reconceptualization of the city which is constructed within the confines of the documentary-film, uncovering the different documentary modes that are used by the filmmakers in representing the city-space.

Chapter Seven comprises a reading of Wim Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), whilst Chapter Eight explores Russell Thomas’s lesser-known documentary, *Our Manics in Havana* (2001). In both films, my readings will draw upon the way in which the filmmakers employ varying documentary modes, including the observational, performative, poetic and interactive, when faced with representing the city-space to the viewer. By aligning my readings with Edward Soja’s theoretical framework, my interpretations of the films will suggest that their representations of the city-space as a type of *Thirdspace* (1996: 10), constitutive of journeys to various “real-and-imagined” *Havanas*, is dependent on the content of the respective films. Furthermore, by considering the combination of the city’s reality with its ideality, and through exploring the representation of the practical, the symbolic and the imaginary, the chapters in the third part of this thesis will also aim to elucidate that in the process of the filmmaker’s representation of Havana, the “real-and-imagined” become mutually reinforced. Moreover, my readings will reveal that lived space becomes coextensive with, and utterly transformed by, the city’s theatricality, or what Lefebvre calls; ‘a sort of involuntary *mise-en-scène*’ (1991: 74).

In summary, the photographic texts scrutinised in Part One of this thesis will present selective interpretations of the lived space of the city, and are these envisaged as belonging to different, critical moments in Havana’s history. In Parts Two and Three these moments are then reconceptualized, and my readings will identify the ways in which these interpretations are subsequently re-imagined and reconstructed. However, whilst differing processes of spatialization span the three parts of this thesis, all are interconnected by notions of the creative imagination, representation, and digestion of the city of Havana as a possible spatial world and/or geographical space. These various parts of this thesis will reinforce the central connection that runs throughout the project, of the need to re-interpret textual and representational geographies of constructs of Havana. Moreover, this thesis aims to build upon a growing discussion of the relationships between the notion of the global city and virtual spaces, and intends to offer novel and inventive ways of reconsidering urban experience and visual culture with relation to Havana.
CHAPTER ONE:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction: spatializing the city

Before exploring the various Havana spaces represented in the key-texts and case-studies in this thesis, Chapter One will aim to provide an overview of the broader theoretical framework that runs throughout the text. As this thesis will be scrutinizing photography, material culture, the urban form, and film, this chapter will elucidate that a multi-disciplinary approach is essential to cover the ground over which the social and visual approaches discussed converge.

Following an introduction to the relevant key theories on space of Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel Foucault, this theoretical chapter will clarify a number of noteworthy definitions, with the aim of defining the key-terms “place” and “space,” and the expression “space as mental construct,” which emerge repeatedly in subsequent chapters and predominantly in relation to the visual construction of the city-space. The following sections of this chapter will focus more comprehensively on the theoretical frameworks that pertain to my interpretations made elsewhere in this thesis. Furthermore, this chapter will also highlight the “types” of space scrutinised in the texts found in Part One: Havana and lived space, Chapters Two, Three and Four; Part Two: Havana and imagined space, Chapters Five and Six; and Part Three: Havana and Thirdspace, Chapters Seven and Eight.

2. Theoretical context

2.1 Edward Soja and post-modern geographies

As a leading post-modern geographer, Edward Soja initially sought to re-locate spatiality to the centre of social theoretical thinking (Latham 2004: 269). The development of his enquiries into spatialized, postmodern social theory can be seen progressing over the course of his three key texts on space: *Post-Modern*
Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (1989), Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places (1996), and Postmetropolis: Critical Studies in Cities and Regions (2000). Most importantly, Soja primarily set out to counter earlier Cartesian spatial thought that had treated space as fixed and predetermined. This is illustrated in the first chapter of Post-Modern Geographies (1989: 10), in which Soja cites Michel Foucault’s interpretation of previous investigations into spatial thought – by those who treated space as ‘the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile’ and envisaged times as ‘richness, fecundity, life, dialectic’ (Foucault 1980: 70).

Soja’s developments in post-modern geographies are rooted in what he sees as a capitalist trend in acknowledging the spatial over the temporal. Therefore, he calls for a ‘responsive evaluation’ of ‘history and geography,’ and of ‘modernity and postmodernity,’ which he sees as ‘imprinted concretely on the empirical fabric of contemporary life’ (1989: 12). Moreover, Soja also sees spatiality as primarily constitutive of social life, and, as such, contends that critical social theory must reconsider space if it is to ‘make practical and political sense of the present, the past, and the potential future,’ which he labels ‘a postmodern geography of critical social consciousness’ (12). In doing so, Soja also appears to echo the work of other Marxist human geographers, including Harvey (1989), and calls for a spatialized rethinking of the ‘triple dialectic of space, time, and social being: a transformative re-theorization of the relations between history, geography and modernity’ (12).

Crucially, and pertinent to my discussions in Part One of this thesis, Soja also collates the work of other key thinkers, such as John Berger (1972; 1974; 1984), and within these readings offers an insightful account of the way in which we experience contemporary “lived space”. He makes a connection between Berger’s writings and those of Foucault, in that they both draw upon the ‘intersection of time and space’ in their writing (1989: 21). Furthermore, he commends Berger’s work in Ways of Seeing (1972) and The Look of Things (1974) due to its calling for an ‘explicitly spatialized narrative’ (Soja 1989: 22). Echoing Berger, Soja also demands a questioning of the conventional storyline that unfolds ‘sequentially,’ in which ‘simultaneities intervene, extending our point of view outward in an infinite number of lines connecting the subject to a whole world of comparable instances’ (23). He writes:
Berger astutely situates the restructured narrative in a pervasive context and consciousness of geographically uneven development, into a constellation of lines and photography of surfaces connecting every (hi)story to an attention-shaping horizontality that stretches everywhere in its power, indivisibility, exploitation, and inequality. (23)

It is with these remarks that Soja appears to locate the crux of the process of spatialization, resulting from the collective construction and creation of contemporary moments. He emphasizes that we are now faced with grappling with a geographical rather than an historical projection, and that ‘it is space not time that hides consequences from us’ (23). ‘What a shattering assertion,’ he proclaims, ‘for those who see only through the spectacles of time’ (23). Indeed, it is from these bold observations that I have grounded my own explorations in this thesis, in which the subsequent chapters posit the necessary rethinking and reinterpretation of the spatialities that emerge from the respective texts analysed, and from the various critical historical moments that they belong to.

In addition to praising the work of Berger, Soja also supports his own thesis with the work of Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre. He credits them for the way in which their writing served to challenge previous notions of space across various disciplines (1996: 11). As Alan Latham observes (2004: 270), Lefebvre’s thesis, particularly, lies at the very heart of what he calls the ‘central logical armature,’ of Post-Modern Geographies, and, as will be explored below, this can be seen extending into Soja’s more expansive post-modern project. Soja theorizes Lefebvre through a type of ‘Lefebvrian filter’ (Latham 2004: 270-1), which he uses to further explore the way in which space, rather than time, conceals things from us. By doing this, Soja aims to provide a method of demystifying spatiality and its ‘veiled instrumentality of power’ in order to make ‘practical, political, and theoretical sense of the contemporary era’ (1989: 61).

Following Post-Modern Geographies, Soja went on to refine his theory in Thirddspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places (1996) and Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions (2000). In these texts Soja would crystallize the more problematic ‘key coordinates’ of his project (Latham 2004: 272). For instance, the socio-spatial dialectic introduced in Postmodern Geographies is refined into the notion of a “trialectics of being” in Thirddspace (1996), through which he reveals that the philosophical study of “being” can only be interpreted by developing an understanding of the way in which spatiality, historicality and sociality
merge as one. Importantly, *Thirdspace* is founded upon developments and theories on space outlined Henri Lefebvre.

### 2.2 Henri Lefebvre and social space

Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, published in 1974, has had a decisive role in the development of spatial theory since the mid-1970s onwards, and has significantly defined contemporary ways of approaching space. This is highlighted by Soja in his introduction to *Thirdspace* (1996), in which he refers to Lefebvre’s text as ‘the most important book ever written about the social and historical significance of human spatiality and the particular powers of the spatial imagination’ (1991b: 8). In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre set out to investigate the nature and production of social space, and to work towards bringing together an inventory of differing social spaces, in order to theorize the way in which space is produced. The crux of his discussion lies in our understanding of what he calls space as a “social product” (1991b). He writes:

> Many people will find it hard to endorse the notion that space has taken on, within the present mode of production, within society as it actually is, a sort of reality of its own, a reality clearly distinct from, yet much like, those assumed in the same global process by commodities, money and capital. (26)

Further exploring the production of space, Lefebvre also describes spatialization as not only to do with the physical arrangements of things, but linked to the way in which spatial patterns emerge in the social environment, and to the historical conception of space and the world around us. However, arguably his most important contribution in *The Production of Space* was to present his trialectic of spatial practice, which he defines within ‘representations of space’ and ‘spaces of representation’ (1991: 33; 38-9). He describes representations of space as the ‘conceptualized space […] of scientists, planners, urbanists […] all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived’ (38), whereas he describes the representational space as ‘directly lived through its associated images and symbols’ (39). Furthermore, he envisions these spaces as *l’espace perçu, conçu, vécu*, or perceived, conceived and lived, in a trialectic that coalesces physical, mental and social space respectively. He also recognizes perceived space as a physical form, a real and material space that is both produced and utilized by society. On the contrary,
conceived space is representative of our knowledge and mapping of space, and it is between the two that Lefebvre locates the *lived* space of the imagination.

In his definition of *Thirdspace*, Soja further develops Lefebvre’s spatialized trialectics to reveal what he calls *Firstspace* (the “real” material world), *Secondspace* (the imagined representations of space), and *Thirdspace*, in which, as Soja explains:

> [e]verything comes together […]: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (1996: 56-7)

This is also crucial to Soja’s visual metaphoric, in which he dismisses the reduction of spatiality to physical objects. This process, he notes, forms ‘a confusing myopia’ that has persistently distorted spatial theorization by creating illusions of opaqueness, short-sighted interpretations of spatiality which focus on immediate surface appearances without being able to see beyond them’ (1989: 122). For Soja, the act of seeing is ‘blurred’ not simply through ‘near-sightedness, but because the focal point lies too far away from what should be seen, the source of a distorting and over-distancing vision, hypermetropic rather than myopic’ (122; 124-5). These distinctions dovetail with Lefebvre’s ‘illusion of opacity,’ in which social space appears purely physical, and ‘the illusion of transparency,’ in which space appears luminous and freely intelligible (1991: 27-30). Importantly, Lefebvre has also commented on that which is ‘seen’ as being reduced to an image. ‘Space has no social existence,’ he writes, ‘independently of an intense, aggressive and repressive act of visualization’ (1991: 286). The notion of a purely visual space, he adds, contributes to a process of substitution and displacement that is in danger of overwhelming and usurping space altogether (1991: 286).

For Soja, *Thirdspace* offers a way of observing the meanings and significance of space that takes place in the composition of the ‘inherent spatiality’ of human life, within which he incorporates place, location, locality, landscape, environments, home, city, region, territory, and geography (1991b: 1). With this theoretical tool, Soja offers a way of expanding upon the capacity and ‘critical sensibility’ of already established spatial or geographical imaginations that are socially constructed by ‘spatial beings’

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1 Soja’s use of “myopia” here infers a blurring (or visual defection) of spatial theory that ties neatly with the discussion of the distortion of imaginaries explored in the following chapters.
(1). Soja’s methodology on *Thirdspace* draws upon the work of both Michel Foucault and Homi Bhabha, and these additional insights prove to be valuable tools for further developing my discussions of the filmic texts in this thesis and, as such, will be further explored in Part Three.

### 2.3 Foucault and the “heterotopia”

Following a similar trajectory to Lefebvre, Foucault identifies that spaces can be grouped into what he calls “heterotopias” – spaces of “*Otherness*” that are envisaged as neither “here” nor “there”. These are highlighted in Soja’s definition of *Thirdspace* (1996), in which he draws heavily on Foucault’s ‘*Of Other Spaces,*’ a collection of insights that he suggests contributes significantly to his own notion of *Thirdspace,* and to an ongoing ‘*geohistory of otherness*’ (155). In the text, based on a lecture given by Foucault in March 1967, the philosopher defines the ‘other places’ of the heterotopia, referring to them as worlds off-centre with respect to the lived spaces of everyday life. Crucially, Foucault observes a number of binaries that exist in the space in which we live. He refers to these as ‘oppositions’ that govern the way in which we interact with space that are ‘animated’ by an ‘unspoken sacralisation’ (Foucault 2008: 16). For example, these spaces include; public and private space, family and social space, cultural and useful space, and leisure and work space (16). Most significantly, Foucault draws upon inner (interior) and outer (exterior) spaces, and leans on Lefebvre’s spaces of representation, whilst reawakening the work of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. Consequently, he implies that interior spaces are charged with different and at times phantasmagorical qualities (16), suggesting that such spaces become manifest as part of a sequence of dream-like imaginaries. These spaces, he observes, represent the places of our ‘primary perception’ in which other binaries exist, and these include but are not limited to; light and dark, transparent or encumbered, above and below, flowing and fixed (16). Outer spaces, on the other hand, are the lived spaces of the city ‘in which the erosion of our lives, of our time and our history occur’ (16). Additionally, an alternative reading of Foucault’s definition of heterotopia has been made by Kevin Hetherington, who suggests that heterotopias represent imagined space *in dialogue* with ‘real’ spaces (1997: viii). A study of such spaces, he claims, is socially and politically productive in that it provides an alternative and comparative view of reality. This is a useful reading of the notion of heterotopia, and correlates with the way in which the term is used in this
thesis – referring to spaces that, as a result of their utopic origins are not “real,” but may mirror the “real,” and therefore aid my interpretation of Havana imaginaries located within the space of the real.

3. Place and Space

In addition to Lefebvre and Foucault, other theorists in the social sciences from the 1970s onwards began to consider the idea of “place” as distinct from “space”. For instance, Rick Biernacki and Jennifer Jordan have observed that “place,” as opposed to “space,” is a ‘qualitative, historically specific configuration,’ incorporating a sense of “individuals” rootedness in locale and the dependence of their memory on the particularities of the physical and cultural environment (2002: 31). Furthermore, “place,” they insist ‘refers to the circumstance that agents are not merely located at a simple point in a grid, but occupy and define the world through the unfolding of practice’ (31). Space matters, they propose, due to the way in which the city today is characterized ‘not so much by homogeneity as by unevenness,’ as the intense material effects of globalization appear not far from places of powerful local meaning and specificity (31-2). However, for Marc Augé “place” and “space” take on greater significance still. For him, “place” refers ‘to an event (which has taken place), a myth (said to have taken place) or a history (high places),’ whereas space merely pertains to ‘a distance between two things or points […] or to a temporal expanse’ (1995: 82). For Augé “space” has more to do with the frequentation of “places” which exist as a result of ‘double movements’ that take place between the traveller and the snapshots they hurriedly collate whilst traversing the city (85-6). Moreover, combining the discussions of Augé to imaginaries of Havana, Velia Cecilia Bobes, in her essay ‘Visits to a Non Place: Havana and its Representation(s),’ has considered the notion of imagined images of the city that are created from both an internal and external context. In doing so, she takes Augé’s notion of the non-lieux (the “non-place”) and considers Havana as ‘a memory city’; a construct derived from collective memory and its historical representations (2011: 16).

In the introduction to their recent edited volume, Havana: Beyond the Ruins, Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield refer to the Cuban capital as a city ‘on the brink of a new era’ in which the ‘palimpsestic’ nature of Havana, alluding to José Quiroga’s seminal text, Cuban Palimpsests (2005), thrives as an entity that is constructed of different temporal, structural and social layers – allowing ‘one city,’
they note, ‘to live as many’ (2011: 1). Importantly, the writers also observe a series of ‘spectacular’ changes that have amounted to a sequence of moments in the city’s history, which must form the basis of any interrogation of the city today, they posit, before new futures may be envisaged. As a result, the place and space of Havana might be seen in a transnational context – a reflection and re-interpretation of what both the outsider and the Cuban consider the city to really be.

3.1 Space and Havana as mental construct

At this early point in the thesis, it is also worth clarifying the term “mental construct,” as this is a concept that emerges in reference to the various readings and interpretations that will be made over the course of the text. The expression “mental construct” is a notion that Saskia Sassen observes as pertinent to the way in which cities and urban regions are increasingly traversed by nonlocal and/or global circuits, and, therefore, affects the way in which we experience the local (2003: 27). As a result, Sassen claims, we experience these sites as a ‘transformed condition’ in that they are ‘imbricated with nonlocal dynamics’ or localized by global processes, that are economic, political, and cultural (27). This, she conceives, has led to the creation of a new split urban spatiality of the city in flux, accounting only for part of what happens in cities and what cities are about, converging within the ‘administrative boundaries’ and ‘multiple public imaginaries’ of the city-space (27). As a result, the investigation of urban mental constructs in this thesis inevitably pertains to the viewer’s construction of city-space, and these mental constructs are formed, my interpretations will envisage, within a “global imaginary”. Moreover, this contemporary consciousness of spatiality is outlined by Soja as part of our critical geographical imagination (1989; 1996), and as my eclectic selection of primary texts will reveal, this remains open to redefinition and expansion in different directions and alternative mediums. Furthermore, Lefebvre has also alluded to the ‘magical’ nature of the ‘imaginary,’ a concept that acts similarly to the unconscious and in the manner in which it fills empty spaces of thought (1980: 143). Additionally, referring specifically to Latin America, Gareth Jones has suggested that the continent’s imaginative geographies are inextricably linked to its geographical displacement, observing that that a more local, virtual experience of Latin America has led to its “de-
territorialization” in a way that has blurred its geographical mappings (2003: 6-25). Moreover, my use of the term “imaginary” also ties closely to the Lacanian understanding of the expression, which Silverman defines as the ‘order of the subject’s experience which is dominated by identification and duality’ (2005: 343). As the film theorist illustrates in her writing on the Lacanian model, images that exist in the “imaginary” ‘exceed any strictly specular definition,’ and are constructed from a growing number of sources (344), and it is for this reason that I feel it necessary to draw from the diverse selection of texts that I do in this thesis. Furthermore, with these readings in mind, and by postulating on the representation of Havana in the global imaginary, my readings aim to redefine and expand upon the way in which we look at space and social spatiality in relation to the city.

4. Three spaces: social, imagined and performative

4.1 Havana and lived space

As has been observed above, “lived space” is present between the material and mental constructs of space, and therefore lies between the aforementioned conceived and perceived spaces of Lefebvre, and between notions of the manner in which we acknowledge conception and perception. Moreover, lived space is socially produced, and is dependent on both physical and mental constructs. Taking James Donald’s lead in his observations in his writing on ‘Metaphor and Metropolis’ (1999), the first part of this thesis will focus on the representation of social space in photography. In doing so, Part One will propose that ways of seeing and understanding the city, in photographic representations of Havana, have informed ways of acting on the space of the city, with ‘consequences which then in turn produce a modified city which is again seen, understood and acted on’ (1999: 27). The photographic texts in the first part of this thesis will exemplify aspects of social space – those spaces that are mapped out and selectively defined by Lefebvre. These are also representative of spaces within which the photographer focuses upon the city-dweller. These places and spaces are often repeatedly used as a focal point in the texts, which draw upon, but are not limited to, depictions of street scenes, monuments, landmarks, public spaces, private spaces, and certain neighbourhoods.

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2 Jones explores the conversion of imagined representations of space, making specific reference to the “re-mapping” of Latin America within “real” spaces, whilst suggesting that the region is now not simply “over there” but increasingly “over here”. This is perhaps best exemplified in Chapter Five of this thesis, in which it is posited that representations of Havana become displaced beyond the physical space of the Cuban capital through different visual mediums.
The notion of the city-dweller stems from German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s influence upon Lefebvre, who was particularly drawn to his notions of habitat (Lefebvre 1991b: 314). In this thesis, the act of city-dwelling is considered as a spatial notion that involves the lived experience of everyday life. As my readings suggest, city-dwelling forms part of the lived space of the city, and is subsequently perceived and conceived by the image-maker and the observer respectively. In his *Critique of Everyday Life: Vol. I* (1947), Lefebvre appears to identify the motive behind the image-maker’s fascination with depicting lived space, alluding to the way in which we perceive urban space in the most fleeting of moments.

**4.1.1 de Certeau and social space**

These “fleeting moments” are at the very foundations of Michel de Certeau’s seminal text *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in which the author interrogates what he calls, “[a]n uncanniness of the “Already There”” (1984: 133). He also appears to question the blurring of the spatial/temporal realms of city space asking; ‘[a]fter having considered the city in the future, does one begin to consider it in the past, like a space for journeys in itself, a deepening of its histories?’ (1984: 133). He exemplifies this in his description of Paris’s urban environment:

These seemingly sleepy, old-fashioned things, defaced houses, closed-down factories, the debris of shipwrecked histories still today raises up the ruins of an unknown, strange city. They burst forth within the modernist, massive, homogenous city like slips of the tongue from an unknown, perhaps unconscious, language. [...] Ancient things become remarkable. An uncanniness lurks there, in the everyday life of the city. (133)

Consequently, de Certeau’s “things” are important in that they ‘impose’ themselves, the writer suggests, like “characters” on the urban stage, and subsequently acquire a certain autonomy (135). Moreover, this characterization of the city’s signs lies at the crux of my analyses in Part One of this thesis, in which these “things” emerge as key signifiers in the construction of lived space.

Additionally, in his description of the ‘mythical texts of the city,’ de Certeau adds two additional networks to the aforementioned “things” that have a particular ‘hold’ on our attention: gestures and narratives, and he describes these networks as ‘chains of operations done on and with the lexicon of things’ (141). These are representative of two distinct modes (tactical and linguistic) which can be used to influence, displace and modify the way in which objects are distributed and used.
De Certeau refers to gestures as ‘the true archives of the city,’” understanding “archives” as the past that is selected and reused according to present custom, and claims that they continually remake the urban landscape (141). He writes:

The wordless histories of walking, dress, housing, or cooking shape neighbourhoods on behalf of absences; they trace out memories that no longer have a place – childhoods, genealogical traditions, timeless events. Such is the “work” of urban narratives as well. They insinuate different spaces into cafés, offices, and buildings. To the visible city they add those “invisible cities” about which Calvino wrote. (142)

In the interior space, the ‘gesture sequences’ of daily life are repeated in minute variation, he observes, and for de Certeau the domestic space represents a protected space or ‘ideal city’ in which ‘all the passersby have beloved faces, whose streets are familiar and safe,’ and ‘whose interior architecture is changeable almost at will’ (146-8). These “gestures” are deployed in specific territories, what de Certeau labels private and exterior spaces, and this once again appears to both interact and reflect the “binarisms” outlined by Lefebvre and Foucault that are explored above.

4.1.2 Photographic space

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre dismisses visual imagery, such as film and photography, as ‘incriminated’ media that is based in the ‘illusion’ of ‘transparency’ (1991b: 97). This is due, he observes, to the manner in which it appears open and ‘intelligible,’ and as a result of the manner in which the visual is privileged over the other senses. He writes:

Take images, for example: photographs, advertisements, films. Where there is error or illusion the image is more likely to secrete it and reinforce it than to reveal it. No matter how ‘beautiful’ they may be, such images belong to an incriminated ‘medium’ […] images fragment; they are themselves fragments of space. (96-7)

As Lefebvre acknowledges, this further problematizes the role of the image in that it compounds rather than reveals the “illusion of transparency,” and subsequently has the affect of manipulating the spatial constructions that are concealed by the photographic form. This manipulation involves the fragmentation of space and, in photographic replicas of the city-space, as my thesis will address in Part One, this
contributes towards the increasing abstraction and spectacularization of Havana within the global imaginary.

De Certeau’s observations above are also shared by Lefebvre in his *Critique of Everyday Life: Vol. 1* (1991a), in which he detects that any representation is in itself a partial exercise, noting that maps, for instance, demonstrate a comprehensive overview of the city, yet fail to indicate at all towards a sense urban experience and street life (1991a). Rosalyn Deutsche explores this further, investigating the representation of social space within a ‘stream of contesting momentary images, which, detach from particular locales,’ and ‘join the company of other images’ (Deutsche 1991: 201). As a result, she suggests that documentary photographs take on new meaning through ‘perpetual reinterpretation’. She writes:

>[a] documentary photograph of a member of a social group composed of undifferentiated stereotypes [...] today serves the same purposes as did similar images at the inception of social documentary as a public photographic practice: it “humanizes” by particularizing. It suggests the character of a person’s existence, in which material circumstances contradict human worth, and the more dire the conditions, the more the photos may have to tell us. (201)

Deutsche places emphasis on the role of what she refers to as an invisible “condition,” which represents; ‘a conceptual understanding laid over the image by the viewer’ (201). Furthermore, most problematic for Deutsche is the system of projection, of imagining that the characteristics that we “see” in the person or scene before us are those that are “there” (201-2). However, instead of vacating ‘the territory of image-making’ altogether, Deutsche points to the heightened necessity of the role of the context linked with the image-text, for example via captioning, which establishes a meaning beyond that which is visually projected (201-2).

Whilst theorizing the role of the photographer and social space, it is also worth highlighting Augé’s theorizing of the traveller’s gaze when confronted with space. He suggests that the process of travelling in itself constructs a fictional relationship between the gaze and landscape, and reminds his reader that we tend to use space to describe the fragmentation of places that make up the journey – spaces in which the travellers assume the role of spectator, ‘without paying much attention to spectacle’ (1995: 86). This is a particularly interesting notion to consider within a discussion of photography and the social space of the city, as the images in ‘tourism leaflets,’ which Augé describes, suggest a sort of ‘deflection, [a] reversal of the gaze’ (86). Arguably,
these images operate in a similar fashion to the primary texts explored in Part One, and more specifically in Chapter Four. Akin to Augé’s examples, these images offer ‘the would-be traveller advance images of curious or contemplative faces, solitary or in groups […] his own image in a word, his anticipated image, which speaks only about him but carries another name’ (86), for instance, Havana. Furthermore, the traveller’s space, Augé claims, may thus be the ‘archetype of non-place,’ a space which will be identified as reconceptualized and reconstructed in Part Two of this thesis.

4.2 Havana and imagined Space

The second part of this thesis will explore the notion of imagined space, focussing on representations of the material and hyperreal Havana, and will examine the way in which these are revisioned and re-imagined via advertising consumption, and in the actual reconstruction of the urban form of Havana abroad. Moreover, my interpretations in this part will involve exploring the representations of city life beyond national frontiers within the global imaginary.

4.2.1 Havana and the hyperreal

Theorizing the consumption of “imagined space,” whilst drawing from examples of material, hyperreal and reconstructed spaces, it is essential to firstly structure my discussions around Jean Baudrillard’s theoretical framework, a philosopher who has always thought through his concepts ‘in spatialized terms’ (Clarke and Doel 2004: 30). Baudrillard’s writings, both in his initial examination of the effects of consumerism on domestic space (1996) and in his explorations of hyperrealities, in his seminal text America (1988), point to his fascinations with space, architecture and the built environment. Baudrillard created his own “binarism,” which lay between seduction/symbolic exchange and third-order simulacra, developing a ‘sustained theorization of the spatial and temporal conditions of hyperreality’ (Clarke and Doel 2004: 32). In Baudrillard’s discussion of the hyperreal, modernity is consigned to linear (spatialized) time, for example, time with a sense of direction, in which the temporal is forgotten, the present lamented, and the future hoped for. As David Clarke and Marcus Doel further elucidate; ‘if the idea of an end […] is a function of linear time, linear time lends another sense to the end. Linear time is the time of no return’ (30). In essence, Baudrillard invites his reader to accept that the journey is
interminable, that modernity fails to guide us to a final, purposeful destination, and instead thrusts us into a ‘strange hypertelic universe’ (30).

As Part Two of this thesis will illustrate, the material and imagined Havana spaces explored are in danger of becoming the “perfect model” for image succession realized by Baudrillard, in the same fashion as his envisioning of Main Street U.S.A., in Disneyland, a reproduction of a turn of the century American town. The spaces explored, my readings will observe, constitute reflections of specific places, but also disguise and distort the “real” Havana. Moreover, these are identified as part of a true/false relationship that takes place between images and reality. As my readings in Part Two will reveal, these hyperreal representations of Havana are built upon images which themselves are based to an extent on heterotopic visions of the city. Labelling these spaces as “simulations” surmises that there is therefore no “authentic” reality to reference, and the space presented becomes constitutive of a place without an origin. Eventually this results in these spaces transforming into objects of simulacrum, an original with no reference in reality other than itself. Therefore, these spaces only refer to and make sense in relation to other similarly hyperreal sites or images. To borrow Augé’s term, these spaces become “non-places,” sites which cannot, or rather should not, be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity (1995: 77-8).

These forms also partake in what Baudrillard calls the ‘third order’ of simulation. This differs from what he refers to as a first-order simulation, which would depict a representation of the real, and second-order simulation, which blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. To illustrate this, Baudrillard draws upon Borges’s fable ‘Del Rigor en la Ciencia’ (1946), in which ‘the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly veering the territory’ (1983: 1). For Baudrillard, as there is no longer any way to differentiate between the map and the real space, the former becomes a representation as authentic as the real. With first- and second-order simulation, the real still exists, and we measure the success of simulation against the real. However, third-order simulation involves the production of a hyperreal space, a model that precedes the real, and involves a detachment from reality and representation.

Therefore, it will be observed that the spaces explored in Part Two are in danger of becoming third-order simulations, generating the notion of Havana as hyperreality, and representative of a city-space without a real origin. However, whilst

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3 English translation: ‘On Exactitude in Science’
we may consider the possibility of these spaces as third-order simulations, it is simpler to see them as second-order simulations in which the fake and staged environments, or imagined spaces, appear authentic, because they embody all of our romantic notions of what the space should look like, as Baudrillard argues is the case with Disneyland. It is also easy to do this in that such representations are readily available, in that, as my readings in Part Two will expose, we are able to authenticate and experience these simulations as “real”. However, the implications of interpreting the imagined spaces in Part Two as third-order simulation is perhaps more difficult to categorize. As Baudrillard writes:

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the ‘real’ country, all of ‘real’ America, which is Disneyland [...] Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the American surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. (1983: 25)

Furthermore, like Disneyland, the spaces explored in Part Two of this thesis might be seen to be acting as ‘a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real’ (1983: 25).

Additionally, Soja addresses his own notion of Baudrillard’s hyperreality in what he calls the “exopolis”. This constitutes the “real fake,” which he observes as already part of our lives and lived spaces (Soja 1996: 19). Rather than formed of specific clusters, he situates the sprawling nature of the “real fake” city-space, which is lacking any form of structure and void of any true foundations. He also describes the “exopolis” as forming part of the postmodern city, referring to it as ‘a combination of decentralization and recentralization, the peripheralization of the center and centralization of the periphery, the city simultaneously being turned inside out and outside in’ (1995: 131). For him this space is both ‘enchanting’ and one where the “real-and-imagined,” and ‘fact and fiction, become spectacularly confused, impossible to tell apart’ (131). Consequently, with his exopolis he aims to stretch ‘our imaginations and critical sensibilities’ akin to the way in which it he sees it as aggressively shaping the urban fabric (1996: 279). Soja’s conceptualization of the hyperreal links also to Michael Sorkin’s discussions of the themed space, in which he describes city-spaces that are metonymic, or substitutive, in their representation of the real, and are subsequently representative of psuedo-historic marketplaces that involve the ‘regulated vision of pleasure’ (Sorkin 1992: xv). Furthermore, this type of simulacra, at least in regards Little Havana, as explored in Chapter Six, constitutes the
reconstruction of either images of the Cuban capital that no longer exist, or those that never really existed to begin with (Soja 1996: 19). As such, the exopolis represents a form of nostalgic interplay regarding the idea of the city that succinctly ties together Baudrillard’s notion of the hyperreal with Soja’s own reworkings of space, and provides a platform for investigating the way in which image and reality become further confused.

4.3 Havana and Thirdspace

The final part of this thesis, Part Three, interrogates the new staging and performance prevalent in filmic representations of the city towards the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, following the Cuban “Special Period” of the 1990s. By focussing on the documentary film in this section of the thesis, and following on from discussion in Part One and Part Two, my interpretations will propose that music and documentary film form part of the construction of Havana as a consumable geography.

4.3.1 The staging of performative space

In her discussion of the staging of the imagined city, Joanne Tompkins (2009) highlights a number of key thinkers regarding the staging of space. She alludes to David Harvey’s evocative description of the paradoxical nature of the city, with its collection of oppositional significations, which is reflected in many critics’s attempts to compare the imagined ideal of the city against its lived reality. Patricia Yaeger’s concept of metropoetics is also a fitting tool with which to approach the staging of performance. Metropetics, Yaeger claims, present an approach which ‘enable[s] us to rethink the urban imaginary in light of contemporary urban crises’ (Yaeger 2007: 13). Metropoetics, she continues, is ‘a strategy for understanding the history and phenomenology of cities through acts of cultural and literary making, or poēsis’ (25). Whilst Yaeger applies metropoetics to literature, an analysis of a type of metropoetics in the texts analysed in Part Three of this thesis, wherein the urban context of Havana is performed, facilitates an even more effective rethinking of the ‘slipperiness’ of the staged visions of the city represented, and the supposedly more “authentic” representations of the “real” Havana (25).
The notion of performative space explored in Part Three of this thesis again suggests the representation of space as dynamic. As Elizabeth Fine and Jean Haskell Speer note, we can no longer presuppose identity as a result of local performative spaces being constructed of ‘(re)collected pasts’ that draw upon various signifiers, in the form of media, symbols, and languages (1992: 1). Moreover, as James Clifford adds, we might better understand cultural identity not by studying artifacts, but through observing emergent performances (1988: 14), which, of course, involves considering the role of lived space.

In her text *Theories of Performance* (2008), Elizabeth Bell also explores a number of relevant theoretical tools that, for the purposes of the discussion of staging in Part Three, will be outlined below. Bell suggests that performance is both process, ‘it happens, emerges, grows,’ and, ‘[i]n its processual unfolding […] is also a product, an accomplishment, an event’ (2008: 16). She also observes that through framing these performances are inscribed with particular values by the audience and perform different roles, eight of which are outlined by Strine, Long and HopKins, and these include: aesthetic enjoyment, intellectual inquiry, affective place, cultural memory, participatory ritual, social commentary, political action, and psychological probe (1990: 186-9). Crucial for Bell is that performance is both traditional and transformative. She claims that ‘performance always makes reference to former ways of doing, acting, seeing and believing (2008: 17). This fits with Victor Turner’s theorizing that social dramas (performed in social space) provide the “raw material” for aesthetic performances. These performances, “aesthetic” for the deliberate and artful shaping of conventions, include various staged representations (1988: 41). Erving Goffman shares this view of social drama, claiming that communicative interactions shift between the fake and the authentic in aiding the explanation of the motives of individuals. Goffman explains that: ‘[a] performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serve to influence in any way any of the other participants’ (1990: 15). In recent scholarship Goffman has experienced a rebirth as theorists are returning to his work on space and performance (Hacking 2004; Jensen 2006), and it is useful to turn to the writer’s work here in refining the role of social life and performance in the representation of space. Goffman writes:

At one extreme one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in
In his 1959 text, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman’s theory of performance describes the ways in which daily life is a series of roles we enact with and for others. Most importantly, Goffman suggests that performed roles foster a type of consensual reality – the reality as we know it in our interactions with the Other, and one that the West might use to influence representations of the subaltern subject. The consensual reality of these performances, Goffman clarifies, is concretized by our belief in the social roles that are acted out, creating impressions for ourselves and others, upon social fronts (1990: 32). Goffman refers to these as ‘expressive equipment,’ for example settings, and “masks” worn to create these roles (1990: 32). Goffman defines “front” as the part of an individual’s performance which regularly functions in a ‘general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance’ (32). Alternatively, “setting” refers to furniture, decor, and the physical layout of “fixed place” (32).

The combined effect of this belief system is a process of what Goffman calls dramatic realization, in which social roles are produced in the moments they are performed through interaction. Either visible or invisible, or deliberately hidden, Bell describes this as inevitably involving an idealization of social space, in which performances are measured up to a culturally specific “ideal” (2008: 152). Marvin Carlson’s reading of Richard Bauman’s performance theory also points to this notion of idealization. The sociologist, he suggests, sees all performances as embodying a ‘consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model’ (1996: 5). Goffman finds this tendency for misrepresentation particularly problematic, a responsibility he places with both the audience and the performer (1990: 65). Furthermore, within these readings, a clear system can be marked out, in which cognitive process (belief), material effects (settings and fronts), the performed action (dramatic realization), and society (idealization) work as one. Moreover, as the third part of this thesis, specifically Chapter Seven, will reveal, performances in filmic representations of the city are both ‘realized and idealized,’ and the viewer is transformed into a figure capable of ‘expressive control’ (Manning 1991: 75).
4.3.2 Filmic space

Towards the end of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the new millennium, a number of key thinkers have begun to contribute towards a growing field that is focussing on film and space, or filmic space (Aitken and Zonn 1994; Bruno 1997; Clarke 1997; Donald 1999; Nowell-Smith 2001; Shiel 2001). Reconsidering Lefebvre’s distinction of urban space as itself representational, film representing the city becomes concurrently sensory and symbolic. It is through the analysis of filmic space in this third part of the thesis, in Chapters Seven and Eight, that discussion of place and space reveals urban ties between city-dwellers and specific sites, within the more specific focus of performativity.

As a prominent writer on space and social theory, Michael Dear has consistently drawn attention to the need for new representational approaches to grasp the restructuring of contemporary urban space (McNeill and Tewdr-Jones 2004: 97). The most comprehensive statement of Dear’s observations on post-modern filmic space can be found in the *Post-modern Urban Condition* (2000), and more specifically in his analysis of ‘Film, Architecture and Filmspace’. As is the case with the other notable thinkers on film and city-space mentioned above, Dear sees Walter Benjamin as instrumental in securing the link between film text and city text (2000: 178).

Drawing upon the notion of voyaging originally explored by Walter Benjamin, Dear writes:

> By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. […] With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended […] An unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space conscious explored by man […] The camera introduced us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (178)

Shifting from the parallels to be drawn between the manipulation of spaces in architecture and in film, Dear is captivated by an underlying asymmetry in the way in which space and film, as separate disciplines, approach each other, and he draws from Gibson’s observation on architecture and cinema to elucidate this point:

> Architecture, in its diverse forms, is one of the elements of cinema, and these two arts, industrialized, collaborative, mystifying, have a lot in
common. But true exchanges between them are rare; each nourishes stereotypes of the other. (1984: 113)

Giuliana Bruno explores similar architectural terrain in her influential *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and film* (2002), in which she investigates the intersections between the visual and space. Bruno declares that the parallels between cities and architecture demand a rethinking of the way in which we view film (1-10). Furthermore, rather than “fixed” in place as a voyeur, Bruno has also observed that the viewer becomes a “voyageur” who moves through a film in the same way as one walks through a building or a city, assembling views according to whom and where they are and what they want to see (1997: 10). Bruno’s theorizing of filmic space in this manner is particularly pertinent to discussions of the texts scrutinised in the third part of this thesis. For example, in her analysis of ‘Living Space, Tangible Sites’ (2002: 64-5) the writer investigates the links between architectural ensemble and film, which she describes as concerned with ‘a haptic geography’ (64), a notion that echoes Lefebvre’s spatial architectonics, which he describes as follows:

> Space – my space – [...] is first of all my body [...] : it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, penetrates, threatens or benefits my body on the one hand, and all the other bodies on the other. (1991b: 184)

Moreover, as Bruno observes, it is bodies, that conceive spatial fields, and these, in turn, visualize corporealities (2002: 64). Similarly, she postulates that film and architecture demonstrate systems of representation that are both written on, and by, the body map (64). By suggesting this, Bruno also posits the notion that these systems, within the productions of space, should be considered actual mappings of space – constructs that are lived by their users. For instance, she recalls the Italian term *vissuto* in her discussion, an expression used to describe the space of one’s “real” lived experiences, whilst acknowledging that film and architecture become representative of lived space and the narrative of place. Furthermore, these inhabited sites and spaces, Bruno reveals, are ‘narrativized by motion’ (54-5), and are spaces of dwelling which are viewed subjectively, and subsequently leave traces. It is at this point that the viewer experiences the crossing between perceived, conceived and lived space which was outlined at the beginning of this chapter (2002: 65). The writer sums up this process succinctly as follows:
Film/body/architecture: a haptic dynamics, a phantasmatic structure of lived space and lived narrative; a narrativized space that is intersubjective, for it is a complex of socio-sexual mobilities. Unravelling a sequence of views the architectural filmic ensemble writes concrete maps. The scope of the view – the horizon of site-seeing – is the map of tangible sites. (65)

Bruno also draws upon what she calls ‘inhabitations of space,’ a process of ‘tactile appropriation,’ within which architecture and film are bound (65-66). Dovetailing with the earlier discussions of Lefebvre’s social space, the representation of architecture in film, the writer suggests, is ‘haptically’ imaged and mobilized [and] [l]ike all tangible artifacts, it is actually constructed – imaged – as it is manipulated, “handled” by users’ (66). As Lefebvre would claim, this notion is testament to the way in which bodies both produce space and produce themselves in architectural form (1991b: 137).

Also rewarding is Bruno’s notion of the fiction of the city as developing alongside the spatial trajectory of its visual representations. Film, she argues, takes the same course, creating a twofold interaction in which the film represents architectural narration as much as “the image of the city” (Lynch 1960) lives in the filmic representations of the urban. Furthermore, within this exchange, the moving image plays a crucial role in the process of constructing the architectonics of lived space and film remains a principal narrator of city space. Therefore, filmic projections of city-space continue to play a part in the reinvention of places as sites of narrative. Most importantly, specific to the discussion in Part Three of this thesis, the processes outlined above embed filmic afterimages within the global imaginary and these, as Bruno insists, are imprinted upon our own ‘spatial unconscious’ (2002: 66). Consequently, Bruno’s theory of urbanism, spectatorship, and filmic space is useful insofar as it offers a critical tool for interpreting the filmic texts in the third part of this thesis, texts that have either been inadequately understood and/or under-analysed, and are therefore in need of more extensive interrogation.

5. Summary

As this chapter has exemplified, an exploration of constructions of the city presents an expansive range of different spaces that will need to be located in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. My readings will be analysed more broadly within the more “general” theoretical frameworks of Soja and Lefebvre, with the aid of which I will locate representations of space and spaces of representation, in order to underscore
the way in which perceived, conceived and lived space is constructed. By aligning my own thesis with Soja’s extensive framework (of Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace), my readings will aim to locate more specific spaces and places in order to identify the way in which mental constructs emerge from the different primary texts. Within these constructs my interpretations in the following chapters of this thesis will also highlight smaller locations, of heightened significance due to the way in which they are presented in the key texts. These are embedded in broader constructions of the aforementioned larger spaces, for example, the social space of “the barber shop” in the city-space, the domestic space of the home within the larger space of La Habana Vieja, the public space of the street within Centro Habana, and so on. Furthermore, theoretical perspectives on these particular spaces will be developed in the analyses that constitute Parts One, Two and Three of this thesis. In Part One my readings will explore the representation of Firstspace in photographic replicas of Havana. By focussing on the city’s lived spaces, I will draw upon both general locations (the street, the park, the cemetery) and more precise and definable places (the barber shop, the hotel) in order to deconstruct the way in which these sites/sights are perceived by the observer. However, in Part Two my discussions link more directly with Secondspace, and involve the investigation of representations of lived spaces in an imaginary, focussing on the reconceptualization of city-space and the hyperrealistic reconstruction of Havana. Finally, in Part Three, my readings will observe that the filmic representations discussed illustrate a merging of Firstspace and Secondspace, in a process that ultimately involves the projection of Havana as a form of Thirdspace.
CHAPTER TWO:
WALKER EVANS - HAVANA 1933

1. Introduction

Carleton Beals’s *The Crime of Cuba* was published in 1933 and the text was accompanied by an important portfolio of photographs. These images, taken by the then relatively unknown American photographer Walker Evans, were originally produced in order to serve as an appendix to Beals’s sweeping condemnation of the economic and political oppression on the island. However, a number of images from this portfolio would later be recognized amongst the most famous and respected photographic replicas of Havana of all time. Evans’s photo-essay acquired a new title in 1989 in the form of *Walker Evans: Havana 1933.* As Ana María Dopico has observed (2002: 458), this publication, in addition to the recirculation of Evans’s photographs in a hardback photobook, *Walker Evans: Cuba,* published in 2001, and more recently a second paperback edition in 2011, has at the same time denoted both the appeal of this body of images as canonical photographic replicas of Havana, whilst highlighting their documentary value in the modern era.

Similarly to the other images interpreted in Part One of this thesis, Evans’s images reveal an acute awareness towards the representation of Havana as lived space, consistent with the time and period at which the photographs were taken. Evans’s framing of moments of lived space, frequented by city-dwellers, and his careful compositions, expose a dialogic relationship between the subject and photographer in a way that can be seen re-emerging in more contemporary visual constructions of the city. These processes present a plurality of signifiers to the viewer and, in return, encourage multidimensional readings. Whilst this chapter will refer to Evans’s oeuvre and his Havana images more generally, the analysis will focus upon two specific images that exemplify these multidimensional readings and contribute to this thesis’s discussion of constructions of the city. Evans’s photographs, this chapter will aim to

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expose, represent an origins from which “real-and-imagined” spatialities of Havana have emerged, and these framing, I will argue, have been continually recycled, reconstructed and/or re-imagined in the global imaginary since 1933. Furthermore, As Dopico has proposed, the severing of Evans’s photographs from Beals’s controversial narrative in these more recent editions signals ‘a new era of the ’phatic image’ where compelling yet consumable photography is ‘relatively untrammeled by distracting or disturbing text,’ and where the concealed message of the image appears to ‘represent’ ‘beyond the politics of socialism and beyond old empires and cold wars’ (2002: 458).

Between the 1930s and 1950s, images of Cuba spread via newspapers, magazines and periodicals, in travel articles and tourist books, and in advertisements of travel agencies, railroad companies, steamship lines, and airline carriers (Pérez 1999: 173). At the same time, the Cuban capital was the locus of numerous motion pictures, songs and literature, that conveyed Havana as both “real-and-imagined”. For example, in the 1930s the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca documented his visit in ‘Son of Blacks in Cuba’ in his Poet in New York text, written in 1929-30, and the American author Ernest Hemingway would go on to reside in Old Havana. For Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Evans represented the ‘third man’ in this series of visitors who would go on to define the representation of Cuba, and specifically Havana, in the global imaginary (1994c: 97). The author describes Evans as having lacked the direction of the aforementioned figures, which results in a photo-essay that the writer calls ‘a graphic romance in which the blacks of Havana are revealed as dapper dandies in white’ (87). Moreover, Evans’s trip also appears to juxtapose, for the photographer, the foreign with the familiar, the old with the new, or as Pérez notes, the act of being abroad ‘without being away,’ which lay at the heart of Cuba’s appeal in the 1930s. Furthermore, Havana offered risk-free access to the exotic that ‘offered antiquity without sacrificing modernity’ (Pérez 1999: 173).

In his Havana portfolio, Evans’s images are less neutral than his photographs of his homeland, the USA, and he shifts from his tendency towards large-format photography preferring to capture images of social spaces. For this reason, in my readings of Evans’s images below, this chapter will explore spatial representations of city life on a number of levels, interpreting the photographer’s literary, authoritative, and transcendental photographic style. Evans’s literary style will be explored with reference to the documentary movement of the period, whereas the authoritative and transcendental techniques in his work will be scrutinised more explicitly in my analyses. In order to examine the authoritative way in which Evans captures lived space, my
readings will focus on his image *Interior, Barber Shop*, and will pursue an interpretation of the image as an example of the photographer watching over and/or guarding the lived space of the city. In the second image analysed, *Havana Citizen*, my interpretation will examine the transcendent nature of Evans’s photography and the effect this has on his representation of city life in Havana in 1933. This analysis draws not only from the traditional definition of the transcendent, of “that which goes beyond,” but from a Kantian perspective, focuses on the possibility of knowledge itself through the viewer’s interpretation of the photograph. Moreover, my readings in this chapter will equate this transcendental perspective with the way in which the viewer’s mind "constitutes" objects and makes it possible for us to experience them as ‘signs’. *Havana Citizen* exemplifies Evans’s careful composition in order to employ sign systems in his photography.

2. Theory

2.1 Photographic theory

The theoretical terrain of photography is an expansive one, however, for the benefit of my interpretations in this chapter, it is worth briefly recalling a number of theoretical tools at this point. In his study of photography in *Camera Lucida* (1981), Roland Barthes recognizes that when faced with a photograph, the viewer is overcome by what he terms an ‘ontological’ desire (Barthes 2003: 19). Barthes states that a photograph cannot be distinguished from its referent, from what it represents, or at least it is not immediately or generally distinguished from its referent. In order to perceive the photographic signifier, he suggests, a reading of the photograph requires a secondary action of knowledge or reflection. He also suggests that the referent and the photograph are ‘glued’ together, aspiring to become ‘as crude, as certain, as noble as a sign, which would afford it access to the dignity of a language’ (20).

By observing this “language” in Part One of this thesis, my interpretations will expose the act of reading the photograph itself as the locus of three practices: to do, to undergo and to look. Barthes explains these process in which the operator is the photographer, the spectator is ourselves, and the person, or thing targeted, is the referent and a type of ‘little simulacrum’ (23). This spectrum, related to ‘spectacle,’ he observes, involves “the return of the dead” in every photograph. Through which we interact with the figures, faces, gestures, settings and actions of the photograph. A
second element, the ‘punctum,’ breaks the ‘studium’ and it is this element which Barthes suggests ‘rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow and pierces’ the spectator (21). The notion of the photographic message is further explored in Barthes’s ‘Rhetoric of the Image,’ in which he describes the three messages prevalent when reading the photographic image: the linguistic message, a coded iconic message and a non-coded iconic message. The linguistic messages present in *Havana 1933* are therefore both the captions/titles, which accompany the photographs, and the signs prevalent within his images. Barthes suggests that the function of these linguistic messages is that of a (twofold) iconic message of ‘anchorage’ and ‘relay’ (21). Furthermore, he states that the linguistic message answers the spectator’s question: “what is it?” (2003: 18). In this way the text aids the viewer in identifying the elements of the scene and the scene itself. The focus of the message in the case of Evans’s Havana photographs is that the scene is in fact there “at that moment” and this establishes not a consciousness of the “being-there’ of the thing but an awareness of its “having-been-there”. In line with Barthes’s theory, therefore, Evans’s photographs present the viewer with a space-time category; ‘spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority,’ in which his photographs combine the “here-now” and the “there-then”.

Evans’s Havana images are also imbued with the ‘ontological desire’ perceived by Barthes, and by questioning this desire, he suggests, the photograph cannot be distinguished from its referent – from what it represents (19). Furthermore, the images analysed below, *Interior, Barber Shop* and *Havana Citizen*, are examples of the way in which the photograph is ‘glued’ together, as Barthes observes, to the referent, and become a sign and language in themselves. (21) Evans is the operator in this context, whereas the viewer is the spectator. As Barthes states, perceiving the photographic signifiers of the image requires a secondary action of knowledge or of reflection. The subject of the image is the target and main referent of the image, but it is only through the process of studium that *Havana Citizen* becomes a series of figures, faces, gestures, settings and actions, all of which will be scrutinized in my readings below.

2.2 Theorizing the represented city

As Francois Penz and Andong Lu observe in *Urban Cinematics*, any approach to studying the city requires an interpretation of the hard facts of the urban fabric, or
what Lefebvre calls the concrete materiality of the city-space (Penz and Lu 2011: 8).

By building on this knowledge of the “real” city, this chapter, and Part One of this thesis, highlights photography as ‘complementary evidence of the ‘soft’ side of the city’ (8) in line with Raban’s reading of the urban form in his text *Soft City* (1974), in which the author describes the urban environment as a ‘soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, and nightmare,’ that is ‘as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps’ (2008: 2). Considering Raban’s notion, and by exploring Evans’s images in this chapter, my readings will postulate that analysis of the spatialities that emanate from these photographs offer a more profitable approach to the understanding of the way in which the city would then be reconstructed and reconceptualized by the external image-makers and cultural producers after 1933.

This interpretation suggests Evans’s Havana images as heterotopic representations, recalling Foucault’s definition of the term expanded upon in chapter one of this thesis, analogizing the city as *Other*, exotic and erotic, hidden, and unseen. The scenes in Evans’s photographs (of the barbershop and the street), now void of contextual information regarding their location and existence, also become places without a place and lack any empirical connection to the ‘real’ city. As Penz and Lu observe, in the construction of the city-space within an imaginary, this blurs the historical and the metaphorical (2011: 39). This is particularly important due to Evans’s images constituting some of the earliest contributions to the visual constructs that make up the representations of the city in the global imaginary today. Therefore, as my readings and interpretations in this thesis will look to expose, Evans’s images could be seen to be representative of the ‘ghosts that haunt urban works,’ described by de Certeau and Giard (1998: 143).

3. Contexts

3.1 Historical context: 1902-1933

It’s still a frontier town, and half salvage, forgetful and unsafe […] when you are still bewildered you notice more things, as in a drunk. I was a drunk with a new city for days.

Before scrutinizing Walker Evans’s photography of Havana in greater detail, it is important to highlight the period of dramatic social change in Cuba, and abroad, that

Remark taken from red-cloth bound diary, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Photographs: Walker Evans Archive [call number: 1994.250.95]
encompassed the moment of the photographer’s trip. Therefore, this section will
firstly identify the historical moment of the period, in order to establish the domestic
historical context of Evans’s visit, before exploring the role of photography in the
documentary mode from an international context.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cuba had become, as Dopico notes,
a ‘no place’ and ‘a screen onto which the United States could project’ their own
designs (2002: 457). Beforehand, the final twenty years of independence had seen an
increase in Spanish migration to Cuba, the emergence of a new working class that
formed alongside a modernized sugar sector. However, inequalities remained between
east and west Havana, and caused racial division (Kapcia 2005: 61). The Platt
Amendment (1901), the Danza de los Millones6 (1920-1), and the emergence of a new
communist party, formed in 1925, drastically changed Havana society. President
Gerardo Machado became an increasingly authoritarian figure, yet the 1929 Wall
Street Crash destabilized his control, and a nationwide labour insurrection began from
1930, culminating in his removal by the Army in August 1933, who replaced him with
Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a month after Evans’s visit to the Cuban capital (61).

Evans wrote in his diary entries on his trip to Cuba that he had arrived in the
island in ‘the midst of a revolution,’7 and the trip, as Rodríguez Falcón observes, was
unquestionably made at a time of ‘extreme social tensions’ during the Great
Depression (2010: 736). Outside the nation in the years following the Wall Street
Crash, the image of Havana that was constructed in the global imaginary was one
promoted by movies, songs, radio programmes and tourist advertisements, through
which those outside the nation ‘could visit [Havana] without ever setting foot on El
Malecón. Havana, rather than La Habana […] was an imagined Havana, a locale
‘created and re-recreated’ (Pérez-Firmat 2010: 51). Moreover, as a ‘cultural site’
rather than ‘historical city,’ Havana in the 1930s and 1940s became a ‘dreamscape
rather than landscape’ (51).

In an interview years after his trip to Cuba, Evans would comment on his
Havana portfolio as primarily a commissioned work, suggesting that the creative
appeal of the images in the portfolio was insignificant (Thompson 1982: 82).
However, Evans’s insistence on the photographs being presented as an appendix
rather than illustrations for Beals’s text seems to conflict with this sentiment. Rather
than correlate to the stance of The Crime of Cuba, by documenting the poverty in

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6 The Dance of the Millions: a period between 1920-1 when World War I brought notable prosperity to Cuba as a result of
the increased world demand for sugar.
7 Remark taken from red-cloth bound diary, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Photographs: Walker Evans
Archive [call number: 1994.250.95]
Havana, Evans exerts his aforementioned literary, authoritative, and transcendent photographic style in his own interpretation of lived space. He would later question whether the portfolio really represented ‘art’ or merely documentation (Cummings 1979: 88-91), and this artistic/documentary binary provides an interesting relationship to examine in the images presented in this chapter. However, before scrutinizing these images, it is also important to contextualize the emergence of the growing documentary mode of the period.

3.2 International context: photography in the ‘documentary mode’

Continually re-defined, documentary photography is rooted in the exposition and visual narration of lived spaces and different subjects matters. As Miriam Haddu insists, these subjects have conventionally assumed the form of ‘visual replicas of social degeneracy and or events of historic significance’ (2008: 9). Moreover, Abigail Solomon-Godeau observes that the photographic act alone also represents a documentary process, ‘since the act of shooting a scene via the exposed lens constitutes a type of documenting, and thus a visual reporting of the subject matter or event positioned before the camera’ (1991b: 169).

The pioneering photojournalists emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, and were representative of figures ‘moving between the editorial page, the photographic book and the gallery,’ within which ‘street photography’ became perhaps the only genre specific to the medium with a focus on the depiction of the lived spaces of the city (Campany 2003: 27). Furthermore, as Susan Sontag has commented, such documentary images continue to offer us an ‘unearned sense of familiarity with and knowledge about the world’ (1979: 11) in their respective framings of instances of lived space. This was famously emphasised by Henri Cartier-Bresson with his notion of the ‘decisive moment,’ that period in time, he suggested, when aesthetic composition and subject matter come together within the frame. His text, The Decisive Moment (1952), was originally titled Images à la Sauvette (Images on the Wing), referring to the way in which his photographs were taken “on the fly”. This original title surmises the instantaneity of the documentary photograph of a specific moment, or as Graham Clarke observes, ‘the moment for a particular subject; not just in terms of its appearance at that moment, but in relation to its meaning within the context of an entire history’ (1997: 207). Evans’s images of Havana are similarly framed within the socio-political discourse that defined Cartier-Bresson’s work in the documentary
mode, and subsequently his work in photojournalism, and his influence is further correlated to my analyses in Chapters Two and Three.

As with Eugène Atget’s images of Paris in the 1920s, Evans’s images of Havana possess a socially fantastic character that appear to give his portfolio intimate meaning (Mac Orlan 1930: 43), and akin to Atget, Evans strives to demonstrate ‘what it is like to live there, close to the very nature of the street, which is nothing but an assemblage of shops, dwellings, […] people with human creatures of various expressions (45-6). Furthermore, these images allude to Evans’s curiosity in the urban and social context. To illustrate this, Mora suggests that the photographer’s fascinations are rooted in the work of Paul Strand, and particularly his photograph Blind Woman (1915), as well as in the image-making of Atget (1989: 8).

The result of Evans’s fascination with the documentary mode in the early 1930s amounts to the production of photographic representations of Havana that aim to represent lived space and the city dweller in instantaneous images which narrate the city at a particular point in its history. As a result, Evans’s images are definitive examples of Havana seen through the documentary-mode that would then define its subgenre, photojournalism, explored in Chapter Three, and would also constitute the foundations for the photographic reportage seen towards the end of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, exemplified in Chapter Four.

4. Walker Evans in Havana

4.1 Evans and lived space

As noted above, Walker Evans’s Havana photographs have now come to form his collection entitled Walker Evans: Havana 1933 (1989), the text from which the images in my readings below have been taken. As a separate body of images, Havana 1933 constitutes a series of reflective interpretations of city life in Havana. Evans’s focus on the urban is illustrated by the captioning in Havana 1933, which is constructed around Evans’s comments or based upon material from the Evans estate and via the observations of former Havana residents. Evans’s photographs appear in italics and are notable for their indication towards particular “characters” or “stereotypes” that colour the city. In his own, personal captions Evans simply notes his photographs as follows: Señorita at a Café, Beggar, Sleeping Man, Cobbler Posing, Stevedore, People in Downtown Havana and Havana Citizen. Similarly, when
photographing specific spaces he generalises, captioning his images; *Cinema, Spectacle, Public Square* and *Havana Street*). This captioning further highlights Evans’s manner of capturing the city is eidetic flashes and is particularly significant in comparison to the captions in *Havana 1933* which are added by Mora and detail the photographs more precisely referring to the city-dweller; *Woman in Courtyard Kitchen* and to specific places, adding details to make sense of them; *Asturian Centre, Havana Street, newsboys waiting for the paper, Lottery Shop Display* and *Havana from Malecon Wall* [sic]. Again, this dissimilarity points towards the way in which Evans saw himself as an ‘auteur’ when photographing Havana and this becomes particularly relevant when scrutinizing Evans’s representation of lived space.

### 4.2 Evans’s way of working

Before analysing Evans’s images in the section below, it is useful to briefly highlight Evans’s processes and ways of working whilst in Havana. In the Cuban capital he used two different cameras - a medium format 2½ x 4¼ camera for handheld shots, and a 6½ x 8½ view camera with a tripod. The medium format camera used by Evans was one of his first roll-film cameras and he used it to document moments in Havana street scenes which the conspicuous and much larger view camera with tripod would have been unsuitable for. The medium format photographs also enabled Evans to take numerous images of the same subject, in addition to those taken with the view camera and, as Thompson observe, this encouraged Evans to capture actors, scenery, and props with a more informal approach as they blended into ‘the flux of everyday life’ (1983: 13). The use of the medium-format hand-held camera was also reserved for more sensitive situations and, due to its quieter mechanism, allowed Evans to photograph the street scenes without drawing attention to himself. Throughout his three-week trip, Evans was also accompanied by Cuban journalist Jorge Fernández de Castro and his brother José Antonio, who was also a reporter. This, we may deduce, is how Evans was able to attain the intimacy that he does with the lived space of the city in his images. As Edmundo Desnoes wrote in his review of the 1989 publication of Evans’s portfolio, the photographer arrived in Havana with:

> [...] no previous experience or knowledge of Cuba. But his eyes had experience and knowledge his mind ignored. [...] In two weeks roaming through the streets and barrios of the city and nearby pueblos, he saw, tore

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8 Evans’s Havana archive contains 442 negatives from his trip to Cuba, 324 measuring 2½ x 4¼ inches and 118 measuring 6½ x 8½ inches.
off, and rescued a coherent vision of Havana no one before had ever recorded, much less created. [...] Evans’s photos are still throbbing with the physical light of absence. (1990: 75)

Evans was able to do this by using the medium format camera, photographing portraits of habanero/as throughout the city and moments in city life which would have been lost had he decided to use the larger format camera. The direct-view camera would have slowed Evans’s assignment considerably due to the necessity of removing and replacing the film for each shot. In addition to this, whilst using the view-camera, mounted on a tripod, Evans would have been limited to static subjects. Therefore, in his photographs taken with the view-camera (images of the city’s façades), Evans is able to accurately control distortion, making adjustments to the camera to prevent converging straight lines in his compositions. Using the view-camera he captures the city’s buildings, their façades (store fronts and cinemas, and colonial architecture) and their interiors. Evans’s attraction to the façades becomes what Guillermo Cabrera Infante describes as the photographer’s own version of ‘Arcadia’ every night. This suggestion of Evans’s harmonization of the city’s lived spaces posits that the photographer’s images are searching for an unattainable, utopian ideal.

5. Havana 1933

5.1 Analysing Evans’s lived spaces

Evans’s photographing of the lived spaces of the city of Havana in 1933 is defined by his selection of place and space. As noted above, the photographer focuses on shop fronts, street scenes, public squares and Neo-Baroque and Beaux Arts architecture in Havana. The small expanse that he covers constitutes La Habana Vieja (the Havana old-town), Parque Central, the other side of the bay from the city, Regla, Vedado and the countryside. Evans’s images of these sites symbolize both spaces of representation and representational spaces, which form surfaces to be read by the viewer. Furthermore, within these images, Evans appears to be experiencing what Mora calls, a ‘quasi-obsessional attraction’ to the surface of Havana (1989: 20). As a result of this, lived space resonates throughout Evans’s photographs. The subjects themselves do not appear to impart their own histories to the spectator but rather an accumulation of signage and repetitive architectural details constitute that mise-en-scène that theatricalises the lived spaces of the city within Evans’s frame. This is best
exemplified in Evans’s photographs of the working classes, for example, in his photographs *Selling Caramels*, *Stevedore* and *Newsboy*. The stevedores in Evans’s images are shot against white walls, providing a mug-shot effect that would be re-awakened in the work of David Bailey years later (see Chapter Four). In these images, subjects are either shot from behind, somewhat characteristically of the photographer, or swamped by the sumptuous textures which make up the image. Mora also suggests that Evans’s refusal to further explore ‘superficial emotional layers’ (21) allows the subjects in his photographs to communicate through his images. Therefore, the focus of Evans’s photographs is the mundane, everyday life of the city-dweller, all of whom are captured within frames that represent replicas of a transient moment. However, Evans’s compositions also reveal the photographers personal engagement with the context in which the images are construed, which result from a dialogic relationship between the subject and the contextual basis of the photograph. The images analysed below *Interior, Barber Shop* and *Havana Citizen*, dated 1933 and reproduced in the texts mentioned above, enable readings of how Evans’s processes are achieved. In their most basic forms, the images offer two clear examples of voyeuristic and surveillance photography. Gerry Badger (2010) has commented on notions of voyeurism and surveillance as inherent to the intrusive nature of the photographic act itself. Such images, the critic suggests, not only look to provoke, intrigue, and stimulate the viewer but also to express concern for their subjects and to encourage them to think, referring to Barthes’s conception of the photograph as ‘subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatises, but when it is pensive, when it thinks’ (1981: 38). Consequently, reading such images, exemplified in my interpretations below, involves examining the fundamental politics of looking.

The gaze in Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* is voyeuristic in nature, and professes a personal recording of lived space, in which part of the construct represents Evans’s individuality as an image-maker. Evans’s *Havana Citizen*, on the other hand, represents an impersonal image of surveillance, a construct of covert anonymity, in which the photographer’s attempt to mirror his own figure of the flâneur that is epitomized by his subject. In *Theory of Film*, the German film theorist Siegfried Kracauer provides a useful correlation between the role of the spectator to that of the flâneur. The two ways of seeing, he insists, serve to gratify an individual’s longings for similar moments of transience in real-life, and these are shaped by incidental ‘fragmentary happenings,’ that take the form of buildings, passers-by, faces, that stimulate the senses of the viewer and provide him with material for dreaming (197:
Sudden shifts in the mise-en-scène, he adds, are ‘pregnant’ with possibilities that allow the viewer to fill their own quotidian existence with meaning (170). Like Kracauer’s spectator-flâneur, Evans, too, is drawn into images of transient phenomena, attracted to the lived spaces of the city, and this is exemplified in his photographs of crowds, streets, faces, and street-scenes in *Havana 1933*. By incorporating the objects and subjects that he does, he releases their psycho-physical correspondences not only within himself but the viewer, and this process is typified in his photograph, *Interior, Barber Shop*.

5.2 Interior, Barber Shop

*Interior, Barber Shop* (see figure 1) depicts a scene from a barbershop in Havana in 1933. It is notably not a dilapidated Cuban salon and contrasts with the decrepitude shown in other scenes of poverty in Evans’s photographs, for example, in his images of Havana’s homeless. The customer waiting in the chair on the right, his feet in the foreground and his reflection in the mirror, in addition to the customer being attended to by the barber, also presupposes the prosperity of the barbershop to the viewer. As Evans photographs the scene from off-centre, his photograph makes for a significantly more dynamic image. By shooting the scene slightly off kilter there is an imbalance in his composition in which the subjects each maintain a different gaze, and the rule of thirds divides these subjects accordingly. The closely cropped framing of the image guides the way in which the viewer does this. By assuming a lower viewpoint, Evans is able to capture not only the scene, the lived space of the barbershop, but the wall which rises above the barber’s mirror. This complexity in Evans’s photographs, symbolized in *Interior, Barber Shop*, is highlighted in Susan Sontag’s seminal text, *On Photography* (1977), in which she writes of the ‘narrowly selective transparency’ of the photograph, whilst referring to the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographic project, that Evans would joined in the late 1930s (1979: 6). Sontag comments on the number of frontal pictures that the photographers would take in order to capture ‘the right look […] the precise expression on the subject’s face that supported their own notion about poverty, light, dignity, texture, exploitation, and geometry’ (6). It is an example, Sontag adds, of the way in which the photograph imposes standards on their subjects in a manner that suggests their images as only an interpretation of the lived space they represent (6-7).
Interior, Barber Shop is an example of this. As Anton Rosenthal observes (2000: 33), places such as the barbershop have come to define public space in that they characterize the accessibility between the public and the city that exists, in which
people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities’ (Carr et al 1992: xi). The selection of characters in Evans’s Interior, Barber Shop highlights this sense of community and is mirrored in his other images of Havana, in which he depicts spaces found within the public domain, such as plazas, parks, and streets. As with Evans’s photograph of the barbershop, these images represent microcosms of the more expansive lived space of the city.

Interior, Barber Shop is also layered with a number of narrative elements which appear to communicate different messages to the viewer regarding the lived space represented in the frame. Firstly, the linguistic message is confusing, as whilst Evans photographs a barber shop interior, we might expect him to be inside the barbershop. He is in fact positioned from outside, which gives the impression of the photographer as a strolling flâneur or voyeur, and is an instance of Evans photographing the city from the eye level of a passerby, apparently integrating himself into the flux of the street with a subjective point of view facilitated by the medium format (Mora 1989: 12). The photograph also exemplifies Evans’s reluctance to provide a purely documentary portrayal of the city, in line with Beals’s demands, and instead he represents the city-dweller and the lived space of the city from the view of an outsider, envisioning Havana from his own perspective, a notion which will be explored below.

Interior, Barber Shop also becomes an informational space that lends itself to redefinition, and from which the photographer is able to amplify or withdraw secondary data. Removed from its spacio-temporal context, Mora notes, Evans’s photograph reveals itself as the loci of a second context (1989: 13). As discussed above, the authoritative style of Evans’s Havana portfolio pertains to the photographer’s objective of creating an image of the modern city (Havana) as a construct that also projected his own presence, and inferred his own understanding and awareness of social space. Evans also illustrates this in his images of city-dwellers frequenting the space of Havana; homeless people (Beggar, Woman and Children), habaneros at work (Cobbler Posing, Coal Dock Worker, Stevedore), and in portraiture of Cuban men and women. These are images of various Havana neighbourhoods that merge into one mapping of city that produces a particular construct to the viewer in which the exchange of gazes between the observer and observed testifies to Evans’s ‘having been there’ (Barthes 2003: 120).
However, Evans’s inclusion in *Interior, Barber Shop* also emphasizes the notion of the photographer as “outsider” mentioned above. The viewer observes Evans in the mirror, in the act of taking the photograph, and whilst the photographer’s presence points towards the notion of him “having been there,” as Mora observes (1989: 11), his presence also reaffirms the ‘aleatory’ nature of the photographer’s relationship to the text. In doing so, the photographer situates himself between the shot and the printed image in a ‘claim to authorship,’ which, as José Quiroga observes, also conveys Evans’s loyalties to the working class (2005: 87). Similar images of solidarity can also be found Evans’s other Havana photographs; *Havana Policeman, Cobbler Posing, Coal Dock Workers, Spectacle* (looking down upon the steps of the Capitolio building), and *Havana Street* (depicting newsboys waiting for the paper). However, *Interior, Barber Shop* is perhaps the most effective example of this. In the composition, the viewer is drawn into a familiar scene, and the barbershop’s depth seems a believable, three-dimensional lived space, and Evans encourages this perception through his careful framing of space. The image is filled with a soft light emanating from the reflection in the mirror, light from an overcast Havana sky pouring over the trees in the background. The lighting in the image creates a broad, soft line between the highlights and shadows and whilst this diminishes texture, Evans creates a smooth even look in his image. The low-key lighting of the image also gives the photograph a certain mystery and a coldness, which contrasts with other images of the city’s spaces. This cool light is suggestive of a place of solace from the bustling streets of the city and its softness also alludes to a calmness which juxtaposes with images of street life in the city, such as the scene found in his *Havana Citizen*. The lines in *Interior, Barber Shop* are also key to a successful reading of the photograph and are fundamental to Evans’s composition. By delineating the shape of the image in the photograph, they also create a sense of depth and tone, upon which the objects and subjects of the image are framed. The horizontal lines collude with the lighting in the image to suggest a passivity and distance from the Havana street, despite the fact that the shop opens out onto it. The lighting and use of lines in *Interior, Barber Shop* is therefore key to our understanding of the third dimension in Evans’s images and for our spatial orientation as viewers. The creases in the crisp, white barber’s uniform give the impression of him walking towards Evans, and, therefore in the direction of the viewer, suggesting motion and activity within the lived space of the barbershop. The tones of light and dark in the image also add to a sense of depth, and the whites in the image, the barber’s outfit, the barber’s chair and
mirrors, are examples of this. Foreground framing here also encourages the viewer to focus on what is happening in front of them, rather than on the trees seen in the mirror behind the barber and Evans himself (see figure 2). Again, this creates a sense of depth and places the emphasis on the figure and the signs in the image, and reworks the photograph from a two dimensional image into a three dimensional one, in which the viewer is drawn into the scene. The framing of Evans in this image is important and alludes to important works from art history that have also symbolically seen the artist included in the artwork, such as Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*, 1656, discussed in greater detail below.

![Figure 2. Author’s own cropping of Walker Evans, *Interior, Barber Shop*, Havana, 1933](image)

Evans creates a natural frame within a frame by positioning himself in the doorway of the barbershop. Again, this creates an additional depth and adds to the various layers of the photograph. Moreover, the focal point of this image at first appears to be the
barber himself, he is instantly noticeable as a result of his return of the photographer’s gaze, from behind his thick spectacles. However, the image is confused slightly by Evans’s presence whereby the appearance of Evans framed in the doorway of the shop further highlights both his role as an artist and as a documentary photographer. This links to Lefebvre’s theory and practice of ‘rhythmanalysis,’ in which he states that ‘in order to grasp and analyse rhythms,’ particularly those of the street, ‘it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely’ (Beaumont and Dart 2010: ix). Evans’s camera angle here is also significant, as he appears to photograph the barbershop interior from ground level, frequenting the same lived space as the subjects in the image. Additionally, the darkest aspect of the image is found in Evans’s shadowy presence in the mirror. The strong contrasts between dark and light in the image produce a sort of chiaroscuro effect. These bold contrasts affect the image’s composition and the way in which the figures are represented in the frame. As a result, *Interior, Barber Shop* also correlates with a number of famous artworks from the depression-era that sought to capture the “everyday” lived space of the city. For example, Edward Hopper’s *Barber Shop* (1931), which, similarly to Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop*, depicts the quotidian scene of the shop interior. As with Evans’s photograph, Hopper’s composition invests the scene with meaning, and makes an emotional statement, by framing the ordinary in such a way that has an impact on the viewer.

Years later, Robert Frank would also focus on the barbershop interior in a central image of his text, *The Americans* (1959). In *Barber shop through screen door – McClellanville, SC* (1955) Frank’s composition constitutes a poetic image in which the photographer’s reflection exposes the manner in which he is peering into the barbershop through a screen door. The suburban houses of the small fishing town reveal the commonplace location of the shop. As with Evans’s image of the Havana barber shop, the viewer assumes the photographer’s gaze, “looking in” on the scene. Therefore, both Evans and Frank’s images exhibit the way in which the photographers brand the space with their presence. Both photographers also use the reflection in the mirror to enlarge their field of vision in the image, and subsequently present both the interior and exterior space to the viewer. However, whilst Frank’s image is an ethereal one that retains a dreamlike quality as a result of the empty interior it depicts, Evans’s barbershop is a meeting place, a site of lived space. In this earlier image of Havana, Evans therefore defines a construct of the lived space of Havana that would re-appear in subsequent works picturing the city-life in Havana over the course of the twentieth
century. Evans’s focus in *Interior, Barber Shop* is on the public space of the city as a site upon which the city-dweller converges.

In his discussion of the city-dweller and city-space, referring to the role of ‘The Neighborhood’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Pierre Mayol defines two problematics that lie at the basis of understanding the cultural practices of the lived space. Firstly, Mayol refers to ‘the urban sociology of the neighbourhood,’ that ‘privileges dates relative to space and architecture’ (1998: 73). Secondly, he defines ‘the socioethnographic analysis of everyday life’, that proliferate from popular culture. Poignantly, Mayol mentions James Agee and Walker Evans’s documentary text, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), as exemplary in its socioethnographic analysis of lived space with its ‘vast, poetic, even mythic frescoes’ (1998: 73). Eight years before the aforementioned text, Evans’s Havana portfolio, and his image *Interior, Barber Shop*, appear to put this process of analysis into practice. In his description of the street trade in Paris, Mayol refers to the ‘social porousness’ of the neighbourhood that ‘founded a space that made possible a multiplicity of little shops or of small trades […] living in perfect osmosis with the surroundings […]’ (1998: 73), and for him, the ‘barber shop’ is one of a number of establishments that exemplify these places. Propriety, in these surroundings, transforms a space of determined economic exchange and creates a ‘linguistic space’ in which a more complete recognition of these relations becomes thinkable and thus able to be articulated. This involves, Mayol observes, the subject taking his or her role in the functions of the street (1998: 83). Crucial, however, is Mayol’s articulation of the range of ways in which it communicates with the subject, recognizing the barber shop as a space in which the city-dweller becomes aware of themselves ‘through the multiplication of exchanges that it authorizes’ (1998: 83). Tellingly, in his review of Evans’s 1989 portfolio, Desnoes described the relationship between the contents of the *Interior, Barber Shop* image and the viewer as one that provides a ‘Proustian catalyst’, writing: ‘I could almost feel the barber’s cold scissors and the monstrous sadness of lumps of hair strewn on the patterns of the tile floor. Maybe music and certain smells can do the same, but never other visual art forms’ (1990: 76).

Therefore, my interpretation of Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* reveals the method by which in a single frame, the photographer encapsulates the different exchanges mentioned by Mayol above, and, at the same time, appears to ground the image with his presence. In turn, this reading suggests, the photographer both grounds and authorizes the image. However, whilst the photographer’s motives for guarding
over this scene remain unclear, the composition of the image invites two interesting readings, that are explored below. Firstly, by looking in on the lived space of the barbershop, Evans encapsulates the role of the voyeur and/or flâneur. Secondly, the multiplication of exchanges in the photograph, and Evans’s presence in the image, makes for an interesting comparison between *Interior, Barber Shop* and the notion of the artist represented in the artwork, mentioned above. These readings will demonstrate that the photograph constitutes a site of visual encounters between the image-maker and the city-dweller, which in turn offer multiple meaning in a context that is both symbolic and concerned with notions of performance of the lived space of Havana.

### 5.2.1 Interior, Barber Shop and the flâneur

In *Imagining the Modern City*, James Donald notes the role of the flâneur as key to investigations regarding the representation of the city. As the author suggests, ‘[b]eing a citizen, being a man about town, being a person – these are not identities, they are performances’ (1999: 109). Moreover, for Donald, the flâneur represents the citizen who moves through the city’s streets, squares, arcades. It is only through a politics of strolling, he insists, that modernist subjectivity of the city comes into existence. As Benjaminian theory dictates, the flâneur also occupies an uncertain social position, and the figure is often presented as a dandy, an aristocrat, a gentleman, or a bohemian (Benjamin 1973: 54). In the anonymous ebb and flow of the urban crowd, in *Interior, Barber Shop*, Evans appears to assume the form of the Baudelairean flâneur, feeling himself able to away from home yet at one with the city, and this notion is crucial to subsequent constructions of the city that surface elsewhere in this thesis.

In his career, Evans made very few self-portraits, however, there are examples of the photographer catching his own reflection in mirrors and windows at the time surrounding his Havana trip. For instance, in his photograph of a New York City lunch counter from 1929, four years before his Havana trip, Evans already appears to toy with the idea of representing himself within the frame. Similar to his photograph of the Havana barbershop, Evans’s barely visible reflection in the cafeteria window alludes to his presence, as Barthes would remind us, constitutive once more of his “being there”. This is also highlighted in his photograph of a vendors kiosk in Havana, in *Roast Pork, Country Style* in which Evans’s white suit and titled hat can be seen clearly reflecting off the glass. Evans had also photographed using mirrors previously in the years building up to his Havana trip in *Moving Truck and Bureau Mirror* (New
York, USA, 1929) and *Mirror* (Saratoga, New York USA, 1931). Thompson has described such images as ‘stunningly disorientating’ and as surreal now as they were at the time – the mirrors here, becoming ‘the centrepiece of a found three-dimensional collage that smashes together naturally inimical textures and linear forms and projects itself out to, as it were, behind you,’ whilst looking in ‘two chronological directions at once’ (Thompson: 1982 28).

![Image](image.png)

**Figures 3. Berenice Abbott, Tri-Boro Barber School - 264 Bowery, Manhattan, c1935**

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Evans’s positioning of himself in the images mentioned above, and in *Interior, Barber Shop*, in the role of the photographer-flâneur, presents the viewer with a scene of lived space in a way that differs dramatically from his contemporaries and Evans depicts a more revealing image that engages the spectator’s interest. Evans’s representation proves a more compelling image, for example, than Berenice Abbott’s photograph of a Manhattan barbershop from 1935 (see figure 3). Shot from the exterior, Abbott’s dependence on the signs displayed in the window does little to convey the sense of
closeness of Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop*, in which he teeters between the interior and exterior of the shop. Moreover, Evans’s method of strolling through lived space becomes, to paraphrase Mayol, a ‘dream of travelling in front of a particular display window’ that is stimulated by the interactions that constantly take place in the street (1998: 13). He describes the city as ‘poeticized,’ in this sense, by the subject, stating that the city dweller refabrics the urban apparatus into ‘an object of consumption’ that may then be appropriated (13). These interactions, Mayol writes, cause the urban space to become not only the object of a knowledge, but ‘the place of a recognition’ (13). For Evans, therefore, *Interior, Barber Shop* could be seen to represent a verification of the strength of his affiliation with the social environment, in a way that would be crystallised in his work for the FSA. Evans’s presence in the photograph also correlates with Heinz Paetzold’s definition of the flâneur as an individual that attempts to identify with the urban crowds on the street, to be at one with the collective around him, but instead suffering isolation (2000: 215). Acknowledging this observation, Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* also should be seen as a representation of the lived space of everyday human solidarity and demonstrates once more Evans’s insinuating of his affiliations with the working classes.

### 5.2.2 Interior, Barber Shop and representation

It is also rewarding to examine Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* in terms of representation and the subject, and in line with Foucault’s reading of Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (*The Maids of Honour*, 1656) (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 20). Similarly to the painting, as my readings have envisaged above, Evans’s photograph produces its own kind of knowledge and these similarities are worth exploring. Furthermore, as is the case with *Las Meninas* (see figure 4), Evans’s photograph contains various visible elements which are read by the viewer, but the meaning of the image is dependent on the viewer’s interpretation of it. It is, as Foucault observes, an example of complex interplay between presence and absence (Hall 1997: 58), the latter of which is represented by Evans himself. Moreover, Velázquez also alludes to a similar notion of the ‘self-aware’ artist as seen in Evans’s self-portraiture in *Interior, Barbershop*. In *Las Meninas* the painter paints himself into the picture, he paints his own act of painting and the object of the represented painter’s gaze (the subject) is representative of a type of concealed authority that makes his painting possible, and the King and
Queen of Spain seen behind the mirror of the painting at the centre of the composition.

Figure 4. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (Museo del Prado, Madrid, 1656) © Museo del Prado, Madrid.

In *The Order of Things* [Les Mots et les choses], Foucault reads *Las Meninas* as portraying a paradoxical relationship between reality and representation (1970). This representation, he suggests, constructs a triangular relationship between the painter, the mirror image, and the shadowy figure in the background, and these different elements are linked because they are all representations of a point of reality outside of the painting. In the same way as *Las Meninas*, Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* presents the viewer with a ‘behind-the-scenes’ look at the artist at work, in which a ‘spectacle-as-observation,’ as Foucault suggests, is provided and, as a result, the centre of the composition is affected (1970: 14). In *Interior, Barber Shop*, the habaneros in the image are also seen looking out of the image. The customer in the barber’s chair is looking out on the scene in reflection through the mirror as it is being photographed, the barber is looking directly at Evans, a second customer sits waiting and looking out at the photographer, Evans is taking the photograph, and the spectator is the viewer. These different figures are each crucial to the way in which the spectator perceives the spatial layout of the lived space represented in the photograph.
In Evans’s image there are also two subjects to the photograph and two centres, the two subjects being the barber and Evans himself, in the interior and exterior respectively. Therefore, the composition of the photograph, its discourse, encourages the viewer to oscillate between these two subjects and this further heightens the way in which lived space is represented to the viewer – seeing Havana through the photographer’s own gaze. The effect of this, as Stuart Hall observes, is constitutive of a form of representation that places the viewer in two positions of looking in a ‘state of suspended attention’ (Hall 1997: 59) in which the viewer is both looking into the scene, from outside, in front of, the photograph and also looking out of the scene by identifying with the gaze of the barber and the imagined gaze of the other subjects in the image. By projecting ourselves onto the subjects in the image in this way, the viewer makes sense of Evans’s photograph. This visual construction of lived space is therefore reliant on three separate processes. Firstly, the viewer is unified by the different elements and relationships in the photograph. Secondly, the photographer (Evans) is present in two places at once, the viewer assumes his position behind the camera but he also represents himself in the image. Thirdly, the viewer is obviously not present in the image and therefore the exchange that takes place between the viewer and the represented space remains a construct, which lends the entire scene to re-imagination. For Lefebvre, this denotes the scene as a site of ‘spontaneous theatre,’ in which the observer becomes both the spectator and spectacle (1991b: 314-5). Whilst Lefebvre identifies these lived spaces’s various elusive, ‘qualitative, fluid and dynamic’ qualities (1991: 42), he also acknowledges that society also seeks to appropriate and dominate such spaces, and as my readings of Interior, Barber Shop have aimed to expose, Evans’s composition is representative of this.

5.3 Havana Citizen

Walker Evans’s Havana Citizen (see figure 5) is widely regarded as one of the most iconic images taken from Evans’s Havana photographs, and is certainly celebrated in a way that many of his other Havana photographs, including Interior, Barber Shop, are not. As the following chapters of this thesis will also expose, his framing of this figure has also led to similar visual constructions that have either looked to mimic or reconstruct this famously anonymous city-dweller. The figure’s gaze and pose, and the contents of the image, make for a “noisy” composition that lends itself to constant
reinterpretation. It is an interesting image to interpret following my principal reading of Evans’s Interior, Barber Shop, Havana Citizen in that it has been the subject of much discussion by critics, each of whom have sought to explore the visual interplay that is seen to take place between the literal context of the newsstand and the various gazes of the subject, the photographer and the spectator. A Barthesian reading of this image reveals an array of signifiers that instil the image with secondary iconic information in a way that further discloses Evans’s desire to focus his lens on the features that make up the lived space of the city. Moreover, Havana Citizen appears to represent a photographic replication of the city-space in which the “things” theorized by de Certeau (1984: 133-141), and outlined in Chapter One, come to the fore. Furthermore, as Evans frames the Havana Citizen, he also appears to be imposing himself on the urban stage, and, as my readings below will reveal, this further constitutes the photographer’s desire to mirror the gestures and narratives of Havana from behind the camera.

In his review of Walker Evans: Havana 1933 in Mea Cuba, Cabrera Infante is fascinated by the Havana Citizen’s haunting presence, and he writes:

[...]
in all those books where Walker Evans returns and makes us return to Havana in the dream (and in the nightmares) of his portraits there is always a disturbing presence – a constant ghost. It is the image of a black dressed implacably from head to foot in white. He is standing on the downtown corner watching half the world go by. Evans calls him ‘the citizen of Havana’. He is wearing a spotless linen suit and an immaculate collar shirt and a black tie with white polka-dots and a handkerchief in his pocket and a straw hat that was then very much in vogue. This man in a white suit may be a sbirro – whom Machado invented and Batista inherited (he looks so dangerous perhaps because he is so well dressed). However that may be, the man is there stopped in time and only his eyes appear to be moving. But of course his eyes cannot move either. Now he is frozen by the photograph and that moment has been made to last forever. The dandy dangeroso, as Walker Evans would say, will keep his eyes peeled while he watches the invisible witness who has made him immortal with a wink, black on white, like the photograph. (1994c: 97-99)

As the writer appears to recognize quite prophetically, Havana Citizen could be seen to represent an early fetishization of the Afro-Cuban, that forms part of a construct which has continued to re-emerge over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the form of the ‘ghost’ described by Cabrera Infante, the Havana Citizen’s figure is one that image-makers have since blurred within exoticized visual constructs of a pre-Revolutionary Havana. The notion of Evans’s photographs having a spectral quality is also further envisaged by s, who claims that Evans’s images are
akin to ‘ghosts’ that ‘hover and haunt’ the (Cuban) viewer (1990: 76). Indeed, as with other images in Evans’s Cuban portfolio, it might be noted that there is a transcendence in his *Havana Citizen* image that provokes the viewer to look beyond the content and the figure framed in the photograph and to see what Cartier-Bresson called “le silence intérieur d’une victime consentante” (the silence of a willing victim).

5.3.1 *Havana Citizen* and the typecast

My reading below proposes that Evans’s *Havana Citizen* depicts the pre-presented imaginary of a typecast. In my interpretation, the man in the image represents a cinematic archetype, existing within the confines of a construct of lived space, both literally and metaphorically. The subject is figuratively representative of the exoticized Cuban, and their Otherness, yet also is seamlessly framed by the signifiers that surround him in the image (the newsstand, the colonial column of the arcade the shoeshine boy and the lavish mosaic flooring). Evans’s depiction of the *Havana Citizen* equates with archival images of the Cuban in Havana at the time of the 1933 Revolution, at which point city-dwellers are pictured in other photographic replicas wearing white suits and straw boaters, and at the same time this correlates with the photograph of the boxer, Kid Chocolate, that adorns the front-page of the newspaper held by the shoeshine boy.

In *Havana Citizen*, Evans uses the available light to create a number of visual and cognitive effects. The iconic stature of this photograph is arguably a result of Evans’s successful illumination of the central figure and the manner in which he emphasizes and de-emphasises the signs and objects which surround him. By creating this focal point, Evans orchestrates the mood and atmosphere of the image in a way which typifies his Havana photographs as a whole, and his use of light becomes an integral part of his photographic vocabulary seen in the rest of his career. Firstly, the viewer is struck by the brightness of the citizen’s white suit, which beams out from the image, illuminated by the hard light from sun above Havana.
The direction of the light here also emphasizes the shape of the tall, dark and slender figure. The viewer knows, from the other images in Evans’s collection displayed alongside *Havana Citizen* in the *Havana 1933* text, that the figure is photographed standing on the pavement beside the newsstand, whilst the newsboys in the
background are situated beneath the arcade. Therefore, the suit is also illuminated by the shadows in the scene, which are equally important in isolating and emphasizing the figure for the viewer. The sharp lines created between the highlights (the citizen’s suit, boater and his eyes/gaze) and the shadows (the shoeshine boys with newspapers behind the citizen), emphasizes both the texture of the image and the specular reflection which is taking place in the composition. The use of hard light⁹ here by Evans equates the Havana citizen with notions of firmness, strength, and power. The viewer also notes a sense of tension and drama and the lighting technique. The high-key nature of the photograph, with its bright highlights and minimal shadows, therefore suggests, first and foremost, a vibrancy to the image which breathes life into Evans’s work even now.

The white suit of the man in the image is also important an important signifier. As Donald implies, recalling Simmel’s essay on Fashion, the suit serves as a mask of masculine anonymity that represents a phobic reaction against the hyperactivity and overstimulation of the modern metropolis; ‘Take it off and you will find the real man. […] Ego is always and only imaginary, formed in the play of display and reflection of public life’ (1999: 109). For Evans, the Havana Citizen’s clothes represent a form of advertising. As Donald writes, the citizen’s ‘sartorial exterior is now presented as the promise of extraordinary richness within,’ and as such clothing becomes a display of authority (109). It is perhaps for this reason that Havana Citizen has become synonymous with photographic representations of the city before the Cuban Revolution, immortalised by films such as Our Man in Havana (1959), in which the leading actors are seen traversing the city in similar attire, and in advertising images of the period – such as Kerne Erickson’s poster of an American tourist flying into Havana on a clipper plane, discussed in Chapter Six. Furthermore, preceding Evans’s trip, writing in the 1920s, Ronald Firbank’s character in Prancing Nigger (1925) is described by the author watching over ‘the passing crowd’ in Havana and observing the city akin to the photographer. He describes the Afro-Cuban crowd in the city as ‘[...] foppish nigger bucks in panamas and palm-beach suits so cocky’ (1925: 39). Firbank’s description is one which certainly fits with Havana Citizen, matching both the elegance and refined, dandyish manner of the subject with his apparently menacing gaze. The mention of the Palm Beach suit by the writer, popular in Florida and the Caribbean in the 1920s and 1930s, also appears to be the subject of Evans’s own fascination with the citizen. This is also echoed by in the citizen’s poise

⁹ Hard light here refers to the light source in the image (the sun) that casts the shadows visible in the photograph.
and outstretched hand, which appears to lack a dandy’s cane, whereas the citizen’s wearing of a straw boater also has implications towards the man’s importance. British-made boaters had cachet with the Cuban buying public of the period and annual reports from the British Legation in Havana during this period mentioned that exports of straw boaters to Cuba had shot up during the late 1920s. Furthermore, as Luc Sante suggests, Evans’s Havana Citizen is exemplary of the way in which Evans’s eye seeks out the elite and finds himself surrounded (2001: 9-10).

As with Interior, Barber Shop, the composition of Havana Citizen is crucial to the way in which we read Evans’s image. The photographer guides the viewer towards the focal point (the subject), ensuring the punctum of the image is not obstructed by other elements. Lines in Havana Citizen are also employed as a compositional device and these draw the viewer towards the two focal points of the image – the face of the Havana citizen and his clenched fist. By delineating the shape of the image in the photograph, the lines also create tone. As a compositional tool, lines in the photograph also mark the edges of the shapes in the image, and these serve to frame the Havana Citizen, the column behind him, and the newsstand. The lines may also be seen to suggest a lack of movement and this alludes to the way in which the motionless Havana Citizen has remained frozen in this image since its composition. Furthermore, the viewer may imagine the newspapers of the shoeshine boys rustling behind the figure and the movement of the gentleman with the wooden leg next to him, but this sense of movement appears to contrast with the stillness of the citizen.

Evans’s camera angle is also important, as he appears to shoot the Havana citizen from a low viewpoint which further emphasizes the citizen’s considerable height, and this further heightens the impact of the image. Whilst the general understanding in photography suggests that placing the subject at the centre of the image makes for a weaker image, here it gives the figure an authority. As Epstein observes, this also enables the viewer to consider the figure's elegance, against the classical architecture behind him, highlighting ‘the subtle sinuosity of his length’, and reminding the viewer of the photographer’s own gracefulness (Epstein 2000).

Therefore, photographing the man from this angle, the viewer’s perception of the subject is changed considerably, as Evans sanctions the man with a certain authority. This compositional tool also mimics the work of the aforementioned

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10 John Jacob Astor IV, an American millionaire businessman, had famously worn a boater (and is thought to have increased their appeal due to his own fortune) before his death on the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.

11 Additionally, in his comprehensive text on How to read a Photograph, the art historian Ian Jeffrey has described the citizen in front of the news-stand as a ‘living artwork’ (226).
photographers of the documentary photography movement of the period, who also sought to empower their subjects through their use of camera angle. For example, Evans infuses his framing of the figure with the grace and elegance of Edward Weston’s nudes from the 1920s and 1930s (see *Nude*, 1927), and his slight tilt defines the man’s languid stance yet also depicts him as a dominant figure.

The lines in the photograph, that delineate not only the Citizen but the newsstand, the architecture, the pavement and the buildings in the background, also provide veritably straight lines throughout the centre of the image. This alludes not only to the height of the slender citizen but also provides a sense of the depth of field. Additionally, Evans’s foreground framing also highlights the lived space unfolding at the forefront of the photograph, rather than focussing on the architecture of the street behind the subject. The relationship between the foreground and background is illustrated by the lines which seem to connect the pillar behind the figure to the citizen, and the two subjects (architecture and the citizen) are therefore both mutually dependent. Furthermore, the interaction between the architectural and human form is also inferred by the photograph’s primary linguistic message, in Evans’s captioning *Havana Citizen* (rather than the *Citizen in Downtown Havana*, a label that it holds at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City), further insinuating that the citizen is “at one” with the city. Therefore, when faced with the Havana’s architectural signifiers here (the Beaux Arts column of the arcade and the colonial architecture of buildings behind him), Evans appears to integrate them within the framing of the subject, in turn suggesting lived space in direct relationship with the urban environment – the city-dweller forming part of the urban fabric. The architecture in the image is representative of the soportales eulogized by Carpentier (1970) and in *Havana Citizen* the colonnade in the image not only supports but serves as an agent in Evans’s visual construction of the kinetic energy of the city. This sense of entwinement between Havana’s colonial architecture and the city-dweller is also illustrated by images of prostitutes in Evans’s Havana photographs, and correlates with Cartier-Bresson’s similar images from his *Mexican Notebooks 1934-1964*, in which Carlos Fuentes refers to the photographer’s ‘redeeming choreography,’ constitutive of the essence of the people chosen as subjects, as they are framed within the lived spaces of the city (1995: 9).
5.3.2 Havana Citizen and the sign-system

Behind the citizen, the entire mise-en-scène of the photograph represents a sign system working on a particular level, and this is exemplified in similar documentary photographs from the Great Depression era, such as Tina Modotti’s Elegance and Poverty (1928), in which the photographer depicts an apparently dejected Mexican city-dweller, a worker, sat on the curb beneath a billboard for elegant men’s clothing. Havana Citizen is a defiant reversal of this image in that the city-dweller in Evans’s photograph is empowered by the signs that surround him. Havana Citizen exemplifies Evans’s lifelong habit of making several versions of the same picture with different lenses and cameras, as Thompson writes, due to his ‘many-levelled relationship’ with his world (1982: 10). The photograph is, as Thompson comments, an example of Evans responding to a world of things which he at once sees and experiences (1982: 10). Regarding Evans’s cropping, Thompson states; ‘[w]hen he is faced with stimulating subject matter, his immediate task is to make what sense he can of the components of seeing – camera distance, perspective, framing, light and gesture, all of which may be telling him important, perhaps contradictory, things at the same time (1982: 10). Furthermore, these compositional techniques also affect the way in which the citizen’s pose and dress is framed by the photographer and the way in which the viewer acknowledges the play of glances and gazes that are taking place in the image. For instance, in Walker Evans: Havana 1933, Mora alludes to the way in which the gazes of starlets from the newsstand represent an exchange between themselves and the citizen (1989: 14). However, Rodriguez Falcón reveals that this exchange is non-existent, in that the Havana Citizen is being looked at, but is not returning the gaze of either the women on the newsstand or the photographer (2010: 746). However, my own reading of this image opposes these evaluations, suggesting that the citizen’s unawareness to the exchange of gazes (of the women looking out from the newsstand and of the photographer/spectator looking into the scene) is constitutive of how and why the photograph has been transformed into an iconic work. Moreover, in Regarding the Pain of Others (2004), Sontag comments on the satisfactory appeal of the photograph of an ‘unexpected event seized in mid-action by an alert photographer’ (2003: 50). Part of this allure, my reading therefore suggests, lies in the way in which the citizen is framed unaware of the camera, or as Sontag states, ‘off guard’ (50). By capturing the citizen in this fashion, Evans creates a stronger image which encourages the viewer to further explore the signs presented for themselves. These signs (which
first and foremost emanate from the newsstand behind the subject) become the visual beat of the image, as they perforate the viewer’s understanding of the photograph with their secondary iconic information. In his essay, ‘The Crisis of the Real’, Andy Grundberg encourages his reader to reconsider the sign systems prevalent in Evans’s “self-referential” photography, in that they reveal not only structure and coherence but also paradox, play and oxymoron (Grundberg 2003: 175). As my additional reading below reveals, Havana Citizen is part of what he calls a ‘evocative nexus of signs’ (176). Furthermore, as Dudley Andrew has observed, it is only when the photograph has ‘escaped the control of the photographer that the indexical nature of the photograph assumes an added weight and significance (1997: x). As Rodriguez Falcón observes, the actress’s presence upon the newsstand represents a reversal of traditional role of the Hollywood star as the ‘looked at’ and the city-dweller as the observer (Rodriguez Falcón 2011: 744). The citizen is not only present in the space of production and consumption of images, but becomes, she observes, the cinematographic image itself (Rodriguez Falcón 2011: 744). One magazine, above the copies of Cartele and Cinelandia, is fronted by a young brunette woman, Kay Francis, a popular Hollywood actress from the 1930s. Additionally, on the cover of Cinelandia, Sari Maritza, an actress famous for her role in early 1930s British films, peers out of the newsstand in the direction of the photographer and further links the exchange of gazes taking place. In addition to these signs, a Coca-Cola advertisement is also located high above the newsstand, even above a publication which uses an illustration of Rodin’s The Thinker as its cover. Despite the coincidental nature of the illustration of Rodin’s sculpture on the newsstand, it is an important signifier in that it, too, is belittled by the apparently almighty symbol of United States capitalism – the Coca-Cola sign. The logo for this soft drink, produced, advertised and sold out of Atlanta, Georgia since the end of the nineteenth century, serves as a reminder of the U.S. presence in Havana following the bottling operations that began in the early twentieth century in Cuba (as well as in other Latin American countries). The Coca-Cola logo is immediately identifiable, with its typeface in Spencerian script. The cursive style of this logo was used to imitate the dominant form of formal handwriting North America at the turn of the century. The implication here is that an element of North American capitalism, and one of the most symbolic vehicle for Americanization of the period, lies in the backdrop of not only Havana’s bustling streets but also in Cuban life as a whole. However, it also towers over culture, literally here above Rodin’s The Thinker, and therefore Evans could be suggesting the domination of
capitalism as something all the most encompassing. Unlike the images of the film stars on the magazines, all white, and the Coca-Cola logo, also white, Rodin’s image is pictured in a hue similar to that of the Havana citizen, the subject of the photograph.

In summary, as with Interior, Barber Shop, Evans’s Havana Citizen depicts a space of representation, a portrayal of the lived space of Havana that animates the street in a precise moment of ‘spontaneous theatre’, where, once more, the observer becomes both the spectator and spectacle (Lefebvre 1991b: 314-5).

6. Summary

As my readings in this chapter have illustrated, Evans’s photographs present the viewer with both sites and sights of contestation in which dualities exist in a way which would echo throughout visual representations of the city that emerged in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These photographic replicas of the city would resonate not only in other images of the Republican-era, such as in Eve Arnold’s powerful images of Havana in the 1950s, but also in images of the 1959 Revolution and of the city in the Cuban Special Period. Whilst Evans’s photobook American Photographs (1938) resituated Havana Citizen, relocating it to a vehicle for a considerably larger appreciation and appropriation, the topical publication of Havana 1933 at the very beginning of the Special Period in 1989 became an example of what Barthes refers to as the photograph “returning from the dead” (1984: 9). This return constituted not only a recollection of the Republican-era Havana photographed by Walker Evans but a reminder of the framings of lived space that appeared to communicate more clearly in his work than the numerous photobooks published by acclaimed photographers towards the end of the twentieth century. As my subsequent readings in this thesis will reveal, early visual constructions of Havana, such as Evans’s, are key to developing an understanding of the later mystification of the city as a “postcolonial exotic” (Huggan 2001).

In the following chapter, my interpretations of lived space at the Revolutionary moment, in 1958/59, further develop my analyses of the visual construction of lived space in this chapter by focussing on a critical moment in the city’s history that would counter Americanised images of the city that circulated between 1933 and 1959.
CHAPTER THREE:
BURT GLINN – HAVANA: THE REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT

You can’t just hail a taxi and ask the cabbie to take you to the revolution.


1. Introduction

This chapter will analyse a series of photographs taken by the American photojournalist Burt Glinn, as presented in Havana: The Revolutionary Moment. This photobook showcases Burt Glinn’s photo-essay and documents his second trip to the Cuban capital in 1959, one that took the photographer from a New York City party to Cuba in the early hours of New Year’s Day, 1959. Glinn’s black and white photographs, shot on 35mm film, exhibit a synergy of styles and techniques that affect the way in which his images have been memorialised and represented since 1959. As Michael Chanan has observed; ‘for such a small country, Cuba is big on iconic images’ (2008), and, as such, some of the most memorable photographic works of the last century have originated from the inventory of images that emerged following the triumph of the Revolution.

In his photo-essay, which he produced whilst working for the Magnum photographic agency, Burt Glinn focuses primarily on the role the city-dweller. He frames the gun-firing rebels in Havana’s streets, depicts the rebel army resting in the Habana Hilton, and follows a chronological trail up to Fidel Castro’s arrival and speech to the masses in Havana. Poignantly, Glinn bases his photographic replicas in images of the city’s lived spaces, appearing to acknowledge the significance of capturing the essence of the Revolution from the street. In doing so, Glinn aligns his methods of image-making with the modes and styles of the photojournalistic

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movement of the period, whilst also alluding to the performative qualities of the city-dwellers that he frames in the ‘revolutionary moment’. As a photojournalist, Glinn is also moved to narrate through his photographs both the immediacy of the situation and to objectively represent an actual moment of reality (Sontag 2003: 23), which he shares with the citizens of Havana that he photographs. As my readings in this chapter will propose, Glinn’s images constitute part of the formulation of the city-space and city-dweller as collectively created at a critical, historical moment. In relation to the memory of Cuban images, Quiroga has described this as part of a ‘structuring’ of iconic sequences (2005: 95). Significantly, the events, at the end of 1958 and beginning of 1959, caused a shift in the way in which Havana was imagined abroad. Moreover, as Gustavo Pérez-Firmat notes, 1959 marked the transformation of Cuba from Pleasure Island into “Revolutionary Cuba,” ‘with the adjective marking the break between past and present’ (2010: 159). Similarly, writing specifically about the “dream” of Havana and rebellion, Edmundo Desnoes has gestured towards this imaginary being founded primarily in Cuba’s political position, writing:

The image of a country in revolution created a visual truth, an indisputable reality. These men and women were creating a new world. It wasn’t art; it was the thing itself. […] Context is fundamental in reading images. The Cuban revolution created a dream of rebellion and social justice as well as a reality of scarcity and repression. It became David confronting the overwhelming power of Goliath (2011: 9).

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that in his essay ‘Bitter Daiquiris: A Crystal Chronicle’, José Quiroga aligns his own comprehension of Havana with Walter Benjamin’s notion of Paris as a dreamscape (2011: 274-6). Quiroga suggests that to understand Havana and “read” the city, one must ‘dig’ deeper into the dream – a spatial fantasy constitutive of an image that ‘its residents have of it, observed by the foreigner who is not a foreigner – diffused and disseminated in the face of the constant imposition of defining oneself” (276).

2. International context: photojournalism and reportage

The emergence of the Magnum photographic agency, owned by its photographer members, and founded in 1947, transformed the role of photojournalism towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century. As Sontag has observed, the successes of such agencies at the time was reliant on the ‘deeper bite’ that photography has, and
continues to have, over other mediums, in which an image is able to ‘stock’ and ‘instantly recall’ moments from history (2003: 19). This is exemplified in the way that Magnum’s leading photographers were seen to witness the defining moments of the second half of the twentieth century. As less polished pictures, Sontag insists, images such as Glinn’s photographs of street rebels at the moment of the Cuban Revolution, retain a ‘special kind of authenticity’ and offer some explanation as to why they are collectively memorialised amongst other iconic images from history (24). The critic adds that the intentions of the photographer ‘do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties for the diverse communities that have use for it’ (35).

Following work with Life magazine between 1949 and 1950, Burt Glinn became a full-member of Magnum in 1954. He then made his mark at the agency by photographing what have been labelled true revolutionary moments – capturing the triumph of the Revolution in Cuba and Nikita Khrushchev’s visit to America in the same year. In this work the influence of the leading members of the Magnum collective can be clearly seen in Glinn’s images. It was the work of Cornell Capa and David ‘Chim’ Seymour that would have the most profound influence on his photographic styles and nuances. Chim had co-founded the Magnum Photos photography cooperative, together with his brother Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1947, and concentrated on what he labelled “concerned photography”. This, he suggested, described an emotional engagement with his photographic subjects that tended to blur the border of journalistic objectivity and involved a ‘heightened sense of curiosity’ and ability to ‘foresee and predict’ situations (Rotkin 1982: 9). The most interesting correlation between the work of Chim and Glinn can be seen by comparing the latter’s Havana photo-essay with the former’s images from the time of the Spanish Civil War. In these photographs, Chim shows an awareness towards the treatment of the city-dweller, exemplified in his photojournalistic work from 1939, in which he documented the journey of Loyalist Spanish refugees to Mexico. The innocence of the citizen and the portrayal of disruption and dislocation are themes that re-emerge in the early photographs of Glinn’s Havana photo-essay. Cornell Capa’s eclectic style also visibly influences Glinn’s work. For example, the images of street rebels in Havana in Glinn’s photographs recall images such as Capa’s First dead in election riots, Mexico (1940), in which the photographer fills the scene with the excitable faces of the city-dwellers that surround a body that lies in the street. Most striking in the composition is an exchange of gazes that takes place between the
subjects and the photographer. At the bottom centre of the image, the aforementioned corpse stretches across the length of the photograph, the man’s eyes are open and appear to stare back not only at the photographer but at the spectator. It is an image that again recalls Barthes’s notion of ‘the return of the dead,’ (1984: 9), but is also an example of the photojournalist’s tendency to centre on both the great historical moment and the more specific instances found in the street scenes of the lived spaces of the city.

3. Havana: The Revolutionary Moment

3.1 Analysing lived space

The untitled images presented below, dated between 31st December 1958 and 8th January 1959, and reproduced in Havana: The Revolutionary Moment (2002), enable readings of how the Glinn’s photographic processes are achieved. As my interpretations of the selected images illustrate, Glinn’s photographs constitute a series of photojournalistic interpretations that have as much to say about the lived space of the city, and the city-dweller, as they do regarding such a critical moment in the city’s history. These readings will also reveal that the photographer’s photojournalistic impulses towards capturing the framed moment influence his approach to image-making and heighten his awareness of the connotative meanings that emanate from the scenes he depicts. Ultimately, these analyses will demonstrate a way of reading the photojournalistic image beyond denotation, in turn exemplifying the way in which these images constitute symbolic visual texts that would go on to influence constructs of Havana in the global imaginary.

3.2 Rebel space: photographs of danger and rebellion

Similarly to photography in the documentary mode, photojournalism, as a subgenre, is the subject of much critical debate. Both share parallels in the exposition, information and visual narration of their subject matter, and are inextricably linked by the capturing of the ‘decisive moment,’ defined by Cartier-Bresson, and discussed briefly in Chapter Two. Aligning Glinn’s photo-essay with this notion involves analogizing his images as both capturing the moment at which the photographs were taken and relating their meaning within the context of an entire history (Clarke 1997: 207). The
encompassing nature of photojournalism and its coverage, John Taylor observes, has implications for historical understanding in that the role of photography exposes the way moral concerns and ethical codes exist in everyday public discourse (1998: 55). According to the film theorist Vivian Sobchack, photojournalists can occupy any one of a number of ethical spaces when looking at death and horror (1984: 295). Although Glinn’s camera does not focus on death itself, we may read the firing of weapons in the urban environment, in the first selection of images analysed below, as synonymous with the horror that resulted from the brutal Batista regime, and we are aware from an historical angle of the deaths which occurred as a result of the struggles on the street building up to the triumph of the Revolution.

Glinn’s opening images of the gun-fighting citizens on the streets of the city do not simply bear witness to the photographer’s responsiveness when faced with the plight (and rebellion) of others but also to his awareness to what would be considered newsworthy and respected by his peers. His responses and gazes (his point-of-view) in this first series of images of danger are crucial to my readings of the representation of the city dweller in the images, who are framed within volatile spaces of danger and rebellion. In his testimonial narrative, he states:

People were shooting at everything […] People getting killed but I got the impression that nobody knew who they were shooting at. […] There did not seem to be much opposition, but there was a lot of firing. You could not tell who was shooting at whom. People appeared in the streets wearing “26 de Julio” (the name of Fidel’s movement) armbands and helmets with “26” painted on them. On that first day, it was not clear who was a legitimate rebel and who was a summer patriot. (1999: 174)

In Glinn’s opening images signs point to the location of the rebels, on the streets of the city, and therefore the lived space of Havana, yet the photographs are particularly difficult to read as conventional compositions of the urban surroundings. As a result, these wide-angle photographs are reliant on its subjects to convey, or even to perform, a sense of place and space that defines the lived space of the city at the critical historical moment of the Cuban Revolution. However, despite the apparent tension in these scenes, Glinn’s images are well-composed documentary images of street rebels and members of Fidel Castro’s Movimiento 26 de Julio,¹⁴ in which the photographer’s viewpoint and camera position is key to the way in which the viewer reads the image.

¹⁴ The 26th July Movement, Movimiento 26 de Julio or M-26-7 – the revolutionary outfit led by Fidel Castro, whose opposition eventually caused the deposition of Fulgencio Batista from power in Cuba. The Movement took its name from Castro’s failed attack on the Moncada Barracks, Santiago de Cuba, on 26 July 1953. In Glinn’s photo-essay, the M-26-7 is repeatedly seen on makeshift armbands and is painted on helmets.
The photographer frames the rebels within the confines of the façade and columns of the Manzana de Gomez building on Agramonte Street. In these images, the building, the first shopping mall in Cuba, constructed in the European-style of the shopping arcade in 1910, symbolises a space of excess and indulgence that has been re-appropriated by the rebels. Close to the subjects, the rebels, Glinn compresses the depth of field in these photographs and draws attention to the central figures. In each photograph the foreground figures convey a sense of the danger and a fast-shutter speed ensures that the smallest details in these images are conveyed with clarity; the defiant glare of the M-26-7 guerilla, the terrified stare of the citizens, the remnants of anti-Batista protests, each define the representation of the city-space as one of rebellion.

Figure 1. Burt Glinn, Untitled, December, 1958 © Elena Prohaska Fine Arts, Magnum Photos.

Glinn’s opening series of photographs, including the medium-shot of the gun-toting citizen on Calle Agramonte (see figure 1), first and foremost correspond with Sobchack’s notion of the endangered gaze discussed earlier in this chapter. Close to the scene, the titled angle of the photograph suggests the photographer’s own movement. A linguistic message in the photograph, ‘LIQUOR’ written on the wall,

15 Describing the scenes of 17 January 1959 in his text The Havana Mob (2008: 313), T.J. English highlights the shootouts that took place between the rebels and Los Tigres at this location.
also emphasizes the avarice of the mafioso Batista regime, in which drinking, along with dancing, gambling and dining, symbolically formed a larger part of the city’s decadent appeal to the American in the 1950s. As a result, the rebel’s firing in the direction of the sign, written in English rather than Spanish, might be read as a coded-iconic signifier in which the citizen is revolting against the Americanization of Havana. Therefore, the scene that fills the frame provides a stage for a performance of lived space, in which various other citizens’s gestures speak to the camera (and therefore the viewer). These despairing figures behind the gunman each contribute an array of different gazes that point towards a number of visual encounters that take place between the photographer and the viewer. Directly behind the gunman we see a citizen in the shadows covering his ears from the gunshot, another man runs for cover and two others hide in an alcove, one clutching at a column and the other flinching, with faces scrunched in surprise at the sound of the shot. The attire of the gunman, dressed for everyday activities rather than warfare, but with a ‘26 de Julio’ rebel’s armband also emphasizes the mutinous nature of the photograph. Similarly, the cigarette, which is pictured hanging from the mouth of the gunman, implies the suddenness of the situation at hand.

The photograph is a disorderly image that frames the transient moment and leaves the viewer to question what exactly is taking place in the scene. Perhaps most striking of all is the direction of the gun, which the gunman appears to be shooting into the street, out into the left side of the photograph. The presence of the gun within the lived space of the city, in the supposedly civilised urban environment, and the notion of the armed city-dweller, is key to the visual construction of the Cuban rebel in subsequent visual constructs.

The exchange that takes place between observer and observed here, and therefore between the camera and the weapon, is key. The scene in figure 1 exemplifies what Sontag refers to as the irrepressible identification that connotes the camera to the gun (2003: 16). ‘Shooting’ the subject and firing at a human being, she insists, fuses together acts of war and picture-taking as ‘congruent activities’ (60). For Sontag, therefore, Glinn’s camera serves as a ‘predatory weapon’ (1979: 14) in the act of taking a picture. Therefore, Sontag’s reading of the gun/camera exchange signals towards the photographic act as a process of violation. She adds; ‘by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed’ (14). Moreover, Glinn’s photographs, as Sontag adds, should not simply be seen as ‘memento mori’ (15),
through which the viewer is encouraged to remember their own mortality, but as images that speak of the city-dweller’s vulnerability, despite the obvious defiance of a number that are pictured by Glinn as brave revolutionaries.

Figure 2. Burt Glinn, *Untitled*, December, 1958 © Elena Prohaska Fine Arts, Magnum Photos.

This representation of the city dweller in lived space is echoed in the image above (see figure 2), in which a rebel (again with armband) casually clutches at a machine-gun whilst surrounded by other civilians. Glinn’s testimony reveals these subjects as city-dwellers wearing “26 de Julio” armbands, who have armed themselves with the intention of locating Batista sympathizers and the state secret police. Glinn’s affirmation of these subjects as “citizens” heightens the viewer’s reading of the image, and is highlighted by the “everyday” clothing of the city-dwellers. As in figure 1, these are not trained militia but street rebels, dressed as they would be for everyday city-life in civilian clothing. The fact that they are now armed and adorned in M-26-7 paraphernalia intensifies the notion of the transformation of the everyday space into rebel space. Once more, the frame again presents the viewer with a number of different gazes. A concerned rebel in a tin helmet fills a third of the frame. The fearful and intense stares of those behind the gunman at the centre of the image (one holding a different rifle) mirror Glinn’s photographic gaze, whilst the gunman at the centre of the image looks out onto the street from the arcade with defiance from behind his
sunglasses. Similarly to the presence of the drooping cigarette in figure 1, the subject’s sunglasses here serve both as coded and non-coded iconic signifiers. The sunglasses on the gunman at the centre of the image hide the subject’s gaze from view, whilst also highlighting the Americanization of Havana which the citizens are now seen rebelling against.

As my readings above deduce, Glinn’s photographs of rebels re-taking streets of the city represent frames that replicate a series of transient moments of rebellion. The photographer’s compositions also reveal the photographer’s personal engagement with the subjects in the image, in a way that appears to defy the conventions of photojournalism, which might normally avert interaction with the subject.

3.3 The re-appropriation of space: taking the Havana Hilton

The rejection of Americanization, seen in figures 1 and 2, is also demonstrated in Glinn’s photographs of Fidel’s rebel army assuming the newly built Havana Hilton for their own purposes (see figures 3, 4, 5 and 6). These images represent revealing scenes of the heady first hours and days of the Revolution. They depict tired guerrillas, organizing themselves after suddenly finding themselves in charge of the country. Shot from different viewpoints, the images depict the interior and exterior of the hotel space, and the photographer presents the now re-appropriated space and the rebels from different positions. These are constitutive of cleverly thought out compositions that demonstrate the photographer’s more careful framing away from the turmoil of the streets outside. This notion of reclamation (a re-appropriation of previously owned Batista spaces) that continued subsequently in re-housing the state’s Central Committee in offices built by Batista, and by transforming the old Presidential Palace, a symbol of neo-imperialism, into the Museum of the Revolution.

Having been used as a makeshift rebel headquarters, the Havana Hilton (much alike the other hotels mentioned later in the chapter) became a space to be used by holidaying Cubans of all classes and races – for honeymooners, day-trippers attending political events in the city and for young couples seeking privacy (Cluster and Hernández 2008: 263). As Rodriguez Falcón has pointed out, new hotels built after the 1930s, and particularly those constructed during the 1950s, were characterized by their ‘monumentality and purism in style’ and, located within the framework of the city’s skyline, transformed it drastically (Rodriguez Falcón 2009: 444). Listing these

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16 The rebel’s occupation of the Havana Hilton is the subject of Bjarte Thoresen’s documentary film When Castro seized the Hilton (2009).
buildings, she includes the ‘emblematic’ Habana Hilton, along with the Capri and the Riviera, as becoming ‘visual signifiers’ for the ideology of capitalism (445).

Erected in 1957-8 at the top of La Rampa on Calle 23 in Vedado, the acquisition of the Habana Hilton hotel, following its recent construction, and due to its considerable cost ($24 million) (Moruzzi 2008: 202-219), represents an important repossession of Havana space, in the name of the rebel army. This was further highlighted by Fidel Castro’s decision to use the Hilton as his headquarters due to it then being a prominent symbol of American influence.\textsuperscript{17} The construction of the Habana Hilton had been among Batista’s proudest achievements and was earlier labelled a Cuban project with an American face, from which the huge blue-lit rooftop “Hilton” was visible from most vantage points in the city.\textsuperscript{18} Glinn appears to be drawn toward the symbolic nature of this monolithic structure and this is exemplified in his various framings of the building’s interior and exterior seen in figures 3, 4 and 5.

For instance, in an elevated shot of the Havana Hilton’s hotel lobby (see figure 3), Glinn frames the entire scene by using the interior structures of the hotel (the balcony, the stairway and the entrance). This frame within a frame hides the other distracting details of the hotel, its décor and other furnishings, and focuses the viewer upon the occupation of the space by the rebels. A number of guerrilla troops are seen conversing on the stairway, others sit in the lobby, three armed men sit outside, and a lone gunman appears to be standing guard in the lobby. The way in which the figures fill the frame makes for a dynamic image, in which the subjects, positioned off-centre, create an imbalance that connotes to the shift of power. This metaphorical reading is supported by the diagonal lines in the image, which encompass the expansive architecture of the lobby as the photographer defies the traditional straight edges of the viewfinder. In turn, Glinn appears to take on a non-conventional angle that mimics the rebellion that surrounds him in Havana. Notably, the floor of the lobby is relatively empty, it represents a space which the rebels have re-appropriated and are now seen guarding over.

\textsuperscript{17} In 1943, Hilton Hotels, founded by Conrad Hilton, had hotels that spanned the United States from coast to coast. In the 1950s the chain branched out globally, setting up hotels in Latin America.

\textsuperscript{18} The building of the Habana Hilton was overseen by Welton Becket & Associates (famous for overseeing construction of the Capitol Records headquarters in Hollywood, the Beverly Hilton, in Beverly Hills, California, and the Cineramadome, in 1963). A particular focus was placed on the construction of the building’s interior design, in order to create a unique look that captured the tropical atmosphere of Cuba and the spirit of ‘old and new Havana’ (Moruzzi 2008: 205), whilst boasting 630 rooms, thirty stories, two ballrooms, a swimming pool, casino, and a rooftop lounge.
Furthermore, the rule of thirds employed by the photographer encourages the viewer to read this image in three sections, in which each third of the image works like a triptych in embodying, for itself, similar sentiments of re-appropriation. Different tonal balance in the three sections of the image differentiates these sections. In the image, the hotel’s atrium fills the lobby with a light that bestows the interior with reflected daylight and this heightens the smaller details in the image, allowing them to stand out. At the bottom of the image, the four figures conversing on the stairway are shown in a shadow, and their profiles identify them as armed. At the centre of the image, the lone gunman is also shown as a silhouette, contrasting against the bright
light bouncing off the pavement behind him. Most powerful, however, is the framing of the rebels outside the hotel, in the top third of the image, who are framed once again within the glass door at the entrance of the hotel. They draw the viewer’s attention to the original logo of the Habana Hilton on the door handles behind them, whilst a machine gun is propped up against the windows from the inside. These rebels now sit, slumped, in the drive that was previously frequented by Havana’s wealthiest and most expensive vehicles.

![Image of rebels outside the hotel](image)

Figure 4. Burt Glinn, *Untitled*, December, 1958 © Elena Prohaska Fine Arts, Magnum Photos.

Similar signifiers emerge in Glinn’s other images of the hotel. In one untitled image (see figure 4) shot from a bird’s-eye view from the hotel’s balcony, Glinn photographs two rebels resting in the same lobby. One is sat in an armchair, whilst the other lays spread-eagle on a sofa, his machine gun on the floor beside him. The way in which the rebel is pictured, exhausted, with his feet on the hotel furniture shows a disregard for the now deposed Batista regime. Again, the image is carefully framed by the furniture of the hotel, colossal screens fill a third of the image, and, once more, Glinn depicts...
the re-acquisition of the hotel as a Cuban space at this critical moment in the history of the city.

This sentiment of indifference towards the luxuries of the Batista regime is also echoed in an untitled image of rebels sleeping in chairs behind a desk at the Havana Hilton, one with his feet propped up on the wooden counter. In an additional photograph (see figure 5) Glinn photographs rebels and a Cuban woman from a low angle, making for a dramatic image. We see young, defiant militia outside the building, the hotel towering over them – the entire composition alluding to their insubordination and disregard for what the Habana Hilton stood for just days before. In the image the monolithic structure of the Habana Hilton, behind the subjects, fills the scene, with the mural façade, painted by Cuban artist René Portocarrero, and the building directly behind the subjects. The positioning of the photographer for this image allows him to highlight the magnitude of the building behind the rebels. Glinn appears to again equate their acquisition of the landmark building of the Batista regime to the feat of the Revolution. In this photograph the building represents the history that Tagg suggests the photojournalistic image needs, it is the ‘existential essence’ that fills what would otherwise be an empty photograph without a context. In turn, the image is able to deliver what Barthes desires, the confirmation of the scene’s existence; ‘the mark of a past presence’ (1981: 3).

Therefore, in these images, different signifiers combine to affirm the hotel as a re-appropriated space. In Glinn’s photographs, the lobby is no longer a space of decadence, which it was before 1959, and the acquisition of the hotel by the rebels is the very definition of Cartier-Bresson’s ‘decisive moment’, a turning point in the history of the city and the nation. The space of the hotel represents the symbolic epicentre for the shift in relations between the United States and Cuba, and their two respective ideologies. In these images, different signifiers combine to affirm the hotel as a re-appropriated space. In his images, the lobby is no longer a space of decadence, which it was before 1959, and the acquisition of the hotel by the rebels is the very definition of Cartier-Bresson’s ‘decisive moment’, a turning point in the history of the city and the nation. The space of the hotel represents the symbolic epicentre for the shift in relations between the United States and Cuba, and their two respective ideologies.
3.4 Lefebvre and rebel space

Glinn’s images of rebel space above represent what Lefebvre calls ‘the right to the city,’ that involves the city-dwellers’s challenging of the urban’s dominant power structures, and, therefore, these photographs serve as documents that record a reconquering of the urban environment on their part. As Stuart Elden observes, urban space is not only the place where political struggles happen but is increasingly the very object of that struggle (2004: 151). This is exemplified in Glinn’s photographs in figures 1-5, in which the physical and material presence of the city of Havana emerges as a main protagonist in his images. It represents, Elden adds, not only a site of conflict but also the space in which such conflicts are initiated. Glinn’s photographs, therefore, witness the call for the right to the city, what he describes as ‘a right to centrality’ (1970: 179). The right to the city, Lefebvre states, manifests itself as a ‘superior form of rights,’ which include the ‘right to freedom, to individualism in
socialization, to habitat and dwelling. The right to the oeuvre, in participation and appropriation [...] are implied in the right to the city’ (1996: 173-4).

To illustrate this, Lefebvre gives an account of the oriental city, with the palace of the prince at its heart, a place from which armies leave to protect or oppress the surrounding area. In my readings above, the Habana Hilton is representative of this ‘place for assembly,’ elucidated upon by Lefebvre, which constitutes the way in which the city is being re-appropriated in Glinn’s photographs (169). Moreover, Glinn’s images epitomize a reversal of these processes of consumption of the city-space. As Lefebvre states, in contemporary times, the city is increasingly seen as a centre of consumption (169-70), but it also constitutes a space from which city-dwellers are excluded, economically or otherwise.

Lefebvre further expands upon the notion of the ‘moment’ of re-appropriation in his discussion of events in Paris in May 1871 and May 1968 respectively, in which he appears to capture the essence of revolution. He describes armed citizens returning from the city, ‘from the outside where they had been driven, where they only found a social vacuum, assembled and headed toward the urban centres in order to reconquer them’ (1969: 117-8). Moreover, in Glinn’s photographs Havana, too, is representative of a social vacuum that will be filled with a new social ideology. The streets of the city, represented by his photographs of rebels fighting in central Havana, become ‘political areas, political places’ (72) making up a sort of ‘concrete utopia’ (118), and these, therefore, lie at the foundations of projections of Havana as a “real-and-imagined” space that have emerged in the global imaginary since 1959.

The recycling and re-appropriation of these imaginaries is observed in descriptions such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s in Mea Cuba (1994), in which the Cuban writer describes the rebels of the revolutionary moment as ‘strolling through the city centre streets with a defiant style’ and clashing with the Batista police ‘in a carefree fashion’ (1994d: 150). They remind the author of the depiction of movie gangsters, ‘immolated simulating, emulating Dillinger or Bonnie and Clyde on the screen’ (150).

The likening of these rebel figures to an iconic criminal such as John Herbert Dillinger, Jr., a North American gangster and bank-robber from the Depression-era, not only links the figure of the rebel to the characteristic notoriety, bravado and daring of such villains, but also to their filmic depictions which were popularized in 1950s films such as Don Siegel’s Baby Face Nelson (1957), and later glamorized, in Sydney Pollack’s Havana (1990), for example. In Pollack’s film, shot in Santo Domingo, the
announcement that Batista has fled is met with a re-appropriation of place by city-dwellers, who are seen parading the streets against the flow of American citizens leaving the city amidst the commotion. In the background a neon sign for the Tabacalera tobacco company lights up the scene, as fruit machines and roulette tables are thrown into the streets, smashed and set fire to. These acts are representative of the physical dismantling of capitalism, forming an important part of the construction of the city as a “rebel space” in post-1959 global imaginaries of the city, and founded in photographic replicas of the revolutionary moment.

Rebel space is also re-imagined in Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather: Part II*, in which Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, visits Havana following Batista’s calls for American investment (the city again represented by Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic). Santo Domingo’s Presidential Palace is reimagined as Batista’s presidential palace. As in Pollack’s *Havana*, guerrillas, rebels and city-dwellers are seen throwing slot machines into the streets and smashing parking meters. Due to the film’s popularity, Coppola’s re-envisioning of rebel space is a particularly important one, and his reconstruction of Havana not only fictionalises but also fetishizes and geographically relocates the representation of rebel space. Interestingly, both Pollack’s and Coppola’s projections of rebel space are ones that particularly trouble Cabrera-Infante, who surmises that the portrayals in these films are rooted in what he calls ‘bad fiction,’ a reconstruction of rebel space that is at the same time ‘glittery, thunderous – and untrue’ (1994d: 318-9).
3.5 Heroic space: Havana’s Parque Central

The final section of my analysis in this chapter will draw explicitly from one untitled image (see figure 7), in which the photographer captures the elation of citizens assembling in Havana’s Parque Central awaiting Fidel Castro’s arrival into the Cuban capital. The image is an example of Glinn’s final images in which, following the rebellion in Havana, city-dwellers are seen amassing in the city’s streets and public spaces. This alternate image, a reversal of the endangered visions of street rebels in the city seen earlier in this chapter, is significant in that it manifests the gestures, bodily comportment and performative actions of the city-dweller that, similarly to the images of rebellion, would form the basis for a contrasting visual construction of the habanero/a to that of the rebels and summer patriots seen in Glinn’s other images.

Glinn’s photograph of the Parque Central frames a number of signifiers that locate the viewer’s gaze to a specific site – a large square full of trees and dominated by the central statue of Martí, and by the buildings which surround it, including the Hotel Inglaterra. Hundreds of bodies fill two thirds of the image and Glinn’s raised viewpoint, slightly above the crowd, gives the image a greater depth. The photographer is also close enough to capture the different emotions of the city-dwellers that have gathered at the park in front of him, and in the image, faces look up and away from the photographer.

The lack of city-dwellers returning the gaze of the photographer differentiates this image from Glinn’s photographs of the rebels in the street (see figures 1 and 2) who, as observed earlier in this chapter, in some cases, are seen looking straight into the camera. This shift, highlighted by the positive faces of the civilians in the image sees a swing in Glinn’s aesthetic, and the dynamic altered significantly. As with his earlier images, the photograph is loaded with iconic information that provokes a detailed reading. For example, the aforementioned change in the mood in Glinn’s image-making is highlighted by the gestures of the citizens in the photograph.
These gestures comprise of members of the crowd clapping, women smiling in the foreground, men concentrating, and signs being lofted above the crowd. As signifiers, these different gestures converge to give the image a noisy energy. These signs at the centre and bottom of the image serve as additional linguistic messages that highlight the sentiment of the crowd. They read; “¡VIVA GOBIERNO REVOLUCIONARIO!” and “¡VIVA FIDEL!” The cartoon at the centre of the image depicts an illustrated, fist-waving Fidel kicking out a howling Batista. This caricatured Fidel foretells the importance that similar cartoon images would have in the formation of a Revolutionary citizenship, where politicized cartoons and comics proved vital to the development of the new society in Cuba. These numerous vignettes, that capture the euphoria of the citizens, are framed within the confines of the two aforementioned
monuments, the Hotel Inglaterra and the Parque Central. As with Glinn’s images depicting the Havana Hilton, these “places” provide the ‘existential essence’ that verifies the location of the scene and confirms its existence (Tagg 1988: 3). To paraphrase Dimendberg, the square, conceived as a space of representation by Glinn in the Parque Central image, alludes to the notion of the core. This, he states, reiterates the tautness between public space as a physical gathering place and its function as a site for receiving media messages (2004: 112). Furthermore, as one of Havana’s earliest hotels, the Hotel Inglaterra, on the edge of Centro Habana’s mass of streets, has a real presence and provides the backdrop for the image. The Inglaterra opened in 1856 (Lightfoot 2002: 122) and has operated continuously as a hotel ever since. Overlooking the masses in the Parque Central and the Paseo del Prado, the hotel is, in itself, loaded with various significant iconic messages (similar to those photographs of the Havana Hilton now repossessed by Cuban rebels). Claimed to be part of both Old and Centro Habana, the Hotel Inglaterra and Parque Central originally laid outside the city walls. The presence of these places in the photograph could, therefore, be seen as representative of the relocation of the viewer at the very heart of Havana. The charms of the building itself lie in its lavish lobby, which spills out onto the streets of Centro Habana. The Café Louvre, on the ground floor of the hotel, was originally a famous meeting place for the intellectual, political and literary figures of Havana, particularly the liberation conspirators. The list of literary and historical personalities who have attended the Inglaterra spans writers such as the Spanish Republican politician Nicolás Estévez, and the Cuban general, Antonio Maceo stayed there in 1890. In 1920, the North American novelist Joseph Hergesheimer wrote a travel book on Havana in which he describes the styling of the Inglaterra as inflecting ‘a happy effect of Spain in the tropics’. Federico Garcia Lorca also attended a meal in his honour there in 1930, alongside Guillermo Cabrera Infante and other Cuban literati. In Graham Greene’s Our Man in Havana, Beatrice, the agent sent from London to help Wormwold, stays at the Inglaterra. The Inglaterra’s presence in this image may therefore be read on a number of levels. We may infer that the hotel, stripped of its signage at the top face of the building, loses its identity. Gone also with this is the decadence of the 1940s and 1950s which it has witnessed and instead the edifice could be seen to symbolise tradition - the crowd in the photograph mixing with the ghosts of those aforementioned personalities as they themselves become ‘ordinary heroes’.

In addition to this, the presence of the marble effigy of Martí, that has stood in the square since 1905 (Cluster and Hernández 2008: 105-6), is an important framing
of the inspirational visionary, poet and freedom fighter. In the same way as the aforementioned buildings, his image serves as a coded iconic message in the photograph. In *Mea Cuba*, Cabrera Infante describes the statue and its ‘livid marble arm’ as pointing an ‘accusing hand’ from the centre of the square (1994c: 95). The statue is a reminder of the values imparted by the revered thinker who believed that Cuba would never truly be free without economic, racial, and sexual equality. The presence of Martí, albeit in statue form in the image, returning the gaze of Glinn’s camera, infuses and romanticises the scene with notions of independence, national pride, sophistication and lyrical sentiment.

5.6 The ‘first generation’ of Cuban photographers

Glinn’s photographs precede the later work of what we can now refer to as the “first generation” of Cuban photographers. Given the focus on the city-dweller in early photojournalistic images of the triumph of the Revolution, it is unsurprising that this group of Cuban photographers began producing photographic replicas that celebrated the “everyday heroes” of the new Revolutionary Cuba, men and women who were now seen as ‘agents’ of social change (Chanan 2008). This growing and inventive generation looked to extend the heroic representation of the Cuba Revolution, instead of nurturing the cult of the great personalities, concentrating their efforts on the new hero of the Revolution: ‘the common man’ (Wride 2001: 33). In both personal work and in photo-essay formats for pictures magazine such as *Cubana* and *Cuba International*, this new breed of photographer celebrated Cuban workers, life in the streets, and the changing face of the island (33). As the great Cuban photographer and historian ‘Marucha’ (María Eugenia Haya) would later observe:

> ‘there was a new surge of human dignity and pride. As the Revolution advanced, it clarified its self-image. No longer would we see the tourist’s Cuba of the ‘nice typical mulatta’ or the ‘humble darky,’ but the *barbudo* [bearded militiaman], the militiawoman, the farm-worker, the labourer would be the protagonists of the abundant and eloquent iconography’. (cited in Wride 2001: 33)

As noted above, this key representation of Cuba, and importantly Havana, as a heroic space, clearly dominates the tail-end of Glinn’s photo-essay. Photographers such as Mayito, Mario García Joya, in addition to other well-known photographers such as Enrique de la Uz, Iván Cañas, Rigoberto Romero, José Alberto Figueroa, and
Marucha, also subsequently began to focus upon the personalities of the Revolution in response to a shift in the ideals and the needs of the Revolution. The heroic moments of the Revolution would thrive also thanks to iconic photographs such as Korda’s *El Quijote de la farola, La Habana* (1959), Raúl Corrales’s *Cavalry* (1960), and in the later work of photographers like Osvaldo Salas and Tito Alvarez.

This focus on lived space would also be seen in the later photographic work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and René Burri in Cuba, from 1962 and 1963 respectively, in which they focussed on the everydayness of Revolutionary Cuba. The frames of these photographs were filled by the image of the common man and therefore placed the city-dweller at the heart of Revolutionary values. The constituted a conceptual shift in which those subjects framed by the photographer themselves became revolutionaries. This is masterfully expressed in Mayito’s carefully constructed photo-essay *A la plaza con Fidel (To the Plaza with Fidel)* (1970). As Parr notes, ‘[l]ike any good photojournalist, Mayito understands that human interest is the most effective approach, concentrating almost entirely on the mass of people attending the event’ (Parr 2004: 119). Furthermore, as a cinematographer, it is no surprise that Mayito’s photobook is ‘skilfully edited, with a rhythmic mixture of long shots, medium shots and close-ups’ (110). His images share much in common with the final images of Glinn’s photo-essay, for example in their respective close-ups of the crowd, emphasizing the euphoria of the moment of Revolution. Mayito’s images are representative of the small quantity of photographs that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, when Cuba was relatively closed to visitors who were not Latin American, and from the 1990s the character of the images changes completely in line with the economic crisis of the Cuban Special Period.

6. Summary

As this chapter has observed, Glinn’s photography exemplifies a continued focus on the representation of lived-space by the image-maker, following on from my discussion of Walker Evans’s photographs in the documentary mode discussed in chapter two. By observing, Glinn’s photography in the photojournalistic mode, my interpretations have strived to elucidate the way in which Glinn’s framing of moments of Havana’s lived spaces, prove to be revealing compositions that expose a dialogic relationship between the observer and the observed, and therefore between the photographer/viewer and the city-dweller/city-space. Within these multidimensional
readings of lived space, my interpretations have highlighted specific representations of Havana in the Revolutionary moment. These individual locations represent complex vehicles that appear to be, even in modern visual constructions of the city-space, continually loaded with meaning as a result of the prolonged circulation of Revolutionary images in the global imaginary.
CHAPTER FOUR:
DAVID BAILEY - HAVANA

Looking out the little window, I saw a tourist snapping photos of crumbling buildings on the Malecón. Her husband was videotaping the same scene. Tourists love the sight of decay. From a distance, it makes a wonderful picture.


Our Man in Havana, Graham Greene. Walker Evans the black guy in the white suit with a newsstand in the background. I am Cuba (Mikhail Kalatozov) a film masterpiece on so many levels a template of propaganda. Put these three artists [sic] achievements together to make my view of Havana.


1. Introduction

My readings in this chapter will focus on photographs taken in Havana in 2005 by the acclaimed British photographer David Bailey and published in his 2006 photobook Havana19. Bailey’s photographs of the city are representative of the boom in visual texts that pictured Cuba and its capital towards the end of the 1990s and into the new millennium, following the worst years of the Cuban “Special Period”.

Bailey’s Havana text can be divided roughly into two sections – his portraiture photography of the city-dweller, and images of the habanero/a captured in the documentary mode. His black and white portraits of city-dwellers, are mostly depicted in front of the all white backdrop of painted white walls in the city. In these images, the wall serves as a replacement for the muslin, cloth, and paper backdrops used in the professional studio. These images appear to situate frozen moments of lo cotidiano, whereby city-dwellers are selected by the photographer, posed, and then

19 David Bailey (2006), Havana (Göttingen: Steidl).
photographed. These compositions include photographs of adolescent Cubans, labourers, workers, a fisherman, people in doorways, people sat in the street, and others. Other black and white portrait images capture city-dwellers peering through windows, and interior shots of workers, such as cleaners, builders, and cyclists.

Bailey’s photographs in the documentary-mode range from images of a boxing gym, filled with young, healthy Cuban children, to architecture, depicting scaffolding on buildings in old town, murals and signs, and images of the Museo de la Revolución (the Museum of the Revolution) — all apparently constitutive of the lived spaces of the city, but in fact representative of highly stylized touristic renderings of Havana.

Interpretations of what Bailey calls ‘fleeting glances’ of Havana’s lived spaces (2006), the photographer’s portraiture isolates the Havana city dweller, and removes them from the urban environment, whereas the artist’s “documentary” photographs constitute constructions of abstract space that assemble a representation of the city as both “real-and-imagined”. His photographs of habanero/as in lived space, encapsulated in his images of La Habana Vieja, correlate with these images of abstract space by highlighting typecasts of the city-dweller in the tourist sites of the Havana old-town. Consequently, in his post-Special Period photobook, images of the city-dweller begin to distort the representation of the lived spaces of the city of Havana. This is due, in part, to the way in which the purposes and processes of photography in the documentary mode and photojournalism are left behind in favour of the art photograph. Bailey’s photobook images, as demonstrated in my readings below, begin to lose their documentary value and their ability to frame the transient moment. Unlike the images analysed in Chapters Two and Three, in the documentary and photojournalistic mode, the photographs in this chapter are carefully posed. This sees a significant shift in the representation of the city-space and the city-dweller in that the composition of the photograph becomes further dominated by the creativity of the photographer as an artist.

Bailey’s images in Havana exemplify this in that his work can be seen to be not only fulfilling his own creative vision, as an artist, but also the expectations of the viewer. Whilst his images of Havana have their own visual vocabulary and convey various messages, their truth claims are entangled with the representation of the city as a construct. As Michael Chanan (2008) has noted, part of Cuba’s allure lies behind the opportunity to look behind its façade yet ‘by definition,’ he writes, tourists are attracted to the façade, and, in their search for a deeper truth, ‘[a]ll too often […] remain outsiders’. Such is the case with Bailey’s Havana, in which the photographer’s
celebration of the subaltern subject creates only a cluster of the real lived space of the city, whilst stereotyping, fantasizing and fetishizing the lived space represented in the frame. In order to address these processes, this chapter will firstly focus on the role of the photobook in the historical context of the Cuban “Special Period,” framing my discussions with the aid of analysis in the field of Cuban studies from José Quiroga, Ana María Dopico and Esther Whitfield. It will then offer interpretations of Bailey’s images in three different sections; Bailey and the celebritization of the city-dweller, Bailey and absolute space, and Bailey and “Old Havanaland”.

In his seminar ‘Imagining Havana: Crime and the Aesthetic of Ruination’ (2011), Phillip Swanson has identified this slightly disturbing and “precarious frisson” that takes place between the tourist and the Cuban capital, Havana. This “quick thrill” might be equated to the fleeting glance of the photographer discussed in this chapter, in which a sort of third world ‘rêjouissance’ (an exhilarated enjoyment and celebration of the Other and/or the image of poverty) is played out in the images discussed. Swanson takes the example of Martin Cruz Smith’s text Havana Bay (2007), noting that the people and places of Havana become “must-see attractions” in the writer’s fetishization of struggle, poverty and female-libidinousness, in which “real” and “virtual” visitors to Havana ‘ogle’ at a ‘creaking Havana’.

2. Contexts

2.1 David Bailey, Havana and his ways of working

2.1.1 David Bailey’s Havana

Over the course of his career, Bailey has been a filmmaker, a curator, magazine owner, environmental campaigner, painter and sculptor, as well as a photographer. As a result of this, Bailey can be seen incorporating a range of styles and techniques in his Havana photobook. These nuances echo his previous work, for which he has become one of the most celebrated photographers in the world. These ways of

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Phillip Swanson has also drawn upon such themes of production and consumption in relation to the way in which outsiders attempt to familiarize with the exotic/Other (2011). In doing so, he has suggested that our ideas of the West are re-located in the linking of different times and places to varying exotic aesthetics. He describes this as a ‘mambo’ taking place between the ‘here and now’ and the ‘there and then’. Most significant, in correlating Swanson’s observations to the writing in this chapter, is his suggestion of Havana as less a site of consumption than one for consumption. Moreover, it is in this, ‘semi-wilful’ omission of the actual, socio-historical context, he observes, that an interesting aesthetic emerges (as discussed previously in Chapter Four, and highlighted in subsequent chapters) in which ‘communist chic’ and a romantic postcolonial exotic converge in the form of the image.
working constitute the photographer’s heavily stylised approach to portrait and documentary photography, and are further elaborated upon in my interpretations below. They involve the artist’s careful composition, selection of backdrop and background, lighting techniques, and posing of the subject. These techniques and styles are embodied in his images of city-dwellers, and, therefore, contribute to the photographer’s vision of Havana and his representation of lived space.

In certain images in Havana, Bailey employs a cinematic approach to his subjects and spaces and this evokes the spirit of some of his more controversial work, whereas in other photographs he shoots portraits of Havana’s citizens which recall his photographic studies from the 1960s, such as Jean Shrimpton (1960), which is used as a comparative text below. These photographs render the city-dweller in his unmistakable spare, graphic aesthetic, and are examples of his irreverent approach towards the subject. In the process of framing the subject in this fashion, Bailey revisions pre-existing archetypes synonymous with the city that are not necessarily “real” but posed. Furthermore, the photographer’s lesser-known work on documentary and reportage is also rekindled in Havana, and is demonstrated in the photographer’s framing of Havana’s city-dwellers in the spaces in which they live and work. By photographing the subjects in these images in a way which mirrors his fashion photography, Bailey also endangers his photographs’s documentary value. The staged and meticulous nature of imitating his choreographed fashion photographs suggests that Bailey is injecting his Havana photographs, too, with notions of the city-dweller’s performative identity. The result is that his images are instilled with an illusive quality that also brings the authenticity of his photo-reportage into question.

In the preface to Havana (2006), Bailey comments on his Havana images as capturing ‘a superficial last moment of Havana before Castro goes and Miami moves back’. Additionally, his self-deprecating admission that his photobook is in fact merely ‘a superficial look, not a soul-searching investigation’ or ‘a quick impression of a place that is unique in its geographical position’ are remarks that speak for themselves. By commenting in this way, Bailey alludes to the way in which he articulates his visual constructions of the lived spaces of the city, as a series of touristic snapshots of the habanero/a. This is particularly relevant in his portraiture shots of city-dwellers, which condense and compress the city-space within the frame. Without context, these photographs in the quasi-documentary mode, or rather fashion/celebrity-style images masked as documentary photographs, blur the lines between the “real-and-imagined” lived spaces of the city. Moreover, as Bailey reveals,
it is the sense of a quick impression captured by the photographer, and the depth of understanding he attempts to recreate in Havana, which allows the viewer to place themselves in Cuba’s ‘unique position […] much closer to the United States of America than the space station is’ (2006). For Bailey, it is the fact that ‘one of the poorest nations on Earth,’ is situated ‘almost within spitting distance of the richest,’ that makes the poverty of Cuba and Havana (as visual subjects) seem all the more extreme. Bailey’s envisioning of this paradox is exemplified in his photography in Havana, in which his framing of a visually anachronistic lived space situates the state of a city in flux. This polarity manifests itself in the work of the photographer most notably in his focus on specific locations, which, in turn, affect the viewer’s interpretation of Havana’s lived spaces, and these are identified in my readings below.

2.1.2 David Bailey’s ways of working

Throughout his career Bailey has explored the communicative qualities of documentary and reportage photography. In 1975, Bailey published a book of documentary photographs (Another Image: Papua New Guinea, 1975) and completed three television documentaries. Four years later he would make his first major photojournalistic trip, photographing the struggles of the Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong in 1979, and in 1985 he built upon this work by photographing the famine in the Sudan. He later completed two substantial documentary projects: one recording the buildings in his London borough, before they were eroded by city development schemes (published in his book London NW1 (1982), and the other documenting Welsh valley communities in the face of escalating unemployment and poverty. These projects established Bailey within the documentary genre, and it remained a significant part of his output, both in television (as with his series Models Close Up, 1998) and in photography with the release of Havana in 2006. When explaining the differences between his documentary and fashion photography, Bailey has made a clear delineation between what he calls “seeing pictures” and “construction pictures” (Higgins 2010: 13). He refers to his “seeing pictures” as images of ‘people, places and things that are in their own space and not rearranged by the eye […] [t]hey have a sense of innocence, of just being’ (13). His documentary photographs in Havana are therefore examples of this, but his “construction pictures” shot in Cuba exemplify a more problematic and heavily stylized approach to picturing the city-dweller that is more closely aligned to his fashion photography, as explored below.
On the subject of style, Bailey has commented on the importance of “stealing” influences, rather than borrowing or imitating, in that using the style of other photographers “weakens” picture-making, stating, “people just think you can be original, you can’t” (quoted in Sarfraz and Manzoor 2010). Amongst his own influences, he has listed Pablo Picasso, Irving Penn, Bill Brandt, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Marcel Duchamp, J.M.W Turner and William Hogarth. The various influences of a number of these artists emerge throughout his Havana text, and are elaborated on below. Additionally, Bailey has made revealing comments regarding the appeal of Cuba specifically, stating:

One reason, though, that I was mad to go to Cuba was that for years the Walker Evans picture of the guy in the white suit, next to the newsstand – it has been haunting me for years. It's like the Paul Strand photo of the blind woman. The two pictures kind of stick in my brain […] And that's why I went. Thanks to Walker Evans”. (quoted in Anon. 2006)

This remark highlights the way in which existing visual constructs can be found at work in contemporary ways of seeing Havana, and will be explored below. Furthermore, Bailey’s text represents, my interpretations will aim to reveal, a form of archival in which the photographer juxtaposes past and present in a way that makes his representation of the city-dweller and the city-space problematic.

2.2 Theoretical context: the photobook and David Bailey’s Havana

The production of photobooks that examine and locate Latin America’s place in the modern world has multiplied dramatically, Martin Parr has observed, largely due to Latin America’s turbulent history in the twentieth century. It is a history, he explains, ‘of revolution and counter-revolution between right and left, and relationship with the United States that is ambivalent to say the least’ (2004: 90). This generation, Parr asserts, is acutely aware of representing a world which reflects reality but is not reality, ‘it is a ‘re-presentation’ of reality and is therefore a much trickier beast than might be supposed at first glance’ (93). As he adds, the photobook remains a significant cultural form because it tends to be based on a theme – frequently the sociological, political or ideological issues affecting a country or region where the photographs are taken, as is the case with Bailey’s Havana, and as a result, these existing issues become of natural concern to the photographer (89).
In his essay ‘Cuba Made Me So,’ the Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes addresses photography from a national context more specifically, and examines the relationship between observer and the observed by questioning the fabrication of dream and by exploring the force of nostalgia. In a close-reading of what Bailey calls his “seeing pictures” in Havana, the viewer is faced with all three of these processes, in differing formats and styles, and as a result of Bailey’s varying techniques and gazes. As my interpretations in this chapter will illustrate, Bailey’s photographs in Havana appear to grapple with the real as a result of the complexities of subjects tied as much to economic and political ideology as they are to dreams and art. Desnoes would categorise these photographs as images of underdevelopment, which serve to impinge constantly on our experience, and remain a ‘decisive ingredient in our vision of the Third World’ (2008: 310-11).

In a more contemporary context, José Quiroga (2005: 98) has added that there is a dialectical interplay prevalent in photography of Havana during and following the Cuban “Special Period”. He cites Emma Álvarez-Tabio Albo’s description of the foreigner’s ‘morbid fascination with the destruction of the city’ (2000: 18) as part of the service economy which has long thrived within the urban fabric. Within this visual framework, Quiroga sees Havana as a space in which the foreign voyeur finds his or her desires, notably manifest in the form of nostalgia, met by the city both in itself and in the form of objects which serve as symbolic referents. In the realm of photography, Quiroga writes:

[…] Havana becomes a monumental dream constructed over the span of generations that add their layer of historical space upon the city. […] The city becomes a laboratory for registering time, and this seduces a subject as viewer, not as participant, as was the case in the 1970s and before. (2005: 98)

He correlates this newfound fascination with the government’s pursuit of tourism as a major source of income for the nation, founded on the 1982 UNESCO designation of Havana as a World Historical Site, at which point La Habana Vieja was redeveloped by the Office of the Historian of the City, headed by Eusebio Leal. Moreover, Quiroga describes the state at this point trading ‘oracular time for its own particular mappings,’ with the consequence being that the Cuban capital became ‘a city of spaces’ (2005: 101). The formation of both pre- and post-Revolutionary touristic spaces formed what Phillip Swanson has called a ‘double nostalgia’ (2011) for a hybridised utopia that blended notions of the ‘hedonistic decade of indulgence’ before 1959 and the
paradisiacal socialist Havana that was envisaged but never fully materialized. This mixture of past and present, he observes, mythologized the city in a manner that involved the fetishization of Havana’s ‘struggle, poverty, ethnicity and female libidinousness’. These notions of the city as one constructed of different spaces dovetails with my own theoretical reading of Bailey’s text in this chapter, and specifically to my interpretations of the different spaces of the city, which in my readings exemplify representations of “real-and-imagined” projections of Havana’s lived spaces.

Ana María Dopico also insists that the ‘photographic image has triumphed in exporting Cuba during the Special Period’ (2002: 452), and suggests that such images of Havana circulate as ‘currency and tableaux,’ referring both to their value and to the staging of a symbolic or performative identity. Assuming a similar theoretical stance to Quiroga, Dopico also recognizes this new image fetish as inextricably linked to the tourist campaign that began with 1995 foreign investment and promotion of the island. In her discussion of the photobook, in which she castigates the North American National Geographic photographer, David Alan Harvey’s images of Havana, Dopico labels the Cuban capital ‘a visual and virtual historical theme park’ (452). This reading is an important one, in that it correlates with my interpretation of Bailey’s images of the lived space of La Habana Vieja below. Dopico also groups three visual fetishes that manifest these different visions, in the forms of the touristic route of ruins in Havana, the Caribbean paradise, and as a third-world Latin American country still fixed in a ‘Cold-War aftermath’ (452), and Bailey’s images can be seen exemplifying these different visions in Havana. Such images have led, Dopico adds, to a ‘third-world tourist and Cold War symbolism’ (451) that has focussed primarily on ‘candid’ Cuban faces and ruin, creating a series of spatial limitations that blur our understandings of the city (453). Furthermore, these are views that are also shared by Esther Whitfield (2008), who attributes the consumable geography of post-Special Period Havana to the exoticization and marketability of the Cuban capital. The fact that these visualizations are viewed externally by foreigners outside of the nation is also important, she insists, in that it aligns outsiders’s ways of reading Cuba with Graham Huggan’s formulation of postcolonial exoticism (2001) as ‘a particular mode of aesthetic perception’ that can consume the city without needing to comprehend it (2008: 21). Whitfield’s ‘aesthetic code’ differs from Dopico’s ‘Special Period aesthetic’ in that she refers more specifically to a series or recurring images and linguistic figures that invoke consistent
meaning. This is evidenced by the contrast between photography following the Cuban Revolution (between the 1960-1980s) and the images recurrent in the photobooks such as Bailey’s, which began to appear in the 1990s and 2000s. In these texts, Whitfield argues that the triumph of the Revolution has been replaced by an aesthetic which is situated in the failure of socialism (21). The following section of this chapter will therefore now draw upon this broader aesthetic code in order to explore the complex constructions that emanate from Bailey’s photographs in Havana.

3. Havana

Whilst photographing the lived spaces of Havana, Bailey appears to be drawn primarily to capturing the city-dweller in portraiture, but also focuses on other street scenes and transient moments of city-life. These different forms of framing the city-dweller and lived space are exemplified in the untitled images below, which enable readings of how Bailey’s processes are achieved in three different types of image-making. The focus of Bailey’s photography initially appears to be the mundane, everyday life of the city-dweller. However, the photographer’s compositions also reveal an inherent touristic gaze when faced with depicting the Cuban, and for this reason these images provide an interesting platform from which to explore the dialogic relationship between the subject (the city-dweller) and the photographer (the tourist).

The first selection of images examined will include examples of the celebritization of the city-dweller. My readings here will infer that Bailey’s touristic gaze, as photographer, involves a framing of the subject in a way that renders that habanero/a with a sense of celebrity. This is enabled, my readings will surmise, by the photographer’s experience in fashion photography. The images represent examples of the city-dweller framed within what Lefebvre calls ‘abstract space’ (1991b: 33). These black and white photographs are in contrast to the second selection of colour photographs scrutinised in this section, in which Bailey focuses on spiritual places. These images pertain to Lefebvre’s envisioning of ‘absolute space’. Finally, the third selection of photographs in this chapter focuses on the performance of the city-dweller within the space of La Habana Vieja. These images are read alongside Baudrillard’s theory on the theme-park imaginary, outlined in Chapter One. Together, these selections offer a multiplicity of readings that encompass the various depictions of the city-dweller in Bailey’s text.
3.1 Bailey and the celebritization of the city-dweller

As noted above, Bailey’s portraiture images in *Havana* constitute framings of the subject in a way which, my readings will suggest, renders the subaltern Havana subject with a sense of celebrity. The majority of these portrait images comprise of the Havana subject posed in front of a white background (a painted wall), a characteristic trait of portraiture photography that, for Bailey, stems from the influence of the early fashion photography of the English fashion and portrait photographer, John French, and the portraiture photography of Richard Avedon, both of whom set up studios in the late 1940s. This technique was also employed by the director Richard Lester in *The Beatles’s* film debut, *A Hard Day’s Night* (1964). Lester’s cinematographer had experimented using white backings and a key light in which the “white-out” environment had given the subjects an engraved look on film. Bailey heightens this effect in *Havana*, once again, by combining this backdrop method with stark lighting and high-contrast printing. These images are also reminiscent of Avedon’s ‘standard mug shot’ photography that defined his portraiture style, ‘with its blunt frontality, uniform lighting, and set proportion of head to frame,’ which stripped away ‘all extraneous elements, establishing a stringent formal neutrality that presents the unique configuration of the subject’s face as its primary content’ (Hambourg and Fineman 2002). The use of the white backdrop in these photographs serves as a makeshift replacement for the paper or muslin set of the studio, and intensifies the graphic sense of edges and silhouette. Removing the subjects from the context of their surroundings both results in a heightened concentration on the topography of the subject, their face and body, and a dislocation of the city-dweller from the lived space of the city.

3.2 Theorizing Bailey’s portraiture in *Havana*

Referring to Richard Avedon’s *William Casby, Born a Slave* (1963), Roland Barthes refers to the portrait as an image in which ‘the essence of slavery is here laid bare’ (1993: 34). The face in portraiture, for Barthes, becomes a ‘mask,’ that remains both pure and theatrical. For this reason, he refers to the most influential portraiture photographers (Nadar, Sander, and Avedon) as the great mythologists, and states: [s]ince every photograph is contingent (and thereby outside of meaning), Photographs cannot signify (aim at a generality) except by assuming a mask. It is this word which Calvino correctly used to designate what makes a face into the product of a society
and of its history’ (34). Furthermore, Barthes’s theorizing of the portrait photograph is key to my readings below, of the city-dwellers depicted in Bailey’s *Havana*. Crucially, Bailey equates his own portrait photography with Nadar’s work, and comments on the artist as being a key influence, stating; “When I look at his pictures, I see my own pictures. He knew what I know. Or I know what he knew.”

Bailey, therefore, aligns himself with the work of, what Barthes calls, a ‘great mythologist’ and this notion should have significant repercussions in the way in which the British photographer’s Havana images are interpreted. Moreover, my readings postulate that Bailey’s portrait photography turns the city-dweller, or rather ‘masks’ of the habanero/a, into ‘the product’ of a particular social moment in the city, of post-Special Period transition, further alluding to the construction of Havana as both “real-and-imagined”. As Barthes adds, the ‘mask’ is a thorny territory of photography, that viewers find difficult to trust. ’It wants meaning,’ he writes ‘but at the same time it wants this meaning to be surrounded by a noise […] which will make it less acute’ (1993: 36). This leads both to the deflection of the photograph’s meaning, and to the aesthetic, rather than political, consumption of the image by the spectator (36).

Furthermore, whilst Bailey’s portraiture images in Havana, allude to a particular history as a result of the date at which they were taken, they, too, become *masks* that lie somewhere between the innocent and the performative. This makes the photographer’s representation of the city-dweller particularly problematic and subsequently plays a part in the construction of the habanero/a in the formation of the imaginary lived space of the city.

### 3.3 Bailey’s portraiture in Havana

Bailey’s portraits of city-dwellers in *Havana* can be seen to evoke his early work as a fashion photographer in the 1960s. At that time, shooting on a 35mm single-lens reflex camera, Bailey was able to shoot in a rapid, informal way, and created images in line with the cinema vérité style seen in French new wave cinema and films such as Jean-Luc Godard’s *À bout de soufflé* (1960). In these photographs, Bailey used his hand-held camera to evoke a sense of dynamism and realism. Bailey’s studio portraits from this period, consisting notably of studio portraits of celebrities in New York City exude the sort of energy which has come to be recognized today as the quintessential “Bailey style”. Moreover, it is this style that is mimicked in his portraits from Havana...

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below, in which, my readings will propose, the photographer’s processes bequeath his images a sense of “celebritydom”. Bailey’s methods of image-making in these photographs reveal the method by which in a single frame, the photographer attempts to capture the Havana subject in lived space, whilst also demonstrating a space of visual encounters which in turn offer multiple meanings in a context that is both “real-and-imagined”. For instance, the aforementioned quintessential “Bailey style” is exemplified in his close-cropping of a photograph of a young Cuban woman (see figure 1). It mirrors the photographer’s early images of models and celebrities, such as his iconic photograph of Jean Shrimpton (1960), in which Bailey captures the already heavily photographed English model and actress. This celebrity portrait from nearly fifty years earlier is re-imagined in his photograph of this habanera from 2006. As such, Bailey’s photograph reveals a framing of the city-dweller in a way which renders the Havana subject with a sense of celebrity, in which the artist’s highly stylised fashion photography approach ultimately affects a reading of the image.

Figure 1. David Bailey, Untitled, 2006 © David Bailey, used with permission of the photographer.
Bailey’s photograph of the habanera consists of a scene in which a centrally positioned young afro-Cuban is pictured leaning against a white Havana wall. A black doorway with weaving iron bars, behind the woman, fills the right side of the frame. The subject delicately grips a cigarillo in her left hand and wears a neck-scarf and halterneck leopard print top. The subject gazes out of the frame, away from the photographer and into the distance. The habanera’s contemplative gaze is also important in the viewer’s interpretation in that it appears to mirror the stare of the subject of one of the most iconic Cuban photographs, Alberto Korda’s Guerillero Heroico (1960). In Korda’s image, Che Guevara is photographed by the Cuban photographer looking out onto a crowd at a speech, gazing as if into some unknown realm. However, the image, and Che’s expression, has been re-appropriated over time and its original value has altered. As with Korda’s image, the subject’s gaze in Bailey’s photograph of the habanera has different meanings depending on the viewer’s interpretation of it. The image could easily be seen as both a Cuban woman looking back into the past or into the future. The viewer is encouraged, via the photographer’s framing of the city-dweller, to charge the image with significance depending upon their own reading of the subject. Furthermore, as with Bailey’s image of Jean Shrimpton, this photograph of the habanera is tightly cropped. This increases the drama in the frame and intensifies the composition. By closely cropping the figure Bailey also implies action beyond the frame of the photograph, which is further heightened by the way in which the Cuban is looking outside of the image. The extremes of light and dark also add to the strength of the image, whereas the white painted wall contrasts with habanera’s skin tone. Whilst Bailey’s low viewpoint appears, at first, to empower the subject, the Cuban is also sexualized due to the close-up and slightly off-kilter nature of the shot that creates an imbalance in the photograph. The photographer gets uncomfortably close and this is exposed in the diminutive details that emanate from the image, such as the smaller details of the subject’s complexion, a scar on her arm and the creases in her skin. Moreover, the gaze is also unambiguously male and the subject is portrayed as seductive. This is amplified by the subject’s exposure of skin, as a result of the garment she is wearing – a halterneck leopard print top. This revealing item of clothing is depicted as provocative in that the Cuban is not wearing a brassiere and her naked shoulder protrudes from off-centre in the image. The leopard print pattern is also important, in that it both recalls the stylized fashions of the 1960s, at which point animal print became popular, and evokes a sense of the subject as exotic. Bailey’s use of the rule
of thirds also directs the viewer to the cigarillo that the subject holds in her left hand, seen towards the right of the frame, further highlighting the carefully posed nature of the shot. Lines in the metal gating of the doorway behind the habanera, in the background of the image, also frame the cigarillo and this alludes to its importance in the frame as a visual signifier. These lines in the backdrop create foreground interest and introduce the cigarillo as a feature, changing the dynamic of the photograph significantly. The pseudo-sophisticated holding of the object fills the frame with a sense of the performative, and in doing so, Bailey serves to dislocate the city-dweller from the “real” space of the city into an imagined, abstract space. This prevents Bailey’s photograph from being one of documentary value and instead exemplifies a carefully posed composition in the style of fashion photography. Moreover, this is also an image that exemplifies the portrait photographer Irving Penn’s influence on Bailey’s image-making. As with Penn’s work, Bailey’s image of the habanera constitutes a clever composition that is reliant on the skilful arrangement of the subject holding the cigarillo that promotes an interplay between line and volume. The subject’s pose heightens the intensity of the frame, whilst also alluding to the ordinariness of the scene. The image therefore illustrates the way in which Bailey’s image constitutes both a “real-and-imagined” construction of Havana’s lived space.

Furthermore, Bailey’s framing of the habanera in the image above connotes to the sexualized images that comprise David Alan Harvey’s photographs of women in Havana in *Cuba* (1999). Harvey’s images of Cuban women similarly dislocate the habanera from the lived-environment. In his photographs this is done through the cropping of women’s faces from the frame. It is exemplified in his untitled photograph of habaneras on a beach, surrounded by foreigners, in which only their bodies are seen, or in his untitled photograph of a Cuban woman in Havana’s Café de Paris. The latter image depicts a young habanera, seen drinking mango juice from a carton. This is juxtaposed in the photobook alongside the aforementioned beach-scene, which again objectifies and anonymizes the Cuban women present in the frame – both images imply the habaneras as jineteras, seen experiencing and sharing the touristic space with male foreigners, and caught in the voyeuristic gaze of the photographer.

Both Harvey’s and Bailey’s images lack the introspective nature of Cuban photographer Abigail González’s investigative photographs of bodies in personal space (see: *Cuba on the Verge*, 2003). In González’s untitled image of a habanera in

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22 “Jinetera” is Cuban slang for a female sex-worker/prostitute.
an interior space, the dynamics are changed significantly and it is the half-naked habanera who assumes control. Despite being photographed by González in her underwear, the subject is not sexualized, and is seen resting on a window and looking back into her own lived space. She does not return the gaze of the photographer and instead looks contemplatively upon her own private belongings, reflecting on the items strewn across the floor of her home. It is an image of domesticity that more carefully reveals the lived space of the city to the viewer, in a way that Bailey’s images fail to do.

In a second reading of Bailey’s portrait photography in Havana, a subsequent image from his text re-imagines another archetypal style in the photographer’s work from the 1960s (see figure 2), where the white background is particularly reminiscent of the images seen in his seminal text, David Bailey’s Box of Pin-Ups (1965). In this collection, the photographer exhibits a style of portraiture radically different from his fashion imagery, in which thirty of Bailey’s images consisted of a plain, white background. However, unlike the thirty-seven glamorous portraits in the text (comprising images of actors, models, and other members of the “popocracy” of the 1960s), in Havana Bailey turns his lens towards more images of city-dwellers and lo cotidiano of city-life in the Cuban capital.

The untitled photograph of the city-dweller below (see figure 2) consists of a scene in which a frontally-posed Afro-Cuban man sells newspapers on a Havana street. The image is a powerful composition of the habanero that again comprises an exchange between the observer and observed. In turn, a close-reading of the image reveals a multiplicity of exchanges between both the subject and the objects in the image (the newspaper), and the subject and photographer/viewer. The newspaper-seller appears almost chiselled from the crumbling wall behind him, and Bailey achieves this through his use of direct flash. Most striking in the image is the subject’s intimidating gaze, which challenges the viewer, and by positioning the man at the centre of the frame, Bailey further intensifies the figure’s presence. The subject constitutes the central third of the image, however, his tilted head and non-symmetrical body (due to his disability) makes for a fragmented central subject that defies the traditional straight edges and rules found in conventional portrait photography. The white background merges with the white of the newspaper and further ruptures the subject and, as with the image of the habanera with the cigarillo above, extremes of light and dark create a sharp contrast. Moreover, with his one arm,
the man clutches at a pile of newspapers, copies of the popular *Juventud Rebelde*, the newspaper of the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* in Cuba.

Bailey’s entire composition promotes the perception of both the exotic nature and mystique of the habanero as *Other*. The half naked Afro-Caribbean Cuban, the expression in his eyes, the newspaper he is holding, the colour of his skin and his disability – these all form a specific and carefully framed composition that lends itself to the romanticized vision of *Otherness*. More specifically, the notion of the lack of the Afro-Cuban is reminiscent of Graham Greene’s description of a city-dweller in the opening chapter of *Our Man in Havana* (1958: 1-7). The character is seen passing the Wonder Bar, and heading up Virtudes in Havana. Described by Greene, and pointed

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23 The Youth Communist League – the youth division of the Communist Party of Cuba.
out by Dr Hasselbacher to Jim Wormold, the habanero is portrayed as ‘blind in one eye and one leg was shorter than the other; he wore an ancient felt hat and his ribs showed through his torn shirt like a ship’s under demolition’ (1). Greene’s description suggests an early Othering of the Cuban that emerges elsewhere in this thesis, but particularly connotes to Bailey’s photograph of the newspaper seller. The photographer’s fascinations here lie not simply in the contents and composition of the image but in what is left out, or rather what the subject lacks.

The linguistic signifier in this image, the title of the newspaper Juventud Rebelde, literally “rebel youth,” serves as a coded iconic signifier which links the newspaper-seller’s history to his missing arm, and in a Barthesian reading of the image this becomes the photograph’s ‘punctum’ (Barthes 2003: 21). Moreover, whilst we must not rule out his arm having been lost in a specific accident, illness or otherwise, his menacing stare, tensed muscles and framing of ‘REBELDE’ at the centre of the image signify towards his figure as a dangerous one. His pose and gaze appears to revive the images of subjects in “rebel space” discussed in Chapter Three, and the man is depicted by Bailey as embodying a fearlessness when faced with becoming part of the aggressive photographic act.

Furthermore, next to his bicep, a second linguistic message reads ‘¿HASTA CUANDO?’ (until when?). This question correlates directly with the challenging gaze of the subject who then appears to be waiting for a response from the viewer. From a Lacanian perspective the lack of the subject’s arm here (the act of separation) may be deemed synonymous with castration, and also links with the way in which the newspaper, blending with the white background, disembodies the habanero. As Stuart Hall would suggest, a Freudian reading of such an image would denote ‘what is seen’ to our awareness of the sexual development of men and women (Hall 1999: 313). Consequently, what cannot be seen here in the image becomes a comment on the development not only of Cuba, but also of its people. This bleakness, which seems to emanate, from the image is further highlighted by the lack of any clothing on the top half of the subject’s body and the high contrast of the image details every contour of his being, whilst the empty backdrop diminishes any depth in the frame and instead draws attention solely upon the figure of the Cuban. Bailey’s photograph therefore demands that the viewer not only read the image but also engage with its content.

This reading is supplemented by the photographer’s representation of the Havana space behind the subject. This cracked and peeling white wall, an urban re-imagination of the aforementioned white background of Bailey’s heavily stylized
fashion photography, empties the photograph of context and isolates the subject in a type of visual vacuum that the viewer must attempt to fill with meaning. This heightens the importance of the spectator’s reading of the other signifiers in the image, namely the newspaper and the subject’s own bodily form. The viewer is left to imagine the background for themselves, both literally and metaphorically, and to envisage the space in which the subject is photographed and the working environment of the newspaper-seller. Although this image appears to break with the conventions of fashion photography seen in figure 1, Bailey’s depiction of the Havana city-dweller in his image of the habanero is reliant on the viewer’s perception of the grotesque. Subsequently, the photographer serves to exoticize the city-dweller, dislocating the citizen from the site of the “real” Havana into an imaginary that forms part of a visual construction of the city. As with the image of the habanera above (see figure 1), Bailey’s newspaper-seller represents disembodiment and dislocation.

Bailey’s Havana portraits also demonstrate the influence of the American photographer Richard Avedon in the British photographer’s work. This is exemplified in Bailey’s untitled image of an elderly habanera (see figure 3). As with Avedon’s photography in Nothing Personal (1964), this monochromatic image, similarly to the Havana portrait photographs discussed above, isolates the city-dweller with the focus on the figure’s head and shoulders. This image of an Afro-Cuban woman consists of a scene in which the frontally posed habanera fills the frame, surrounded, as with the images above, by the white backdrop of the painted wall behind her. Positioned at the centre of the image, the photographer is reliant on the asymmetrical characteristics of the subject’s figure to allow for a more dynamic image, and these features create an imbalance within the frame. Once again, the white background of the painted wall is used to create a sense of depth, and to add layers to the photograph. Moreover, by heightening the contrast and lighting intensity, Bailey depicts an image of light and dark, in which the subject’s dark skin stands out against the backdrop and emphasizes the decay – both in the crumbling wall behind the subject and in her timeworn complexion.
The figure represents the antithesis of Bailey’s fashion photography, in which the subject's unevenness is emphasized by the woman’s earrings that hang at different levels and by the lop-sided slump of her shoulders. The closeness of the photographer to the subject also highlights the lines and topography of the woman’s visage, which accentuate the uneven contours in her expression. The habanera’s gaze is also defined by her slight squint, which Bailey correlates with the other uneven elements in the frame. Furthermore, Bailey appears to be using gesture, costume and expression in order to give his viewer some sense of the subject’s psyche. As with my readings above, this simplistic, straightforward style appears to mirror Bailey’s photography in *Box of Pin-Ups*, in turn, appearing to allow the viewer some amount of authentic psychological insight into the subject. In the photograph of the elderly Afro-Cuban habanera the various elements in the image – the fatigued body language of the city-dweller, her oversized jumper, full of holes, and her awkward expression – combine to present a particularly reductive and vulnerable image of the city-dweller to the viewer.
Bailey adds to this by exposing the subject’s age and frailty by highlighting these imperfections, choosing to photograph a pose which counters other (significantly colour) images in his photobook.

3.4 Bailey and absolute space

Bailey’s untitled images of the San Lázaro pilgrim and the Colón Cemetery, analysed below, demonstrate the opposition between Lefebvre’s abstract and absolute spaces. For Lefebvre, absolute space is characterized by holy or cursed places and sites/sites that emerge within social space. They are defined by ‘the presence or absence of gods’ (1991b: 35). The mysteriousness of these spaces is founded, he adds, on their having ‘no place’ (35). Moreover, Bailey’s photographs of the pilgrim and the cemetery (seen in figures 5 and 6) represent a fusion of religious, natural, public and urban realms that re-emerge in the photographer’s other images in Havana. For example, in addition to his photographs of the San Lázaro pilgrim and the graveyard, at the Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón, Bailey includes images in Havana of sculptures of religious iconography, of a santera practicing at a table, and of a city-dweller with his motorcycle pictured under the shadow of a life-size crucifix. These images in Havana, are constitutive of absolute space, and evoke Henri Cartier-Bresson’s influence on the photographer. Bailey recalls that one Cartier-Bresson image, Srinagar, Kashmir, Muslim women on the slopes of Hari Parbal Hill, praying toward the sun rising behind the Himalaya (see figure 4), had a particular influence on his later image-making in that it proved to him, at a young age, the way in which photography could have the same depth as painting.24 The style of Cartier-Bresson’s image appears to be mirrored in the images discussed below, in which his ‘documentary’ work focusses on representing the tragic human condition in Havana.

24 This is discussed in Jerome De Missolz’s documentary-film, David Bailey: Four Beats To The Bar and No Cheating (2010), a title that takes its name from Bailey’s own definition of his photographic work as akin to Count Basie’s explanation of jazz as “four beats to the bar and no cheating.”
Furthermore, in *Havana*, Bailey’s representation of absolute space is employed as a narrative device. In line with Lefebvre’s reading of space, the photographer’s images construct a Havana that needs to be defined by both conceptual realms and material activities. In the photographs below, for example, the material spaces of the harbour and the graveyard ground a particular mental space, that of contemplation and theological abstraction (1991b: 217). These spaces also represent Havana as ‘utopia,’ as defined by Lefebvre, and explored in Chapter One. As examples of utopia, these spaces represent the ideal, the symbolic and the imaginary lived spaces of Havana. As Dimendberg observes, the merging of absolute and abstract space in this way represents a form of ‘spatial chiasmus’ (2004: 237).

Bailey’s untitled photographs of the San Lázaro pilgrim and Colón Cemetery are also examples of the photographer’s shift from the supposedly “authentic” realist photography of Havana city-dwellers in *Havana* (shot with plain-white backgrounds), and, instead demonstrate the highly subjective style of Bailey’s documentary photography. In depicting these spaces of the city, Bailey leans on the work of J.M.W Turner, mimicking the romantic landscape artist’s method of painting with light. In these images, Bailey appears to share Turner’s fascination with the elements, by capturing apocalyptic skies above Havana. Moreover, in his compositions Bailey manipulates light and dark elements within the frame in order to endow the scene in the photograph with a theatrical atmosphere that is used to dramatic effect. This notion of the represented space as theatrical has connotations in the portrayal of his
subjects as performative figures, that play out as part of a narrative that is evident in his other documentary work, notably in regards to his “seeing” photographs above. The two images also appear to correlate with the style of the acclaimed British photographer Bill Brandt, in which the artist “stages” images through his understanding of light and dark in the frame.

3.4.1 Bailey’s San Lázaro pilgrim

In his photographs in *Havana*, Bailey appears to be intrigued by the presence of Afro-Cuban cults in the Cuban capital, collectively known as santería. These are symbolically identified through icons in the form of images, figures, and other signifiers, representative of divinities known as orishas. These spirits/deities represent mortal manifestations that aid their followers though life. As Lighfoot notes, it was the Afro-Cuban cults that benefited most following the Revolution, and this was due to their history of association with the exploited classes and as a result of their symbolic resistance to the establishment (2002: 228). This has led to the promotion of santería as a spectacle and attraction, in which the colourful and exotic characteristics have an allure to the tourist. This is exemplified in Bailey’s image below (see figure 5), in which the photographer mixes portraiture and photography in the documentary mode, in order to picture a San Lázaro pilgrim in Havana.

As Sylvia Bermúdez has explored (2003: 172-184), santería plays a crucial and symbolic role in the representation of Latin American popular culture. Indeed, Bailey appears drawn to the figure of the pilgrim, similarly to the way in which the graveyard seems to have a magnetic attraction for him, and his entire composition is suggestive of a supernatural scene. Moreover, Bailey appears to visualize a type of magical realism in this image. Although this is historically seen as a literary device, defined as the depiction of the quotidian that is in some way phantasmagorical (Swanson 2003: 243), the photographer’s composition in this image also appears to be evoking a particularly structured composition of the “marvellous real,” in a way that further objectifies the pilgrim as *Other* and romanticizes the lived space of the city.
In his photograph of the pilgrim, Bailey’s mastery of portraiture is evident in the way that the subject is beautifully posed and constructed, in a frame that is filled with soft and muted colours. The image of the pilgrim consists of a scene in which the subject is cloaked in cotton-sack material that mirrors the clothing on the figurine in the picture, which is framed within a box between the subject’s legs. The man’s beads hang from his wrist and neck, and signify his affiliation to santería. The small statuette of San Lázaro has a blue cloak and hand painted face, whose visage also mirrors the subject’s own features. Fill in flash serves to light up these characteristics in the pilgrim, due to the apparent lack of natural light, and this gives the background a dark and ominous feel. The ambience of this lighting effect also allows the subject to stand out from the background in as forceful a way as the white-out device seen in Bailey’s portraiture images above. Additionally, the image demonstrates a highly effective use of perspective on the photographer’s part. This is exemplified in the leading lines in the image, which stretch out along the jetties and the dock walls, and these are

Figure 5. David Bailey, Untitled, 2006 © David Bailey, used with permission of the photographer.
mirrored by the lines of the pilgrim’s box. This also enhances the ominous stillness of
the water behind the pilgrim, in which the reflection of the sky on the water is
carefully framed by the jetties and serves as a backdrop for the pilgrim at the centre of
the frame. The presence of the San Lázaro figurine in the composition, a particularly
popular saint in Cuba, alongside its orisha (Babalú Ayé), is representative of the
Cuban’s allegiance to the saint. San Lázaro is the result of a synchresis of two figures
named Lazarus from the New Testament, and, for Cubans, represents a figure that
heals the sick, and is symbolised by crutches and light blue colouring. Lightfoot notes
that San Lázaro’s presence, and devotion towards him, has increased in the years of
hardship of the Special Period (2002: 223), and that loyalty to the orisha is most
evident in the Annual San Lázaro’s eve procession (December 17), in which pilgrims
make their way to the outlying chapel of El Rincón in honour of Babalú Ayé,
sometimes crawling their way to the site of the old leper colony. Furthermore, the
picturing of the pilgrim with the statuette of San Lázaro appears to play upon the New
Testament miracle narrated in the Gospel of John. In the miracle, Jesus brings Lazarus
back to life following his death four days earlier. The story is well known in popular
culture, and has been depicted accordingly throughout art history. Of all Saint
Lazarus’s appearances in visual culture, Bailey’s image appears to connote most
obviously to the Dutch painter Rembrandt’s *The Raising of Lazarus* (1631-2), in
which the artist depicts the aforementioned miracle. As with the artist’s composition,
Bailey minimizes the presence of the figure of the saint, who shares the image with
another subject, to which the viewer is drawn. The pilgrim’s box in Bailey’s image
mimics the casket in Rembrandt’s composition, from which Lazarus is raised. To
borrow from Barthes’s analogy in *Camera Lucida*, the pilgrim in the image is the
target, the referent (the spectrum of the photograph), and this heightens the spectacle
of the image. However, Bailey’s photographing of the figure of Lazarus within the
natural frame of the pilgrim’s box, offers for a secondary exchange between the
observer and observed, and as the visage of the figurine appears to be mirrored in the
subject’s own facial expression, one may again recall Barthes’s notion of ‘the return
of the dead’ (1984: 9). Furthermore, there is therefore an interplay in Bailey’s
photograph between the subject and the statuette, and therefore between the “real” and
the “unreal”. Moreover, this reading instils the photograph with an *Otherness* that is
reliant upon the exoticized image of the pilgrim, the iconic message of the San Lázaro
figure, and Bailey’s careful composition. It forms part of the visual construct of the
city-dweller that crosses constantly between the real and imaginary in Bailey’s photographic texts in *Havana*.

The presence of the mass of water behind the pilgrim in the image is also an important signifier. The Malecón, the Havana bay and the waters that surround the city provide an endless backdrop in the art-photographs of the city-dweller that make up post-Special Period photobooks. These spaces (the Malecón, the bay, and the harbour), that stretch from the mouth of the river Almendares, in the west of the city, to the harbour entrance in the east, are symbolic and, as Lightfoot comments, in that they form part of the ‘soul’ of the city (2002: 167). For the author, the Malecón, built by Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century, is as much as symbol of the city as the Eiffel Tower is of Paris, yet is rooted in the lives of city-dweller. As Lightfoot comments, habaneros are both haunted and besotted by the sea; ‘it is a complex love affair, as the waves represent both prison and gateway’ (175-6). She adds:

> In the darkest days of the Special Period in 1993, when people were going hungry and Havana’s lights had gone out literally and metaphorically, I’m told that people did go and sit as usual along the Malecón. But they all turned their backs on the darkness of the city behind them and looked outward to sea. (173)

However, Bailey’s photograph of the pilgrim represents a reversal of Lightfoot’s description above. Instead of being posed by Bailey with his back to the city, the pilgrim turns his back on the water behind him. Moreover, whilst still representative of absolute space, as a place of mediation, the pilgrim at the waterside also may be interpreted as a carefully posed construction of lived space in which the photographer’s tourist gaze romanticizes the pilgrim and turns him into the spectacle.

Bailey’s photograph of the city-dweller differs notably to Sergio Romero’s images of San Lázaro pilgrims; *San Lázaro pilgrim* (1992) and *Man with Statue of San Lázaro* (1992). In *San Lázaro pilgrim*, Romero depicts the subject’s meditative gaze as he sits, slumped on the floor with rope tied around his ankles. Unaware of the photographer, the subject looks towards the floor and appears more involved with his pilgrimage rather than the photographic act. Similarly, Romero’s *Man with Statue of San Lázaro* captures the contemplative gaze of the city-dweller, who is once again not interested in the presence of the photographer. Instead, his figurine of San Lázaro, which again mirrors the visage of the subject, returns the gaze of the photographer.
3.4.2 Bailey’s Colón Cemetery

Bailey’s photograph of the Colón cemetery (see figure 6) offers a similar depiction of absolute space to his framing of the pilgrim above. The image consists of a scene from Havana’s Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón. Whilst no city-dwellers are present, the scene is representative of a terminus of social space through which both the living and dead citizens of the city converge. As Michael Stock distinguishes, ‘even as death demarcates the limits of the body, dictating an end-point to “living” existence, the body itself continues to exist in the grave’ (2006: 70). Moreover, after death we are able to return to the site of the dead in the form of the cemetery and through image. In Bailey’s image, both represent vehicles for the symbolic replacement of the living. Laurence Rickels adds that ‘since the worlds of the living and the dead are separated topographically, the cemetery, together with the mourning activities it organizes, serves as the premier border zone and crossing where the two overlap’ (1988: 201). Primarily, therefore, Bailey’s image of the Colón Cemetery is one of death. It is an
image that represents a visual interplay between death and the photographer, and between mortality and the processes inherent to picture-making. As Barthes suggests in *Camera Lucida*, the photographer is unaware that they represent ‘agents of Death,’ in that by clicking the shutter the reality their photograph represents becomes image (1981: 92). He also recognizes that the photographic act involves an ‘arrest of interpretation’ (1981: 171), which prevents the viewer from penetrating a photograph, and, in turn, endows the image with the quality of the ‘flat death’ (1981: 92). Bailey’s image of the Havana cemetery represents both the real and metaphorical manifestation of this.

In the photograph, the crooked signpost in the image, one of many which serve to guide visitors around the cemetery’s huge space, highlights the broken crypt that it is attached to. The dark sky above contrasts with the sign which reads “Calle G,” pointing upwards, and Bailey appears to be playing with the space’s relationship with the heavens. This is also echoed in the photographer’s cinematic lighting, the evening sunlight highlighted by the shadows in the image that suggests the entire site re-imagined by the image-maker as a type of mythical underworld. This echoes Lightfoot’s impression of the cemetery as ‘like a miniature city on its own numbered grid of streets’ (2002: 181). However, in his cemetery photograph Bailey presents the desolate site as a utopic space which lends itself to the re-imagination of the viewer. His image represents, as with other spaces mentioned in this thesis, and particularly those explored in Chapter Seven, a visual vacuum that forms a crucial part of the “real-and-imagined” construction of the lived space of the city.

The degradation of the scene is also echoed in Lightfoot’s testimonial account of the cemetery, in which she suggests a lack of maintenance, following the worst years of the “Special Period,” has affected the cemetery similarly to the way it has Havana’s other architecture. She comments; ‘there are a disconcerting number of broken slabs revealing jumbles of bones’ (2002: 182). Bailey’s image plays on this supposedly ghostly atmosphere by presenting chiaroscuros that create a foreboding atmosphere. Although the frame is empty of people, the path, and the silhouettes of the photographer and an accomplice that fill it, create a depth in the composition. This depth combines with the photographer’s tilted camera angle to draw the viewer’s focus into the cemetery. The crooked signpost further exaggerates this sense of depth and intensifies the viewer’s disorientation, whilst shadows begin to creep over crypts in the scene creating a dreamlike atmosphere of dereliction.
In summary, the photographer’s image represents his own touristic gaze drawn to a space of mediation and reflexion. Rather than capturing the space as a terminus of social space, and therefore as part of the “real” lived space of the city-dweller, Bailey re-imagines the scene with the techniques mentioned above. Moreover, as my readings have alluded, Bailey’s representation of the Other in these images (and the San Lázaro pilgrim and the Colón cemetery) is rooted to a photographic form of magical realism, in which the composition concentrates upon the phantasmagorical qualities of lived space and, in turn, city-space as both “real-and-imagined”.

3.5 Bailey and “Old Havanaland”

Following its previous designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982, as noted above, in the early 1990s La Habana Vieja was re-developed as one of the city’s primary tourist locations. Importantly, whilst the post-1989 crisis had affected Havana badly, the Plan Maestro (para la Revitalización Integral de la Habana Vieja) at the end of 1994 led to the redefinition of the neighbourhood, providing an artistic space for street performers, musicians, and sketch artists (Kapcia 2005: 182-5). Furthermore, in 1995, the neighbourhood was proclaimed an “Area of High Significance for Tourism,” placing further focus on the area as a themed sight/site as a sort of ‘Old Havanaland’ (Goldberger 1998).

As recent work in tourism studies has elucidated, the sightseer’s experience has increasingly involved the mythologization of place and space (Crouch and Lübbren 2003: 5), in a way that has further destined attractions, such as La Habana Vieja, to serve merely as stereotypical and clichéd environments that are themselves reliant on the circulation of images. The social anthropologist Dean MacCannell (1999) has focussed on the importance of signs in tourism and has located touristic sights/sites where visitors seek to “feel” their lives in spaces of authentication that reflect their understanding of a place. He refers to sightseers as those who have ‘the capacity to recognize sights by transforming them into one of their markers,’ observing that tourist images (photographs programmed by these markers) are rooted in the process of what he calls Kodakization (1999: 123-4).

The prevalence of performing “actors” in La Habana Vieja is highlighted in Bailey’s photographs of the lived spaces of the city, in which the figures he locates constitute hyperrealistic archetypes of old-world Havana city-dwellers. Moreover, by
focussing on these subjects, and on the city as a type of “Disneyfied” museum space in these images, Bailey’s compositions constitute heterotopic renderings which appear to ‘abolish and preserve time and culture’ (Soja 1995: 6), whilst scopically constructing a representation of the city-dweller that is powered by the romanticization of Havana as a visual construction. By objectifying andsignifying Havana’s tourist sites and sights to the viewer, Bailey further proliferates the projection of La Habana Vieja as a form of “place myth,” in turn concretizing existing mental constructs of an “Old Havanaland” in the global imaginary. Below I will aim to exemplify this in my readings of two separate untitled images of an Afro Cuban habanero and habanera.

In his image of the habanero in La Habana Vieja (see figure 7), Bailey frames a scene in which, a white-suited, elderly habanero poses for the photographer in a square in the old-town. The subject’s pose denotes the city-dweller as a playful gentleman, eager to please the photographer, posing as a dandy from pre-Revolutionary Havana.
This is exemplified by the angles in the photograph, in which the city-dweller reaches out to a cane, mid-stride, and holds on to his hat, implying movement. The photographer’s closeness to the subject reveals the man’s bulbous nose, his crooked teeth and considerable grin. Surrounding him, the viewer sees the clean, cobbled streets of the refurbished old-town and the fresh façade of La Habana Vieja’s renovated and repolished colonial architecture.

In order to interpret Bailey’s habanero as part of the ‘Old Havanaland’ imaginary described above, it is worth recalling Baudrillard’s comments on the theme park in *Simulations*, as discussed more comprehensively in Chapter One and theorized in referenced to the imagined city-space in both Chapters Five and Six. He describes Disneyland as ‘a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation’ (1983: 23). He calls it a ‘play of illusions and phantasms […] there to conceal that it is the “real” Country […]’ (23). In Bailey’s photograph, the elderly gentleman in the image plays out the roll of a 1930s caballero with his white linen suit, black tie and trilby, he embodies a certain nostalgia. The photographer appears to be exhuming Walker Evans’s *Havana Citizen*, within which, as noted above, Bailey locates his own fascinations with the city as a “perfect” model or simulation of the “real”. Moreover, similarly to the objects in Baudrillard’s Disneyland imaginary, the ‘Havanaland’ ‘character’ in Bailey’s photographs above is neither true nor false but is symbolic as a ‘deterrence machine’ which here attracts Bailey’s camera away from other sites/sights in the city. The performative nature of the subject’s costume, pose and gestures in the image further illustrates this, as Dopico notes, these forms and poses offer a ‘marketable protocol, a visual diplomacy of gesture, glance, and partial revelation,’ in which:

[...] Cubans well-versed in tourist economies of the Special Period become photography's objects with an ironic confidence in its currency, its set rate of exchange of subject for image, and its universal standard as the coinage of entry into the global market. Photography thus becomes analogous to the dollar as recognizable currency, its guaranteed circulation providing an unarticulated form (both severed from states and silent in its power) and a mobile signifying technique. (2002: 466)

The notion of photographs of the city-dweller as a “mobile signifier” is problematic. As Sontag adds, images which idealize are no less destructive ‘than work which makes a virtue of plainness,’ and constitute an act of aggression on the part of the photographer (1979: 7). In addition, she adds that photographs give the viewer an
‘imaginary possession of a past that is unreal,’ whilst also helping them to possess a space in which they feel insecure (9). Of course, this can be the case for both the viewer and the photographer in that both should be seen as observers. Bailey’s photograph of the habanero therefore represents a space in which the photographer takes “imaginary possession” of the lived space of the city and the city-dweller in order to play up to the place myth of the Havana old town. This process involves a cartoonization of the Cuban that alludes to the depiction and typecasting of the city-dweller in Wim Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club*, further discussed in Chapter Seven. For Quiroga, Bailey’s habanero could constitute a product of the space that surrounds him, the redeveloped area of La Habana Vieja, and is representative of the city-dweller illuminated by the glow that emanates ‘from within the social experiment of which they are a part’ (2005: 108). It is as a result of this illumination, Quiroga claims, that we feel a nostalgia towards the city-dweller and the lived space of the city in such photographic texts (108).

Figure 8. David Bailey, *Untitled*, 2006 © David Bailey, used with permission of the photographer.
A similar process of cartoonization of the city-dweller materializes in Bailey’s image of another Afro-Cuban habanera (see figure 8), a photograph of a diva from the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba. The photograph consists of a scene in which the subject is framed similarly to the portrait photographs described earlier in this chapter. Close to the subject, Bailey reveals the habanera’s complexion and the basic nature of her home-made headdress. The close up also reveals the subject’s make-up, her lipstick and fake eyelashes, and the whites of her eyes looking away from the photographer. At the very bottom of the photograph, the viewer sees the shoulders of the subject, revealing the bright colours of the habanera’s traditional Afro-Cuban dress. Bailey’s appropriation of the subject in this photograph is part of a power/knowledge relationship between the observer and observed. To paraphrase Urry, the photographer’s visual knowledge of the subject gives him power, momentarily, over her. Photography, he writes ‘tames the object of the gaze, the most striking examples being of exotic cultures’ (Urry 2001: 127).

The photographer’s image of the habanera also underscores Picasso’s influence on Bailey, and the photographer has commented on the way in which elements in his work appear to mimic the Spanish painter’s style. In his photograph of the Afro-Cuban habanera above, Bailey evokes Picasso’s paintings of his second wife, Jaqueline Roque. The photographer’s close-cropping of the woman also appears to exaggerate the subject’s décolletage and neckline. His viewpoint enables a distortion of the habanera’s dark features, her prominent cheekbones and profile, and this appears to present her as caricature rather than portraiture, further lending to the construction of the exoticized city-dweller. Bailey’s images of La Habana Vieja contrast with the Hungarian photographer Sylvia Plachy’s poetic study of city-life in Havana. In an untitled image (date unknown), Plachy photographs an elderly Cuban woman on the corner of the Plaza Vieja. It is an image that reflects the notion of the decisive moment discussed earlier in this thesis, whilst also framing the performative nature of the city-dweller in the post-Special Period environment. In her description of the scene, Plachy comments that a theatre troupe, on stilts and in costume, were entertaining school children in the square, as tourists took photographs. Outside of the scene, the photographer caught an old thin woman dancing, who was ‘summoning all her strength, remembering her whole life in the sway of her body’ (Plachy 2003: 37). It is an image suggestive of movement, seen in the blur that reflects the woman’s dancing, and is a photograph of the city-dweller that contrasts with the stasis of Bailey’s images of the city-dweller in La Habana Vieja. Plachy’s image is one of a
Havana that is moving forward, rather than one that immobile and frozen in a nostalgic imaginary.

4. Summary

As this chapter has observed, Bailey’s photography in Havana constitutes a further development in the visual construction of the lived space of the city, shifting from the documentary and photojournalistic modes employed in the photographic texts interpreted in Chapters Two and Three respectively. Representative of the post-Special Period photobook, my interpretations have aimed to elucidate the way in which Bailey’s images, as art photographs, represent the manner in which abstract and absolute space is depicted by the photographer. Bailey’s photographs of the city-dweller in my interpretations above exemplify the medium’s ability to, as Urry observes, ‘pass itself off as a miniaturization of the real, without revealing either its constructed nature or its ideological content’ (Urry 2001: 127). The reductive nature of Bailey’s stereotyping of his subjects creates a cluster of the real, and by celebrating these subaltern subjects in this way Bailey contributes to the construction of Havana’s Otherness, in turn stereotyping, fantasizing and fetishizing the lived space represented in the frame. This stereotyping is part of what Derrida calls ‘a violent hierarchy’ in the binary between the observer (the photographer/viewer) and the observed (the Other); ‘One of the two terms governs […] the other or has the upper hand’ (1972: 41). For Foucault, of course, this relationship involves the binary of ‘power/knowledge’ and stereotyping classifies the city-dweller in Bailey’s images according to a norm, and constructing the subaltern as Other.

Towards the end of the 1990s and throughout the 2000s, photography has formulated a historical ‘scramble’ (Dopico 2002: 452) for understanding and documenting Havana, which has provided a market appetite for Cuban products. As my readings in Part Two will reveal, these photographic texts have also proved decisive in the further objectification that has taken place in the consumption of the city abroad, in which the signifiers located in the photographic texts in Part One are seen in the reconceptualization of Havana as part of a consumable geography. Moreover, the following part of this thesis also shifts from interpretations of the “representation” of Havana, explored in Part One, and will aim to further explore Havana as an imagined space, whilst drawing upon the reconceptualized city-space in the advertising image and the re-constituted and themed urban environment.
1. Introduction

Today it is impossible to escape reconceptualized visions of Havana as an imaginary and performative space when exploring photographic representations of the city. Such images are created and distributed within advertising discourse and, as Berger notes, are seen without effort or choice upon the part of the viewer (1972: 129-30) and therefore have a significant role in the formation of visual constructs of city-space. The projection of Havana within the advertising image has been largely disregarded from academic interrogation and consequently academic discourse has overlooked a key component in the construction of an imaginary Havana within visual culture.

In this chapter, the advertising image is regarded as a promotional device, rather than a documentary or photojournalistic tool, as seen in Chapters Two, Three and Four. It is therefore highlighted as a more overtly constructed, interpretative and representational medium. To explore these themes, this chapter will focus on the images that constitute Havana Club’s advertising campaign, Nothing Compares to Havana (2010). In the advertisements, the meaning of the image is anchored through the accompanying text whilst the manipulation of colour, contrast and other graphic intervention is used to evoke specific emotions and moods in the viewer. In the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign these moods constitute feelings of nostalgia and longing for a Havana imaginary. My interpretations will suggest that these advertising images re-evaluate and envision a constructed way of city life rather than representing a “real” Havana. Here the viewer ‘sees’ forms of a hybridised city space that incorporate various stereotypical mental constructs of Havana as part of the advertising campaign’s reconceptualization of the city-space. Additionally, the campaign infuses a number of different mediums including photographic texts and pseudo-documentary video-shorts. It also features an online website, a tool to encourage viewers to explore the campaign on the worldwide web. As my readings of
these texts will reveal, these representations collude in the construction of a virtual Havana space.

Through the careful construction and staging of photographic space, the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign exhibits performative representations of an imagined city-space containing advertising images which represent a constructed rather than “real” or revealed Havana. The appeal of Havana Club’s advertising image lies in both the camera’s revelatory ability to capture the city-space, and in the photographer’s representational abilities to visually construct Havana. Moreover, the choice of images used, the techniques employed by the photographer and the manipulation made to the images in post-production are all crucial to the way in which the campaign constructs an imagined Havana for the viewer. Within the confines of this imagined Havana, the role of the city-dweller in the supposedly lived space represented in the image is key, and this links my readings in this chapter with those made in Part One of this thesis.

This chapter will also survey the representation of a virtual Havana through the advertising image. To do this, it is relevant to draw upon examples of the reproduction of the recognizable sites and sights of Havana, including La Habana Vieja, the Malecón, Vedado, and Centro Habana in advertising. Rather than exploring the representation of the city here as an ‘ambient’ or ‘virtual city,’ as posited by Dopico (2002: 453), this chapter will explore the reconstitution of the city through the realm of the visual in advertising as the city as ‘hyperreal’ (Baudrillard: 1983). In doing so, my interpretations will explore the depiction of Havana as a hybridised space in which the city as a consumable geography is founded upon the mythologization of place and space. In my observations, this chapter will consider the viewer’s reading of the advertising images as problematized by the way in which the city is presented to them. Havana is envisioned in these images as a copy world of simulated stimuli in which the spectator’s fulfilment is met by the advertising image’s promise of an imitation “reality”. As Dopico notes, advertising images such as those examined in this chapter constitute part of the re-circulation of images that signal an investment in Cuban culture. The images operate simultaneously as political fantasy, nostalgic commodity, and Cold War fetish in which ‘practiced hands in the fantasies of neocolonialism and underdevelopment, inheritors of a voracious industry of tourism and advertising, have depicted the modern habanero/a in a ‘market mirror game where images reify—but do not represent—the real segregations of their city’s tourist apartheid’ (2002: 453-4). Moreover, the notion of the Cuban people as the most
alluring element of the Cuban tourist panorama is highlighted briefly by Scarpaci and Portela in their discussion of Cuban landscapes. Cubans, they write, have a ‘strong cultural allure; they are internationally appealing at many levels, and, perhaps, always have been’ (2009: 118). Scarpaci and Portela posit that this attraction is founded in street humour (choteo), Cuban style, racial blending (mestizaje), and the cross-fertilization of culture that makes up Havana’s ‘sensory components’ (118). Interestingly, the authors also illustrate this with the example of the Havana Club brand, stating that it has ‘tapped into promoting the sultry look of brown-skinned beauties dancing in the Caribbean moonlight and in the shadow of Spanish colonial architecture’ (119).

2. Contexts

2.1 The Nothing Compares to Havana campaign

Nothing Compares to Havana (produced for Pernod Ricard by M&C Saatchi.GAD in 2010) is the title of a French-U.S. advertising campaign designed for the Havana Club rum brand. The campaign incorporated the work of one film-director (Harmony Korine), a photographer (Guy Aroch), two creative directors (Daniel Fohr and Antoine Barthuel), one art director (Patrick Samot), and two copywriters (Alexandre Bertrand and Bjoern Bremer). In that same year, Havana Club launched the campaign which focussed on everyday life in the Cuban capital. The worldwide distributor of the rum, Pernod Ricard, who produce Havana Club in a joint venture with a Cuban state company, showcased their Nothing Compares to Havana campaign with print, billboard and cinema advertising, alongside additional online resources and PR support. In addition to its launch in the UK, the campaign would also be seen in Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey. The campaign attempts to depict various “everyday” scenes from the city of Havana, either in print or on screen for the spectator. These scenes include shots of 1950s automobiles, Cubans dancing in the streets, ballet dancers at the side of the road, a young Cuban on the Malecón, men playing domino, removal men dancing, a worker in the Havana Club factory, musicians traversing the city, a newly-wed couple on a push-bike, and a case of Havana Club weighing heavily on the back of a bicycle. Furthermore, the Nothing

25 See also: Havana Club’s Nothing Compares to Havana website (http://www.nothingcomparestohavana.com), Havana Club’s Havana Cultura website (http://www.havana-cultura.com) and the Havana Club website (http://www.havana-club.com)
The campaign was previewed in the UK at the Notting Hill Festival in August 2010 and then featured heavily on radio and in cinemas in the run up to Christmas, reaching 63% of 25-34 year old males in the UK (McKenna: 2010). The campaign included the running of these adverts alongside trailers in both art-house and mainstream outlets with a focus behind The Social Network (2010) film, chosen specifically to reach Havana Club’s target audience. Patrick Venning, head of marketing for Havana Club, explained the philosophy behind the campaign as follows:

In Havana, people remain true to themselves and appreciate the simplicity of human interaction in every day life. ‘Nothing Compares to Havana’ sums up this refreshing attitude highlighting the informality, passion and generosity of the city, reiterating Havana Club’s authentic Cuban heritage. Havana Club is a truly authentic Cuban brand and we believe this expressive and exciting campaign reflects that perfectly. (McKenna 2010)

Venning’s comment in the quotation above quite succinctly states Havana Club’s interest in the appeal of ‘lo cotidiano,’ and in representing the lived spaces of the city within the advertising image. His observation regarding the ‘generosity of the city’ suggests a relationship between the observer and the observed within the advertising campaign. However, as my analysis below will illuminate, the campaign’s visualization of the city is in fact a one way interpretation which frames an imagined Havana in frozen moments of lived space. These fleeting glances, represented by the advertising images, divulge little in regards to the actual city and instead promote the representation of an idealized Havana within the public imaginary. Photographs for the campaign were shot by Guy Aroch, an Israeli-American New York-based fashion and celebrity photographer. Aroch specializes in beauty, fashion, and celebrity portraits which can be seen on the covers and in features of newspapers and international magazines, and in advertising.26 The video shorts used as part of the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign, directed by American film-director Harmony Korine, depict filmic representations that frame the same subjects posed by Aroch in the advertising images.

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26 Aroch’s journalistic credits include Men’s Vogue, Italian Glamour, Italian GQ, and The New York Times. In advertising, in addition to Havana Club, Aroch has worked with brands such as Victoria’s Secret, Nivea Visage, L’Oréal, Garnier, and H&M.
2.2 Advertising, the imaginary and decorporealized space

In his text *Culture in the Plural*, de Certeau explores the notion of the imaginary city (1997: 17). He notes that the ‘language of the imaginary is multiplying’ within the confines of the urban environment, and has transformed into a language that defines the interactions between the city-dweller and city-space (17). De Certeau’s understanding of the expansive nature of the imaginary is crucial to my readings of Havana as a consumable geography in Part Two of this thesis. My examples are inextricably linked to the proliferation of mythologies, which in turn, continue to construct the way in which we ‘see’ the city in the global imaginary (17), a concept directly linked to the realm of the visual. As de Certeau states, it forms part of a particularly ‘ocular exoticism’ that is directly linked to the discourse of advertising (18). According to de Certeau, mythologies ‘invade’ advertising by transforming the vocabulary of exchange into an imaginary literature (20).

In the advertising images below, the reconstruction of Havana involves the selling of an imaginary Havana as a consumable product. It involves a reconstruction of city life beyond national frontiers within an imaginary, and moves one step closer to the material reconstruction and re-imagination of city spaces which is considered in Chapter Six. Furthermore, the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign is also representative of what Lefebvre calls decorporealized space (1970: 203), as visualized within the confines of the advertising image. This involves the alienation of the city-dweller, the habanero/a, from the actual city-space in an image that is actually a reconstruction of city life within an imaginary.

2.3 Advertising and photography

It is worth scrutinizing the role of reconceptualized visions of the city in advertising when exploring photographic representations of the city of Havana in the modern imaginary. In the twenty-first century, processes of production and manufacture have governed our lives to such an extent that we are now aware of them as a specific set of historical, social and economic relations which human beings have constructed (Wells 2009: 207). The influence of the advertising image was the subject of scrutiny as early as 1927, by Hungarian photographer László Moholy-Nagy (1927: 257-60), who did not regard photography primarily as an art form, but a powerful and effective means for transforming visual culture, and approached advertising’s place in modern life as a
powerful means of manipulation that was linked directly to the lived space of the city. These relations are significant to my interpretations of the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign below, in that they form the basis for the construction of the imaginary city-space in the advertising image. My readings in this chapter present the medium as both a cultural tool which has been commodified, as well as a device that has been used to express commodity culture. In his *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord focussed on what he saw as a process of exploitation in which the mass media was involved with the creation of spectacle.

Debord’s theorizing of this imagined space links directly to my analyses of the hybridised depiction of the city-space below, which also insinuates that the projection of Havana within the advertising image spectacularizes an inaccessible reality, or ‘hyperreality’. My interpretations will also explore the way in which the ideology behind an advertising campaign can have an impact on the way in which we see Havana today. To do this, the discussion in this chapter will identify how the juxtaposition of glamour and naturalism affects the way in which we see and consume Havana in advertising within the public imaginary. The *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign, which will be scrutinised below, showcases how relatively mundane activities are glamorised as part of the process through which photography has helped instil products with characteristics that are generally not associated with the commodity. By relating these processes within the confines of the advertising campaign, the advertising images form a depiction of the city-space that reconceptualizes the lived space of the city into an imaginary.

2.4 Photographic context

As mentioned above, Aroch’s experience as a fashion photographer is key to my readings of his Havana Club advertising images. The language of fashion photography is carefully examined by Clive Scott, and his insight is particularly useful to my interpretations of Aroch’s images of women in the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign. As Scott notes, fashion photography has, throughout its history, tended to transform women into objects (Scott 1999: 131). Their clothes both help to construct and complement identity, and enhance and dramatize the physical qualities of the women in the image. It is this way of seeing that Scott calls ‘unobtrusive aesthetic engineering’ (133). Like the fashion photograph, the advertising images in *Nothing Compare to Havana* attain an ‘absence-of-reality’ factor. This is due to the way in
which the photograph must not present its image as reality, but rather negotiate between the image’s origin in ‘false’ reality and its future in ‘real’ possibility. As Scott states, the element of the image’s unreality is ‘part of the photograph’s investment in the future, part of its projective ambitions’ (145). Each advertising image is layered in careful composition. A first layer of language reveals the campaign’s tagline; “NOTHING COMPARES TO HAVANA”. It is a general reference that locates the scene in the photograph to the ‘real’ Havana. The second layer in the advertising images discussed below constitutes the other linguistic message which is imperative and indefinite. It characteristically refers to the audience in the plural in a way that encourages the viewer to interrogate and explore the potential relationships between both text and photograph, and photograph and reality. As Scott notes, the advertising image compels the viewer to, ‘seek sanctuary in, and specific advice from, the photograph’ (146). It is in this second layer of language, he observes, that the viewer experiences a dialectical relationship with the photograph (146). However, as Scott adds, the advertising photograph is ‘dumb’ and its informational power in regards to the representation of the ‘real’ is severely limited (146). Therefore, the image says relatively little about the city-space, but signifies a prime example of how the viewer witnesses the staging of an imaginary Havana. Additionally, the Havana Club advertising images represent the hyperreal condition described by Baudrillard (1994: 16), discussed in Chapter One, brought about by the ‘meticulous reproduction of the real, preferably through another reproductive medium such as advertising or photography, and that during their multiple medium reproductions, reality itself became unstable and hence hyperreal’ (16).

3. Advertising Havana

The Nothing Compares to Havana campaign focuses on altering the way in which the brand image is perceived from a more traditional entity to a modern and international luxury product. As my interpretations below will state, and as noted above, this involves evoking feelings of nostalgia and longing for an old-world Havana. It is important to clarify how these feelings are perceived through the advertising images presented in the campaign as they form part of the basis for the mental construction of a ‘hyperreal’ city-space for the viewer, thus forming the basis for the example of Havana as a ‘hyperreality’. This chapter will also refer to Baudrillard’s definition of the term in Chapter One. Scrutinizing the construction of the city-space in this fashion
involves interpreting the combination of the physical and psychological dimensions of the product. The former involves the product itself, Havana Club rum; the design of the package and logo, the typeface, the images, artwork, and the colours used. The psychological dimensions of the product pertain to the emotions, beliefs and values that the viewer then equates with the brand. Twitchell simplifies this as the way in which advertising loads objects with ‘meaning’ and represents a ‘conversation within a culture about the meanings of objects. It does not follow or lead so much as it interacts’ (1996: 13). This is implied in my readings below in that the viewer’s interpretation of the advertising image charges the product with ‘meaning’ in a way that defines it as inextricably linked to the reconceptualized space of an imaginary Havana represented in the advertising images.

The successful creation of this imaginary is also reliant on the creativity and execution of the way in which the brand image is presented to the viewer. Whilst, as noted above, the strategy behind the campaign lies in its careful direction towards a specific target audience (and broadcast in media that will effectively reach that audience, for example, in films such as The Social Network), its message is crafted to speak to the audience’s most important concerns. These lie primarily with the viewer’s desires to experience and ‘see’ a Havana whose existence is threatened by the globalizing forces of the West. Moreover, the creative concept behind the campaign (returning to Havana to obtain the photography/video material used in Nothing Compares to Havana) is also central to obtaining the consumer’s attention. Not only is the message of the campaign one that sticks in the memory but it is also one, due to its impressive craftsmanship and fine-tuned production values that might be remembered fondly by the viewer. There are also a number of ethical considerations pertinent to the re-conceptualization of the city space in the campaign. Through their advocacy of the images used depicting the everyday lived space of the city, in their non-objective representation of the city, information here is manipulated and transformed by the image-maker. The accuracy of the campaign is also dependent upon the viewer’s perception, and, as will be scrutinised below, slogans, along with subliminal and other linguistic messages, work in the campaign alongside the images to further develop the construction of an imagined Havana.

The notion of advertising as a way of seeing the world is explored by Hackley, who observes that advertising is in itself a discourse, and a medium which consists of texts in context (2010: 41). He observes that advertising acquires meaning not only by its content but also in its context. The appreciation of the context of communication,
he suggests, is an important part of understanding the way meaning is construed within advertising (41). Moreover, Cook categorizes the various contexts of advertising discourse as follows:

- the physical material or medium which carries the text […]; the music and pictures that accompany the text
- the gestures, facial expressions and typography that constitute the ‘paralanguage’ of the text
- the location of the text in time and space
- the other texts that connect to that text
- the connection with other social discourses implied
- the participants, that is, the intended audience, the apparent originator or sender of the ad and their respective assumptions, intentions and communicative idiom (2001: 2)

Understanding the cultural and linguistic idiom of the target consumer group, what Hackley calls the ‘interpretive community’ (2010: 44), is also fundamental to the success of the Havana Club campaign, and, as such, this informative framework will be explored and utilized in relation to the images discussed below. The term ‘interpretive community’ refers to an identifiable group that shares a common understanding regarding some areas of consumption practice. Furthermore, the polysemy of the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign therefore involves various intertextual references to postmodernist cultural themes to which the target consumer is accustomed. This familiarity with polysemy (and intertextuality) creates a sense of the campaign being an in-joke that excludes outsiders (or other interpretive communities) (44). This is most identifiable in the apparent provocation of the models in the images, and in film, which invites the spectator to join the ‘CLUB’ (in other words, Havana Club). Moreover, as the advertising images discussed below reveal, the viewer’s eye is drawn across reconceptualized images of the city of Havana, whilst being given weighted hints about the classic tradition and ‘club’ they might aspire to be part of, if they were to consume the brand. Therefore, the images of the campaign rhetorically support the idea that the brand transports the ordinary person from the everyday to an exoticized Havana. At the same time, the Havana Club (Cuban) brand-name draws on the cultural idiom of style, sophistication and tradition to imply that the product has those qualities, and so by association, will the viewer who then buys into the brand.
4. Nothing Compares to Havana

4.1 Perception: creating stopping power

In order to increase exposure of the advertising campaign, the Nothing Compares to Havana advertising images were placed in specific media in order to engage with, and gain the attention of, the target consumer, namely twenty-five to thirty-four year old males. In order to initiate this engagement, the spectator had to be aroused in some way by the content of the advertisement. The Havana Club images do this successfully through their originality and interpretations of Otherness that involves the reconceptualization of the lived space of the city. In print, the originality of the advertisement captures the attention of the viewer, and the unexpectedness of a new idea gives the product, and therefore the brand, a stopping power. Havana Club do this in the campaign by employing images of Havana’s lived space that can be both juxtaposed next to the viewer’s own lived experiences, but also identified as Other due to their origin, Havana. On screen, the audio/visual experience works differently to suggest the exotic through images of Otherness, and subsequently has a similar impression to the advertising image on the viewer. In both forms of advertisement the relevance to the consumer is crucial to the successful re-conceptualization of the city as part of a consumable geography. This is exemplified in the advertising image above
(see figure 1), in which a musician is seen traversing the city in an open-top 1950s American car. The man, in a panama hat and sunglasses, holds onto his double bass, which sits beside him in the car. In the image the notion of being part of, or involved in, a ‘CLUB’ (Havana Club) becomes the cognitive nudge that engages the consumer and invites them to take a personal interest in the product and the brand. At the same time, there are also enough suggestive connotations prevalent in the image to maintain the interest of the viewer and preserve their concentration. These include the viewer’s association of Havana with music, explored in Part Three of this thesis, and the exoticized implications of the American automobile. These signifiers serve as visual cues, in the form of props, which the consumer pieces together and links with the linguistic message that “Nothing compares to Havana”. Moreover, the way in which the advertising image in figure 1 is left indeterminate is dependent upon none of the polysemic meanings being prior to or stronger than the others.

As a result, this image creates an interpretive space through which consumers can engage creatively with the advertisement. Arguably, this gives the image its particular power. This is exemplified by the fact that the only definite reference to the brand is embodied by a brand name logo in small type in the corner. This again makes the advertising that much more visually intriguing because the consumer’s preconceptions about images and visual context are challenged. Therefore, by making connections between the images, the viewer makes sense of the image for themselves, and in a Gestalt impulse they look to construct the advertising image as a coherent whole. To do this, the advertiser employs photographs such as the image of the musician in figure 1 to plug into a number of cultural influences that coincide with the viewer’s own construction of the lived space of the city of Havana. These connote, but are not limited to, conveying a sense of belonging, of fun and enjoyment in life, of warm relationships, of self-fulfilment, of respect from others, a sense of accomplishment, and of self-respect. These various influences match the polysemic style of the Havana Club advertising images, mixing visual cues drawn from unconnected discourses, and reliant on different cultural signifiers. In my close-readings and interpretations of the advertising images below, these signifiers constitute a sequence of signs that include labour, leisure, architecture, transport and performance. These signs invite an impulse in the viewer that draws them into the advertising image as they attempt to make sense of the visual cues. It is only when unravelling the way in which we read these cues that a clear advertising strategy appears to be in place. The consumer is expected to deduce that the Havana Club
brand, like its advertising images, challenges convention in a quirky, youthful and irreverent yet modern way. However, these signs also contribute to the construction of the imagined space of Havana and are pertinent to the dislocation of the image from the “real” lived spaces of the city, exemplified in figure 1, and in my readings below, in which the key protagonists’s faces are shielded or turned from the camera. In figure 1, the musician at the centre of the image looks away from the camera and his gaze is hidden behind his sunglass, and he is further disguised by his panama hat. The effect of this is that the city-dweller is presented in an unvarying, reductive pattern that shifts the consumer’s understanding of the habanero/a’s individuality to a more categorized stereotype thus removing their individuality. Stereotypes here serve as a convenient way of understanding a city from which the viewer is distant. Consequently, representations of the city of Havana in Nothing Compares to Havana are therefore distorted and serve to further construct the city as a type of ‘hyperreality’. Moreover, the advertising images in the campaign are representative of a form of post-modern advertising that is rooted in the viewer’s acceptance of the imagined city-space of Havana as ‘real’.

4.2 Persuasion and postmodern advertising

Anthony J. Cortese has described postmodern advertising as a form of advertising characterised by a rapid succession of visually appealing images known as the speed-up effect. In addition to the repetition of these images, high-volume, mood-setting music provides a message which is more symbolic and persuasive than informative. Postmodern advertising, Cortese insists, is ‘an arena in which conspicuous role display and reversal, preening, and symbolically enticing situations are evident’ (1999: 7). Cortese reveals:

Advertising has been stripped of its mystic authority. Postmodern advertising has recognized this and is now flaunting it as a technique to sell to those who have been sold out by the empty promise of advertising […]. The consumer has become very distrusting of the hard sell. […] Now, in order to market a brand, advertisers usually have to use a very soft sell. It is so soft that the product is not the focused and is, in fact, often jettisonable. It is not that advertising no longer wishes to be authoritative; rather, ads and commercials get the consumer’s attention by proclaiming their presence or participation and matter of factly admitting their ulterior motive – to sell their brand merchandise. (1999: 8)
Moreover, by utilizing such methods to pleasure and flatter the consumer, the images infer that the viewer has not been manipulated and instead encourage free-thinking. For instance, in the Havana Club images below, the advertisers are employing elements of fantasy, escapism and nostalgia, the marketer also invites the spectator to both identify with the scene and its associated myths, metaphors and stereotypes presented with the Havana Club brand. Here, nostalgia is used to suggest the brand as more natural and organic. It also exemplifies the image-maker’s adopting of a romanticised and non-industrial working environment to give the product an image of quality and historicity.

Figure 2. “Here, no-one is ever left to age on their own” - Havana Club advertising image, 2010
© Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard.

Postmodern advertising is exemplified in the image of a Havana factory worker carefully studying a barrel of Havana Club (figure 2). The advertising image recalls other successful advertisements, such as the Jack Daniels and Hovis advertisements discussed briefly below. These campaigns sought to frame an Arcadian and industrial past and implore feelings of nostalgia from the viewer – a yearning for the past in an image that takes an idealized form. A number of wholemeal bread producers and whiskey distillers have used the image of a more old-fashioned ‘family’ method of production to great success. By representing their brands in this way, advertisers suggest products that have been produced with special attention and with the experience of generations behind them. This idea can be seen in the image above in the drawing together of the linguistic message “Here, no-one is ever left to age on
their own” alongside the factory photograph, also suggesting a sense of tight knit community with all of the same associated values. These attributes draw upon the cultural influences mentioned above, but most poignantly indicate towards a sense of belonging and the respect of others. Moreover, Jack Daniel’s whisky has similarly produced advertisements since the 1990s which present a labour environment that would not be viable today. In the same way as the Havana Club image pictured above (see figure 2), one worker is often highlighted and their work is represented as skilled and individualised (in opposition to machinery-based factory production). By presenting the image in either black and white, or in a faded hue, the images work in the same way as the heavily colourized Havana Club image to suggest the feeling of tradition and contributed to the constructed imaginary of the city-space. To do this, the images draw an emotional response from the spectator through their use of tints (natural light and yellow and brown in the Jack Daniels ads and cool blue in the Havana Club image). Our association of the image to the city-space is reliant upon the linguistic messages in the image that distinguish the location of the scene, and this is implied through the superimposed text as well as the text on the barrel itself, seen inscribed on the peeling paintwork. As Wells points out, there is a reassuring sense of stability in these images in which, because of their relationship to realism, the spectator is guided into assuming the images as representative of the “real” (2009: 232). Hovis’s ‘Boy on Bike’ advert, directed by Ridley Scott in 1973 for Collett Dickenson Pearce and Partners, works to similar effect. Scott used the slow movement of Antonín Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9, rearranged for brass, alongside shots of the Dorset hills to associate the Hovis brand with an edenic past. The advert infers a lost place where people lived in communities and had a better quality of life. Furthermore, the image also correlates with existing images of processes of production in post-Soviet Havana, such as Robert McCabe’s photograph The Rum Factory (2007). In his image, McCabe frames a worker surrounded by barrels of rum that are piled high behind him. A bokeh27 effect blurs the composition and adds a dreamlike quality to the photograph that appears mimicked in the comparable advertising image above.

On screen in the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign, the notion of nostalgia as a form of persuasion is encouraged by what is known as the “slice-of-life” advertisement. The video shorts that accompany the campaign show the product in use and being consumed by the people who drink the product in Havana. These shorts also

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27 “Bokeh” derives from the Japanese word used to describe the aesthetic/visual qualities of the blur in an image/photograph.
suggest new ways of experiencing or consuming the product, playing upon the
difference between the spectator’s location and the more sociable Havana. In these
shorts, the Havana Club product and brand is presented as metaphor. In turn, as
Williamson insists, the association of the product with the cultural references causes a
transfer in meanings which results in the cultural reference becoming the product
(1978: 9-14). This metonymic approach in the Havana Club campaign ensures the
substitution of the product in order for it to represent the entire product group,
“Cuban” rum.

4.3 Havana Club and colour

Colour in the campaign also serves as a psychological language used to attract
attention, provide realism, establishing a mood, which the consumer then equates with
the brand, building upon and broadening its identity. Warm colours, (for instance, the
use of red in the border), conveys a brightness and a certain cheerfulness to each
image. Pastel hues here also suggest a softness in the image and work alongside the
post-production of the photographs to aid in the consumer’s re-imagination of a
dream-like Havana. Similarly, the earthy tones of the faded and chipped façades
which serve as a backdrop locate the organicity of the campaign as something natural
and simple, matching with the previously noted M&C Saatchi mission statement of
‘brutal simplicity’. Notably, the tone of the Havana Club advertising images is
reminiscent of the Kodak film, Ektachrome. Initially developed in the 1940s,
Ektachrome served as a grainier substitute for Kodachrome in the National
Geographic for many years due to the latter being very slow in poor light. The film
always had a bluish cast (compared to Fuji’s green). The similarity shared between the
film effects of Ektachrome and the post-production of the Havana Club advertising
images injects the rum brand’s photographs with a subliminal sense of verité, and
supports the vision of Havana as a ‘hyperreality’. Ektachrome was used most
famously in the iconic photographs of the moon landing in the National Geographic
magazine. Whilst the Havana Club images do not share a similar level of iconicity,
they do appear to be charged with a similar sentiment. Therefore, the effect of the film
used in the campaign has a “reality effect” on the spectator, a process in which the
viewer accept the visuals presented to them as “real”. The use of lens flare in the
images (added in post-production) is also analogous with inexpensive and disposable
cameras (such as Polaroid). This further supplies the images with a nostalgic feel that
matches the sentiment of the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign. The use of the present tense in the various slogans that accompany the images (“Nothing Compares to Havana”) also serves as a linguistic means to suggest that “reality” is now, again adding authenticity to the notion of a ‘hyperreal’ Havana which exists and can be experienced.

4.4 Slogan and font: “Nothing Compares to Havana”

![Image of Havana Club advertisement](image)

Figure 3. *Nothing Compares to Havana* – Havana Club advertising image, 2010
© Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard.

The visual organization of the Havana Club advertisements (the image and copy), distributed in print and on billboards/posters, is carefully orchestrated to rhetorically support the implicit claims made about the brand, exemplified in Venning’s quotation earlier in the chapter, in which the Havana Club marketing executive ties the brand’s qualities to the everydayness of the city-space and the informality, passion and generosity of the city-dweller (McKenna 2010). There is, of course, something problematic in the brand’s appropriation of a material space within the name of the product. ‘Havana’ here is twofold, it is a place name and a brand and both are intertwined significantly and semiotically which further contributes to the construction of Havana as an imagined and consumable geography.

The headline in each image pulls the other signifiers in the image together and makes sense of the advertisement’s message. The large, capitalized font reading “NOTHING COMPARES TO HAVANA,” identifies the product and brand
(“HAVANA” also serving as shorthand here for Havana Club) and begins the sale by seducing the gaze. The use of the slogan here, as Rosengren and Dahlén attest, not only improves brand equity but also makes the brand appear more favourable and memorable to the consumer. In turn, our memory retrieval process effectively associates the slogan with the brand (Rosengren and Dahlén 2006). Three different processes ensure this successful development: cued retrieval, constructed memory, and pure guessing. Most interesting in the case of the Havana Club advertisements is the role of constructive memory, which serves in the consumer’s reconstruction and refamiliarization with the brand when cued retrieval is not possible. This is also powered by the “pure effect theory,” in which consumers are driven by effective responses to advertising stimuli in the form of a Unique Selling Proposition (otherwise known as a Unique Selling Point or USP). The USP here takes the form of the hyperreal Havana presented to the spectator – one which the advertising images suggest that they too, may experience. The slogan also makes a statement that differentiates the product from Havana Club’s competitors (other rum companies, for example Bacardi). The promise of the product direct from Havana is one that the competition cannot offer. The use of the present tense also serves as a cue both to the tangible product and the space of Havana which can realistically be experienced.

The use of the slogan is also an example of an involvement technique by the advertisers to ensure direct address, a clear statement, through an indirect headline, in which the advertiser is communicating directly with the spectator. In the layout of the print advertising images, the photographic text dominates seventy to eighty percent of the ad. With the headline situated either above or below the image, the logo in each advertisement signs off the message, as if it were a stamp of approval. The selection of the typeface also links with the playful nature of the photographs. In a number of photographs the “NOTHING COMPARES TO HAVANA” slogan is slanted in parallel with the image that it is layered upon in a flush right typographic alignment. This typesetting allows the NOTHING in the slogan to further resound, as it is set aside from the rest of the text. In capitals, the typeface is not only clearly legible but also suggestive of a loudness, which matches the explosive Cuban salsa and garish colourization that drives the accompanying videos in the campaign.
4.5 Havana Club and the photographic message

Through semiotic and cultural analyses of the advertising image, Barthes (1972; 1977) and others (Hall 1993; Williamson 1978) have suggested ways in which we can decode advertising images, in addition to understanding our own role in the interpretation of photographs. Returning to Barthes’s essay on ‘The Photographic Message’ (2000: 194-210), it is worth recalling the way in which the theorist describes photographs as containing both a denoted and a connoted message. For Barthes, the denoted message supposes the literal reality, which the photograph portrays. In the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign we see various denoted messages which might then be drawn together to provide an intended reading or impression of the brand, and therefore affect the spectator’s understanding of the Havana imaginary that is presented to the spectator. The advertising image above shows a fairly clichéd photograph of a group of Cuban men playing domino on a rooftop in Havana. Spectators (the Cubans, photographer and the observer) appear to stand behind and observe the game.

The centrality of the figures in the photograph draws our attention not only to them but also to the city-space of Havana that surrounds them. They are further distinguished by the way in which the post-produced lens flare effect gives the impression of the sun setting over the rooftops of the city. Perspective also gives the photograph a sense of depth and the angled positioning of the table mimics the
buildings of La Habana Vieja in the backdrop. It is an important framing of the Havana old town, discussed in Chapter Four, in that it alludes to a sense of the dreamscape or imaginary Havana presented by the image-maker. The representation of a hyperreal Havana in the advertising image is reliant upon the spectator accepting this ‘reality’. The yellow-shirted player with the white flat cap may remind some spectators of Buena Vista Social Club’s Ibrahim Ferrer. The scene photographed by Aroch used in the advertising image may also remind the spectator of the domino game in Wim Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club* (a staged scene further discussed in Chapter Seven). By plugging into these cultural signifiers, the image-maker draws from the spectator’s cultural knowledge of images that have been repeated in the ‘speed-up’ of images since the Special Period. This second message, or, the connoted message, is described by Barthes as the spectator’s usage of various social and cultural references in order to make sense of the image. It is this inferred message, Barthes notes, which is important and symbolic in that it is a message with a code. Here, the most obvious message is highlighted by the linguistic message above the scene: “To go see your friends, you don’t go on Facebook, you go see your friends.” This slogan further highlights the lack of modernity in the image and makes a specific point of inviting the viewer to return to pre-technology days when people would meet face to face rather than virtually. This message is particularly ironic considering the internet campaign which has served as the primary vehicle for the dispersal of these photographs and videos. However, it is a romantic notion, and nostalgia is powered in the photograph by a fetishization of the *Other* as a timeless, pre-modern place which feeds the West’s sense of itself in terms of progress.

Barthes also describes the signs in the advertising image as further mystified by a second level of signification in which the production of ideology becomes paramount. He describes this as a first level of signification which acts as the signifier for a second level of signification to produce advertising messages that are essentially myths. In the image above, whilst the figures are not interacting directly with the brand – a couple of glasses serve as props on the table - the spectator’s acceptance of the models as embodiment of the constructed Havana imaginary, which constitutes drinking, socialising, and relaxing, and encourages the viewer to transfer these existing meanings to the product and brand.

Furthermore, when we look at the documentary photograph, as Wells explains, the denoted image appears dominant, and the spectator believes the photograph to be ‘fact’ (Wells 2009: 221). However, as Tagg has observed, it is
impossible to have a simple ‘denoted’ message as all messages are ‘constructed’ in some way or another (Tagg 1988: 1-5).

Figure 5. When you drink, you don’t drive. This might explain the longevity of our cars – Havana Club advertising image (2010) © Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard

For example, in the advertising photograph above, the spectator knows that the denoted image is carefully structured and therefore does not perceive it as primarily documenting reality. In the image above (see figure 5) of the exceptionally clichéd and recycled image of the classic American car (still apparently being used in Havana), Aroch carefully juxtaposes the squareness of the buildings in the background with the curves of the car. Shot on the Malecón, between Parque Maceo and the harbour entrance, the post-production lighting effect is particularly insipid. The message in the ad is in the slogan – “When you drink, you don’t drive. This might explain the longevity of our cars.” This linguistic message gestures towards the historical context and reasoning behind the longevity with which the classic American car has been used in the city (the 50-year-old U.S. embargo) and replaces it with the more romantic vision of the careful and automobile-loving Cuban driver. Therefore, this manipulated message is implied not simply through the content of the image but by the way the advertising photographs is organised, framed, and supplemented with an additional linguistic message.
Observing the formal structure of the advertising image, Judith Williamson (1978: 24-6) has made useful contributions to the interpreting of advertisements. Observing the advertising image above (see figure 6), and by following her theoretical framework, we can make further observations in regards to the composition and message of the Havana Club advertising image. For instance, in figure 6, we see an illustrative image of the product layered on top of what could be described as the main mood image (both are photographic replicas). The spectator is therefore encouraged to transfer meaning from the mood image to the product through their juxtaposition. The placing of the product in the advertising image is key to the successful attribution of the qualities of Havana city life to the rum itself. The insertion of the Havana Club bottle, alongside the linguistic message directly correlates the sentiment of the advertisement with the product. The sentiment in this advertising image is unequivocally one that looks to favour a sense community over an insular existence. This also, once again, forms part of the construction of the imagined Havana, a city to which the viewer themselves may also experience a sense of belonging.

We read the image from left to right – a young women dances filling the left hand side of the frame, and on the right side a young muscular man holds a glass, in front of a musician playing a double bass. The “Listen to music without headphones” text presents a linguistic message to tap into the supposed personal experiences of the spectator outside of the nation, encouraging them to imagine the scene and soundtrack for themselves. Again, the viewer notes the repetition of the “Nothing Compares to
“Havana” slogan, alongside the computer generated drawing of a star. This serves as an asterisk, perhaps reminding the spectator of the product at the corner of the image, but may also be read as a loaded icon with which we link the brand to the Cuban flag, to socialism, and therefore, to Havana as socialist paradise. Judith Williamson asserts the importance of the spectator recognising their own active involvement in the production of these meanings. In advertising images such as the one above, the image-maker structures juxtapositions for the spectator to interpret, and as a result they are involved and implicated in the production of ideology – what Williamson describes as ‘advertising work’ (1978: 15-19). Recognizing the various influences of different social and cultural knowledge upon our reading of the advertising image, it is clear that they may be interpreted in distinct ways. As a result, the production of meaning in the Havana Club advertising images should be seen as both fluid and ambiguous. The recognition of the influence of the advertising image also entails the encoding and decoding of the advertisement, and the following section of this chapter will analogize this process with reference to the Havana Club advertising campaign and the construction of an imagined Havana city-space.

4.6 Further encoding and decoding the advertising image

Figure 7. Nothing Compares to Havana – Havana Club advertising image (2010) © Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard

Stuart Hall (1973) has further pursued the way in which we encode and decode the advertising image, focusing on the spectator’s own involvement in the production of
its meaning. Hall suggests that images are first ‘encoded’ by the producer, and then ‘decoded’ by the viewer (507-17). However, the transfer of meaning in this process, he suggests, is reliant upon compatible systems of signs and symbols which the encoder and decoder use within their cultural life. Therefore, the background of the spectator (their gender, class, ethnic origin, sexuality, religion, and so forth) affects their interpretation of signs and symbols in the advertising image, and our relationship and understanding of the various forms of photography become part of those signs and symbols and define the way in which the advertising image’s message may become distorted. These misconstrued readings are exemplified in the analysis of the advertising image above, see figure 7. This photograph, of two newlywed young Cubans riding a bicycle through Havana\(^ {28} \) is an example which may be read in different ways depending upon the background of the spectator. Hall discusses three possible readings of an image: a dominant or preferred reading, a negotiated reading, and an oppositional reading. The dominant reading would comply with the meaning intended by the producer of the image. Here this might be the romantic vision of a couple, just married, returning home on the most basic of transport. This image is therefore injected with notions of Havana’s \textit{Otherness} and unique character. Other readings may interpret this as a message of machismo in the image. Although the cyclist’s gaze is hidden from the spectator, we see the man pedalling the bicycle uphill and puffing his cheeks. Therefore, the image may also prove an interesting study of gender relations in Havana where chivalry appears to be in existence.

The wedding bike advertising image also serves as a variation on the clichéd image depicting the balancing of various Cubans and/or other objects on a bicycle. The bicycle therefore serves as important signifier in the image. The relevance of this mode of transport is highlighted by Cluster and Hernández in their writing on the Special Period (2006: 256), in which the authors centre on the bicycle as forming part of the material proof of the changes that transformed the make-up of Havana society. They write:

\begin{quote}
Although she was among the lucky ones who still had work, Verónica had to get there every morning by bike or on foot, because the city’s bus service was decimated by lack of gas and spare parts. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese bicycles, distributed through workplaces, practically replaced cars on the streets. The Flying Pigeon, Forever, and Phoenix brands took the place of Ladas and old Chevies and Fords. […] Throughout the city, three of
\end{quote}

\(^ {28} \) The \textit{Nothing Compares to Havana} website accompanies the image with the caption; “Have you ever been to an eco wedding?”
four people, parents and children, could be seen perched on handle bars, cargo racks, and makeshift extra seats on a single bicycle. (256-7)

The symbolic appeal of this mode of transport is also demonstrated in Cuban photographer Sergio Romero’s work, in which he focuses on the role of the bicycle in the worst years of the Cuban Special Period. Romero’s *Malecón with cyclist* (1993) and *Double bass transported by bicycle* (1992) are examples of this. In the first image, Romero photographs a woman cycling down an empty Malecón. In the second image, the photographer captures a musician and his double bass being carried down a Havana street. Romero’s viewpoint, photographing from behind the bicycle makes for a clever composition in which the double bass appears to fill the bottom half of the image, and becomes a metaphor for the burden of the Special Period on the city-dweller, forced to travel long distances by whatever means possible. Bicycles as a form of transport also form the subject of many of Keith Cardwell’s images in his photobook *Cubana* (2004). In his text, images of city-dwellers sharing a bicycle, for example a father with his two daughters in school uniform, highlight the necessity of the bicycle in the early 1990s in Havana and therefore subtly signal towards the harsh shortages (notably the lack of gasoline) at the time.

4.7 The street ballet

The Havana Club ‘Street Ballet’ 29 advertising image (see figure 8), and accompanying video short depict a particularly contrived, almost incongruous scene in which two young ballet dancers (three in the video) are posed preening at a bus stop in full dress. The choice of the ballerina in this image is key. As Nichols notes, figures used in advertising are taken from a repertoire of possibilities and each carry a certain meaning and the way in which they are arranged for the purposes of advertising involves our associations with them on a ‘syntagmatic’ or ‘metonymic’ level (1981: 59).

The ballerinas are captured by the photographer each wearing a leotard, tutu, tights, pointe shoes, and feathered headband, their hair pinned back in a chignon. Whilst the image at first appears to present a scene of rehearsal to the spectator, their performance dress suggests that the dancers are either performing or waiting for a bus

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29 The *Nothing Compares to Havana* website accompanies the image with the caption; “Have you ever seen a street ballet?”
to take them to performance. However, the title ‘Street Ballet’ infers that the image-makers had intended for the image to be suggestive of a street performance.


© Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard

The ballerinas’s performance attire, rather than practice clothing, heightens the way in which the figures contrast to the dirty, crumbling façade behind them. The dancer on the left appears to be relaxing. She is not posing or in position as such, yet her legs and feet are in *ritiree*. The young girl on the right is shot by the photographer performing a variation on a *port de bras*. Her arms and legs are in a reversion of a *grand battement* or at the end of a *develople*, supported by the column, in what might also be read as a backwards *arabesque*. The accompanying video short for the image, shot by Korine, again depicts a scene of warming up and stretching in which specific poses - *ports de bras*, *arabesques*, and *developes* – all appear. The arabesque here refers to the positing of the body in profile, supported on one leg, which can be straightened or in *demi-plié*, with the other leg extended behind and at right angles to it, and the arms held in various harmonious positions creating the longest possible line from the fingertips to the toes. However, the posing of the dancers in the *arabesque* position has a number of cultural connotations. Taking its name from a form of fanciful Moorish ornament, in fine art the name can also refer to an
undulating, or serpentine linear motif, the dancers mimic passive objects – a notion discussed later in the chapter.

The posing of the ballet dancers in the advertising image is representative of what Lefebvre calls ‘sophisticated gestural systems’ that ‘bring into play all segments of the limbs […] and invest them with symbolic (cosmic) significance’ (1991: 214). In this scene the delicacy of the ballerinas is crucial to our reading of the image, as their gracefulness contrasts notably with the unruly surroundings of the metropolis. These gestures are complicated furthermore, Lefebvre notes, in that they are staged and therefore representative of ritualized and coiffed gestures that generate a highly stylized form of space (216).

Furthermore, in both the advertising image and the video, the dancers are framed by the deteriorating edifice that surrounds them. In the advertising image, a long shot hides other figures and the rest of the street from view, whereas in the video, a wide shot serves to further establish the location. In the background an old habanero sits watching on, a middle aged man passes in the background, and a dog barks at the dancers, adding eccentricity to what is already a bizarre scene. The denoted message in both the image and video appears to be drawing upon Cuba’s rich dance heritage and indicates more specifically to the world famous Ballet Nacional de Cuba (the Cuban National Ballet), founded in 1948. By equating one of the world’s leading ballet companies with Havana Club, and re-enacting their performance on a Havana street, the advertiser imbues the brand with opposing highbrow and vernacular qualities, again contributing to the construction of an imagined Havana. As a mental construct, this image defies the cultured attributes associated with ballet by relocating the scene to a Havana street, which serves as a backdrop for the ballet dancers. As with the other advertising images discussed above, it is an example in which elements of city life and its characteristics are hybridised, frozen and framed in the formation of city-life as a consumable product. The notion of the motionless ballet dancer is key to my interpretations of the Havana space represented in the image as imaginary. As Barthes notes:

> When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do no emerge, do not leave; they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. (1993: 57)

Barthes’s reading of the motionless image supports my reading of the Havana Club street ballet image as a representation of what Lefebvre calls the decorporealized
space (1970: 203), in which the city-dwellers and the ballet dancers in this photograph are alienated from the actual city-space and re-constructed within confines of an imaginary Havana. This decorporealization is also further highlighted by both Aroch’s photograph for the print advertising image and Korine’s video that contain a number of subliminal messages that are intrinsic to the spectator’s reading of them. These intangible attributes are held above those tangible ones in the image and perform psychological functions that are elaborated on in my interpretations of the image below.

4.7.1 The street ballet and the voyeuristic gaze

Primarily, the role of the viewer’s gaze is fundamental to a reading of the street ballet advertising image. As Wells notes, it is important to remember that the image-maker always surveys his or her subject and personally selects what is believed to be worth capturing (2009: 232). Moreover, the processes of advertising photography, she observes, tend to intensify the voyeuristic gaze (232). In the advertising image, the scene also posits the habanera as a static female site of aesthetic pleasure. In this space, as Christopher Pinney suggests, women appear only as ‘flat icons’ onto which the gaze of the ideal ego and the audience are drawn towards the images ‘in moments of scopophilic fetishism (1992: 28). The notion of scopophilia, following Freud, denotes the pleasure of looking which is experienced by the viewer, causing libidinal excitation. Laura Mulvey disputes the political functions of these ‘visual pleasures’ and encourages their destruction (1989: 26). However, rather than opposing the binaries of good and bad, or narrative and visual, the notion of pleasure is explored by Mulvey as centred on the genderized linkages between stillness and motion, which she finds more problematic. As Pinney adds, whilst still images can, of their own accord, provide the focus for a scopophilic fetishism, it is their situation within narrative constructions, such as in advertising discourse, that they enter ‘greatly more elaborate systems of looking’ (1992: 28). Moreover, Mulvey’s observations of the scopophilic nature of mainstream filmic texts are also useful for interpreting the advertising image here. She writes:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female, The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is style accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and
Women as sexual objects, Mulvey insists, are the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle; ‘she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire’ (1999: 383). Considering this, the street ballet advertising image is presented in such a way that the process of looking turns the male gaze into a voyeuristic one. This is exemplified by the cropping of the photograph for the advertisement (placing the two ballet dancers either side of the column which runs through the middle), which imitates binocular vision, and by the presence of the man who watches out onto the scene in the video version.

In the ‘Street Ballet’ advertising image, the arrangement of the scene for the spectator in a stereoscopic fashion further suggests the spectator in the role of voyeur. As a psychological tool, this preconceives the sexual interest of the target audience and involves them in the practice of looking at the dancers, who are engaged in what appears to be the practice of warming up. This process takes place subliminally as the dancers do not return the gaze of the image-maker or the spectator. The dancers may also represent what Cortese calls the ‘perfect provocateur’ (1999: 52), or an ideal image that arouses a feeling or reaction. The exemplary female prototype in advertising, he notes, regardless of the product, ‘displays youth, good looks, sexual seductiveness, and perfection […] The perfect provocateur is not human; rather she is a form or hollow shell representing a female figure. Accepted attractiveness is her only attribute. She is slender, typically tall and long-legged’ (52).

The image is also further sexualized by the exposure of flesh – the dancer on the left’s skeletal shoulders stand out clearly in the Havana sunlight. As Cortese observes, this lack of clothing in advertising triggers sexual motivations in members of the opposite sex and as a result, visual cues such as those in the ‘Street Ballet’ advertising image serve to stimulate sexual appetites within a process of attraction that is both ‘constructed and biologically shaped to be an instantaneous decision’ (21-2). This process is further highlighted in the ‘Street Ballet’ image by the exaggerated leg length of the dancer performing the *arabesque* on the right. She appears to be more adult and, therefore, more sexual (21). As Latina women, the dancers also serve as the exception to the vast underrepresentation of Latinos in mass media, and become sex objects (94) that highlight the post-Special Period marketability of female libidinousness in relation to Havana. Furthermore, the amalgam of genetic features characteristic of the ‘beautiful Cuban woman’ is exemplified by the dancer on the left, who epitomises the exotic beauty with her distinct features and attractive look (95).
The passive role of the dancers in both the advertising photograph and video short corresponds with the complementary and supposedly active role of Cuban men. This logic suggests that as Cuban men are presented in the media as macho, the Cubana should be seen as passive. In the larger outlook, Cortese has noted that this has resulted in a stereotype that portrays Latinas as inarticulate, subservient, passive, and gullible – a negative stereotype that tends to limit mass media portrayals of Latinas to roles as either maids or sex objects (95). This is highlighted in the video as a man passes behind the dancers without stopping to look at the ‘Street Ballet’ taking place. His lack of interest implies an ambivalence towards the women that is again suggestive of the imaginary city-space the advertiser is looking to offer to the viewer.

The street ballet scene also evokes the relationship between the fragmented body, sexuality and abstract space. This is defined by Lefebvre as an anaphorization that occurs in the transformation of the body. It involves transporting the subject outside itself and into the ‘ideal-visual realm’. For Lefebvre, this represents the mental space of castration, ‘at once imaginary and real, symbolic and concrete,’ in which metaphorization occurs and the image of woman is supplanted by the woman herself. This is key, he adds, in the advertising image, in which the fragmented body is ‘transformed into exchange value, into a sign of the commodity and indeed into a commodity per se’ (1991: 309-10). Grady Clay also postulated similarly in the 1950s that the shape of a woman is a quality ‘which has aroused the cupidi nous interest of mankind since Adam’ and correlates with mankind’s interest in the ‘shape’ of cities. He adds that the spatial characteristics of cities, and the ‘molding of exterior space into a recognizable pattern’, both gives the city a visual quality and arouses (Clay 1958: 7). Lefebvre has also suggested that in addition to the female body being transformed into commodity, sex, sexuality and leisure have also become eroticized and spectacularized in a way that is normally associated with ‘holiday resorts’ (210). Thus, such images in the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign may be seen as promotional images associated with Havana as a tourist zone rather than with the “authentic” depiction of the everyday space of the city. This is key to the way in which the spectator observes the ‘Street Ballet’ advertising image, in that by assuming the bodies and the city-space as one and the same thing, “Havana,” is further reconceptualized as a “real-and-imagined” space.
4.7.3 Performance and the street ballet image

In order to scrutinise representations of performance, my analysis here will turn to address the way in which a theoretical framework on performance may serve to explicate my interpretations of the street ballet advertising image. Therefore, I will now provide a brief overview of the practice and implementation of performance theory with relation to the text. As Elizabeth Bell suggests, dance forms a most illustrative and helpful example of the materiality and history of bodies in “scenes of constraint” (2008: 180). Susan Leigh Foster’s work on performance (1996) also concentrates on the role of choreography and the body in space. Both theorists focus on choreography in performativity that involves studying bodies in moments, bodies in social relationships, and bodies performing within and against historical codes and conventions (Bell 2008: 180), but Foster (1996) also expands this metaphor to include all bodily articulation. Subsequently, with these theoretical approaches in mind, the street ballet advertising image, in my own interpretation, represents an example of the becoming of the Cuban “self” through performativity, within the confines of an imagined city-space.

Furthermore, notions of performance in the ballet image are symbolised by the ballerinas’ attire, reminiscent of that worn since the early romantic ballets of the 1830s and 40s. Thus, the image reminds the spectator of the cultish, mysterious glamour of the classical ballerina on centre-stage. However, rather than weightlessly flitting and skimming through a painted landscape, here, a ‘real’ Havana pavement serves as a backdrop for their performance. The waif-like dancers here become not-quite-human figures, and their costume reminds the viewer of that of the performers of the traditional ballet blanc - the famous ‘white ballet’ passages of Giselle, Swan Lake, La Bayadère and others. However, rather than taking place in the more typical dusk or evening, this scene is played out beneath the Caribbean sun. The feathered headbands of the ballerinas could also serve to remind the spectator more specifically of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake. Here, the spectator might associate the ballerinas with the character of the swan, and therefore with transcendence. The symbolism in Swan Lake is illuminated in a number of metaphysical underpinnings over the course of its plot, more generally we associate the ballet with the search for a perfect love. This notion, repeated in culture after culture, connotes the beautiful vision of a swan in flight to the ascent of the soul and subsequently, to the supposed purity and organicity of the Havana Club brand. To concretize this sentiment, the
ballerina to the left can also be seen imitating similar gestures to that of the statuette found in the Havana Club logo.\textsuperscript{30}

![Figures 9 and 10. Cropping of ‘street ballet’ advertising image (left) and cropping of statuette from Havana Club logo (right) © Havana Club, Pernod-Ricard](image)

Furthermore, in the street ballet image, although the ballerinas are depicted by the photographer in the exterior, the viewer is left pondering what is left outside the image in the Havana space presented to them. One might imagine the ballerina to the right looking out onto the busy street for the bus, which they appear to be waiting for. The street in the advertising image is to deploy an open space in which the spectator’s attention is pulled in multiple directions. As there is no central focus in the image, there is no single place for the eye to settle and as a result, the viewer experiences what Thompson calls, in reference to the paintings of Degas, a ‘multiplicity of incident’ (Thompson 2005: 29), in which the ballerina is seen looking out of the fictive confines of the image.

The street ballet image also uses these pictorial devices to evoke in the spectator a sense of what one might see in the “everyday” Havana and how one might see it: disjointedly, partially, rapidly, and in constant flux. This contributes to the hybridised representation of the city-space and therefore to the construction of the city in the imaginary via the advertising campaign. Pose is also used in the image to convey information about the figures and drawing across the image. The spectator

\textsuperscript{30} This trademark is a representation of La Giraldilla, a bronze statue from Havana’s sixteenth century fortress – the Castillo de la Real Fuerza.
might imagine the sex, age, social status, role, and function of the ballerina whilst considering more intimate matters, such as costume, state of mind, health or sexuality. The ritual exercises are also used to match the starkness of the crumbling façade behind them. The ballerinas are not depicted symmetrically and are instead shot from an unusual angle. The staging of the scene also places the ballerinas in the image in careful alignment with the architecture and objects which surround them. In this way, the stage rhythmically relates to the human figures. The ballerina to the right rests against the pillar in parallel with the bus-stop sign which she appears to be almost fixed to, and therefore the two appear to stretch vertically through the image. Whilst on the one hand, as Alastair Bonnett has observed, the presence of automobiles in Latin America has come to constitute ‘the ultimate symbol both of urban freedom and urban modernity’ (2000: 27), the ‘Street Ballet’ advertising image is also one that connotes stasis and the absence of movement. The image harkens back to the worst years of the post-1989 crisis in Havana, and to a period in which the city’s transport network collapsed. As Kapcia notes:

[...] for a city dependent on the huge daily movement of population to and from work, was disastrous. For habaneros, days were long as they struggled to make ends meet and spent hours waiting for the pitifully few overcrowded buses or camellos (specially converted heavy-duty ‘lorry-buses’) or trying to flag down the even fewer cars, or resorted to the bicycle, which now transformed the city visibly (Cuba importing about a million by 1995, mostly to Havana). (2005: 182)

Arguably, the absence of the automobile in this image, ignoring the icon of the bus in the bus stop sign, appears to mock what Bonnett refers to as ‘the modernist illusion of atomised freedom’ of the bus (2000: 27). The bus stop sign in the image therefore gestures towards this mode of transport as a ‘regular and collective phenomenon as opposed to an arbitrary and individual one’. As Bonnett observes, ‘[i]t is not part of the glorious meta-narrative of the modern city, because, in its prosaic, proletarian form, it cannot be absorbed into the propaganda of ‘individual choice’, of ‘free movement’” (27). Thus, the inclusion of the bus stop sign in the street ballet scene provides a notable contribution to the hybridised construction of an imaginary Havana.

The framing of the various imagined city-spaces in the Nothing Compares to Havana campaign are constitutive of what Lefebvre calls ‘contradictory space’ (1991b: 310). More specifically, they are representative of what he calls ‘leisure spaces’ that have become ‘eroticized,’ and of a Havana that is transformed as a result
of ‘the illusion of festivity’ (310). The ‘Street Ballet’ image exemplifies this, and its signifiers outlined above are representative of a process of ‘spectacularization’ that further renders Havana as an exoticized and fetishized city-space (310).

5. Summary

As this chapter has observed representation of the city of Havana within advertising discourse can prove useful to further understanding the way in which constructions of the city are realized in a different form to the photographic and filmic mediums focussed upon in Parts One and Two. However, as my interpretations have aimed to elucidate, the advertising images in Havana Club’s *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign represent examples of a more overtly constructed, interpretative and representational medium in which the viewer ‘sees’ forms of a hybridised city space that incorporate various stereotypical mental constructs of Havana as part of the advertising campaign’s reconceptualization of the city-space. As this chapter initially proposed, these constructs form part of the consumable geography of the city-space, and are, moreover, connected with the proliferation of mythologies that invade advertising discourse in promoting Havana as imagined space. The evidence adduced in my readings not only substantiates the claim that the advertising images discussed reconceptualize the city-space as a consumable Havana, but also takes a step away from the photographic representations in Part One, and instead represents a movement towards the material reconstruction and re-imagination of Havana which is the subject of the following chapter, Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX -
(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE CITY: LITTLE HAVANA

Capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently in the hundred years since the writing of Capital, it has succeeded in achieving ‘growth.’ We cannot calculate at what price. But we do know the means: by occupying space, by producing a space.

Henri Lefebvre – The Survival of Capitalism (cited in Soja: 21)

1. Introduction

Having observed and interpreted constructions of an imaginary Havana within the confines of the advertising image, in Chapter Five, my readings will now focus on the materialization of the city in the urban form, and will draw upon the re-constituted and themed environment of Little Havana in Miami. Whilst my readings to this point in this thesis have consisted predominantly of interpretations of photographic representations of the city, in this chapter my exploration of the imaginary city-space of Havana will see a necessary shift towards what is an important sight and site of reconstruction and reconceptualization of various Havana imaginaries. Furthermore, my examinations will also infer that Little Havana represents a space that is rooted to previous visualizations of the city, as discussed earlier in this thesis, and that it therefore constitutes a physical space of replication that subsequently renders Havana as a consumable geography and product of the imaginary.

In order to scrutinize the evolving cultural imaginary established in Little Havana, this chapter will engage in the study of the Havana-themed environments prevalent within Miami, and specifically Little Havana, and will explore these examples as constitutive of an the imaginary city-space. By tracing the individual characteristics of these environments, sites/sights in Miami, Little Havana and Calle Ocho, and by analysing their visual attributes, this chapter will propose that depictions of Havana as a consumable geography in these spaces and representations form part of the hybridized construction of Havana in the global imaginary. To do this, this chapter
will draw upon an eclectic selection of visual examples and urban forms, spanning the representation and reconstruction of Havana imaginaries in both visual and material manifestations. Initially, my interpretations will draw upon the reconstitution of the imaginary Havana within the Little Havana neighbourhood, noting the sites/sights that constitute Calle Ocho. My readings will then examine Miami’s CubaNostalgia event as representative of a more hyperrealized themed-space. This leads into a discussion of a montage artwork that focusses on the notion of an imaginary Havana in Miami, in Arturo Cuenca’s Thisn’t Havana [sic] collection. Finally, this chapter will focus on the themed environment of La Bodeguita del Medio, a themed-site that is representative of the way in which Little Havana propagates particular pre-Revolutionary imaginaries of the Cuban capital within its confines.

Of the work that exists in the field, Raúl Rubio and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat’s research on the role of the imaginary in the construction of Havana is most applicable in this chapter. Rubio suggests that the representation of Havana in Miami is founded in the combination of different aspects that pertain to Cuban racial, ethnic, ideological, and class composition including the urban versus rural binary; colonial, Republican-era, and Revolution-era historical allusions; and many exoticized images of stereotypes attached to Cuba (2005: 294). He also observes that the question of “Cuban” identities is a topic central to discussions regarding Havana and Cuba in a transnational context that have developed since the 1990s, and can be located in the work of Louis A. Pérez, who has hypothesized that Cuban identity is not fixed but in ‘flux,’ due to the way in which it is constantly re-imagined (1999: 8). Concentrating more specifically on Havana, Antoni Kapcia has also postulated that the mythologization of the Cuban capital is founded in the way in which the city’s visual identity (‘based on fusion and confusion’) merges with its historical uniqueness (2005: 5). The latter, Kapcia writes, constitutes a ‘continuous fusion of cultural influences and manifestations, making a clear-cut identity as difficult to detect as the cityscape’ (5).

Faced with these concerns, this chapter will consider the way in which the Havana themed environment (Little Havana) draws upon existing spatialities and has supplemented visual constructs within the public imaginary, since 1959. Therefore, the primary focus of this chapter will be in the portrayal of an idealized Havana of the past, pertaining to the generation of various imaginary constructs of the city-space. As Rubio has observed, since the 1990s, the theming of Havana and Cuba has swelled
with the manufacture of Cuban material culture, including clothing, rum, cigars, and antique replicas. He notes that:

The label “Cuban” has thrived on everything from ethnic food to popular cocktails; objects and subjects that might not have any territorial connection to the island or its culture, but that are built within a composite of traits or characteristics aligned with an expectation of what “Cuban” is or could be. (2005: 295)

Rubio’s allusion to the “real-and-imagined” nature of these aspects of material culture is crucial, as a similar process can be traced in the reconceptualization of city-spaces within Little Havana. He also notes that a number of aesthetic discourses found in Cuban material culture identify a fixation on both the urban symbolic of Havana and the historical processes related to Cuba and the Revolution (295). As ‘thematic centerpieces of cultural production,’ these signifiers, Rubio suggests, enable the selling of the consumable idea of Havana as myth, as related to the selling of Cuban material culture, and these become both ‘vehicles’ and ‘holders’ of Havana imaginaries (295). Further exploring this notion, the second section of this chapter will aim to scrutinize the visual stereotyping and exoticization which occurs in the processes that pertain to projecting different imaginaries of Havana within the themed environment. As my readings will aim to reveal, these environments contrast drastically with those spaces which they allude to represent (sites found within Cuba) where material consumption consists of, as Rubio notes, ‘limited government rationing, a weak Cuban currency that has been dependent on the influx of foreign currencies, mainly dollars, that are later converted into pesos, and an underground black market of mercantile material needs […] and material desires’ (295). Moreover, this chapter will also infer that the Havana-themed environments scrutinized in this chapter are represented, appropriated and materialized with the intent of marketing upon the popularity of an idealized images of Havana constructs that correlate with my earlier readings in this thesis, further contributing to the fetishization of various imagined Havanas.

By drawing upon key signifiers used in the theming of Havana in the examples identified, this chapter will, in turn, deconstruct the re-presentation of Havana abroad. Rubio defines these external representations as ‘Cubana’ (296), a play on the term ‘Americana,’ and uses this to describe a field including print, visual, and material culture. He adds that the framing of images in these representations pertain to two distinct poles: soviet era and post-Special Period Havana, and a pre-Revolution
Havana, referred to in Miami as Havana B.C. (or Havana before Castro). Therefore in Little Havana, due to the exilic community’s political affiliations, notably anti-Fidel, the representation of Havana establishes imaginaries of the city as a terminus for nostalgia, pertaining most evidently to the Old-world Cuba motif, and particularly that of a pre-1959 Havana. Furthermore, in the discussion of the Havana-themed environments that follows, discussion also returns to the recycling and representation of images of Havana from the 1930s, 40s and 50s (as explored in Part One of this thesis). Moreover, in my interpretation I will aim to demonstrate how a trend for recycling Havana’s visual culture appears to be at the very root of the successful theming of the city abroad today – representative of ‘globalized’ trademarks of the city that are both conceptualized and re-conceptualized by those who seek to appropriate and experience them (Rubio 2005: 297). As Lefebvre’s observation at the opening of this chapter above notes, we live in a society dominated by spaces of consumption, in which the production of substitutive spaces allow for personal visions, dreams, or fantasies to flourish. However, as this chapter will deduce, the possibility of these visions is provided through the careful commodification and imagineering on behalf of the creators of themed environments.

2. Contexts

2.1 Historical context

Little Havana, or La Pequeña Habana, is unsurprisingly a site of not only social, cultural, and political activity, but also a neighbourhood in which the re-presentation of “Havana-themed” spaces is evident. These spaces present the backdrop upon which the street life of the neighbourhood is played out by its inhabitants and visitors. The neighbourhood was labelled Little Havana in the 1960s, following the growth in Cuban immigrants living in the area after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. To date, the Little Havana neighbourhood has the highest population of Hispanic residents in Miami (ninety eight percent of its population)31. Despite an influx of other Hispanic and Latino communities in recent years, namely Nicaraguans, Colombians and Dominicans, Little Havana remains, specifically in the global imaginary, a site from which specific constructions of an imaginary Havana emanate. As Claudia Lightfoot states; ‘it is often said that it is impossible to understand Havana fully without understanding something of Miami. The enigmatic phrase, El Norte, the North, is used

as shorthand for the United States in general but the focus is always Miami, that echo of Havana across the Gulf’ (2002: 257). Miami, she observes, represents a ‘fairground Hall of Mirrors reflection of Havana: instantly recognizable and familiar yet shifted and distorted into something very different,’ (257) and she refers to Calle Ocho as a ‘re-invented version of a Havana street’ (258-9). Pérez-Firmat shares Lightfoot’s envisaging of Miami, referring to it as not only Little Havana but ‘Havana in reverse, its mirror image. Instead of hard left, hard right; instead of Marxist slogans, designers labels; instead of sugar cane, cocaine’ (2010: 178). He adds that ‘[s]ince the early 1990s, the perception of Cuban exiles as fiery exotics, crazies with a cause, has gone hand in hand with a renewed interest in mainland Cuba’. (179)

Furthermore, within the space of the Little Havana neighbourhood, a number of sites and sights form the foundations of how and why an imaginary Havana is represented as it is. First and foremost is the geographical site of SW 8th Street, otherwise known as “Calle Ocho” (see figure 1). The Hispanicization of the street name to “Calle Ocho,” mirroring the translation of Little Havana to La Pequeña Habana, further identifies the neighbourhood’s Otherness within its surroundings, and also plays up to the notion of the space as a hyperreal site in which a “more real than real” Havana is represented by its residents. As mentioned above, along Calle Ocho and within the Little Havana neighbourhood, the sites/sights representing particular material constructs of an imagined Havana provide texts for reading the way in which different representations of the city become manifest in the re-visioning of the city of Havana abroad. Among the most notable sites/sights that represent these imaginaries in Little Havana are monuments and landmarks, such as Máximo Gómez Park (aka Domino Park), La Plaza de la Comunidad, the Cuban Memorial Boulevard, the Tower Theatre, José Martí park and the Museo Cubano.

However, the phantasmagorical qualities of Little Havana’s themed spaces involve the further commodification, reproduction, and consumerization of Havana. As my readings will reveal, these sites/sights appear in the form of selective projections of Havana that are ultimately defined by images. Moreover, as the sociologist John Urry has observed, notions of seeing and theming are inextricably linked (2001: 124-40). Furthermore, he describes the ‘simulated character’ of the contemporary cultural experience that involves the hyperrealistic construction of the themed environment, as viewed through the gaze of the ‘omnivorous visual consumer’ reliant on the rapid circulation of photographic images (124).
The diminutively named neighbourhood of Little Havana, akin to Little Italys and Chinatowns elsewhere, also forms part of the infrastructure of what Michel Laguerre has called a contemporary ‘ethnopolis’ (2000: 11). As Stephen Cairns has further explored, this involves a number of complex processes of choice and constraint on behalf of the exile community in which the urban fabric is re-imagined by ‘exotic architectural forms, styles and motifs’ (2004: 18) in a way that is inextricably linked to articulating a nostalgia for la patria (the homeland).

As has already been explored in this thesis in Chapter One and in Chapter Five (and is outlined below in section 3), the notion of the hyperreal is used to describe the blurring of distinctions between the real and the unreal, and to imply space that becomes “more real than real.” Moreover, in this chapter Little Havana is suggested as a form of simulacra in which the reconstructed Havana becomes more desirable than the original. As will be explored below, the juxtaposition of images in this hyperreal form of the city plays a part in the implosion and collapsing of time and space, in what Baudrillard has called an ‘atemporal virtuality’ (1996).

In Little Havana, the most interesting hyperreal representations of the Cuban capital comprise the bars and restaurants which appear to play up to and characterize particular constructs of a Havana imaginary in a more stylized fashion. These sites
constitute places such as Hoy Como Ayer, with its title that defines the way in which some members of the Little Havana community, and its visitors, attempt to recall a Havana of yesteryear, rather than of the present.

Other popular locations such as the Versailles Restaurant, located on Calle Ocho, also represent a construction of an imaginary Havana site that is constitutive of the way in which the community in Miami would prefer to recall the city. The proprietors authenticate the experience at Versailles by serving staple Cuban dishes such as ropa vieja, arroz con pollo, and lechón asado, whilst the local community enjoy cafecitos, Cuban pastries and croquetas at the walk-up window outside the restaurant. Inside, the interior is filled with mirrors and extravagant lighting. It is important as a reconstruction of a Havana imaginary as it has received ample media exposure over the decades, due to its serving as a backdrop for the convergence of political figures, anti-Castro Cuban-Americans and other press announcements. However, Versailles is still very much a reconstituted vision of a forgotten Havana experience and does not mimic a specific Havana site in the actual city.

For Pérez-Firmat, the re-constitution of Havana in Miami, and the effects of this upon the global imaginary, also has much to do with the proliferation of Cuban-themed feature-films that have emerged over the course of the last fifty years. The most popular examples of these films hark back to a pre-Castro Havana. The writer lists these as; The Godfather: Part II (1974), Cuba (1979), Havana (1990), The
Mambo Kings (1992), Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (2004), The Lost City (2005) (2010: 180). These themed environments, and re-constitutions of the city represent, as Pérez-Firmat notes, a ‘back-of-the-mind Cuba’ that ‘remains an atmospheric effect, a romantic mist, a trick of the senses: smoke and mirages’ (180). As my readings below will elucidate, these additional visual constructs of the city-space further contribute to the way in which themed sites are developed and frequented by those who wish to authenticate particular imaginaries of the city-space according to specific, reconceptualized framings of Havana.

2.2 Theorizing the Havana-themed environment

In his study of the themed environment, Mark Gottdiener focuses on a new trend of symbolic differentiation that has developed since the 1960s, involving the more frequent use of symbols and motifs to characterize the space within the built environment (1997: 2). The signification which takes place involves not only the differentiation of particular material objects, but also the constant reworking of façades and interior spaces by overarching motifs that draw on a broad range of symbols, and these derive from elements of popular visual culture (film, television and photography). In Little Havana, these symbols define representations and reconstructions of the city-space from a time before 1959. Therefore, the Havana-themed milieus further exploit cultural motifs and play upon the spatialities of Havana that already exist whilst affirming them for the visitor, akin to the way in which museums also function. The Museo Cubano on Calle Ocho, with its vast array of relics (from figurines, to suitcases, to sporting memorabilia), represents a “real” manifestation of this, in which, to paraphrase Foucault, the ‘real’ and ‘actual place’ of Havana becomes a realized utopia. Within this utopia, cultural forms are at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed (2008: 16-17). As my readings will reveal, the Museo Cubano represents a microcosm of the broader theming of an imaginary Havana that takes place in Calle Ocho, and elsewhere.

In reference to these Havana themed environments in this chapter, my analysis will also aim to explore constructs as the material product of two social processes. Firstly, attention is directed toward the literal re-presentation of environments, as Gottdiener notes; the production and creation of large material forms that are socially constructed and serve as containers for human interaction (1998: 4). Secondly, these spaces will be presented as themed material forms that are also products of a cultural
production process and use constructed spaces as symbols that perpetuate an ‘authentic’ construct of Havana, and themselves become spatialities of the “real” Havana, which in the same way as those other visual representations discussed in this thesis convey meaning to those who experience them. What is key to the scrutinization of these spatialities is the way in which symbols prevalent in the themed environment are interpreted and then take on a range of meanings according to the reaction of individuals when exposed to their various motifs (Gottdiener 1998: 5). These are melded in the form of material and visual culture, and subsequently provoke additional responses from their “users”. Furthermore, as Gottdiener illustrates, the consumer’s interpretation of the Havana themed space is therefore reliant on the way in which the visitor inputs meaning through their reading of the signifiers available to them. As he suggests, motifs and symbols develop through the medium of the space’s differing material forms, which, in the case of Cuban visual culture, tend to be highly stimulating. Moreover, as consumers of these Havana imaginaries, we are affected, Gottdiener suggests, by powerful consumer conditioning and advertising, as explored in Chapter Five, and therefore “self-actualize” within the themed environment, in order to further authenticate images of both the self and preconceptions of what we expect Havana to be (1998: 6-8). Consequently, as my readings below will reveal, these Little Havana “places” equate to Lefebvre’s representational spaces (1991b: 39). Not only are these spaces directly ‘lived through’ but they are inscribed with images and symbols of their inhabitants (39). Furthermore, the space of Little Havana is one dominated and experienced by the imagination that seeks to change and appropriate it, by overlaying its physical space, and making ‘symbolic use’ of its objects (39). Additionally, Lefebvre also suggests that the representational space presents us with an ‘illusion,’ a fetishized abstraction, in which people ‘spontaneously turn themselves, their presence, their ‘lived experience’ and their bodies into abstractions too’ (93), In Little Havana, images also both ‘fragment’ and represent ‘fragments of space,’ and the way in which they are rearranged, what Lefebvre refers to as ‘découpage and montage,’ further splinters the representational space (97). Moreover, these images also pertain to Lefebvre’s ‘visual space,’ what he calls an ‘immense crowd’ of ‘objects, things, bodies’ (209). Lefebvre refers to their ‘relationship’ with subjects. He writes:

Everywhere there are privileged objects which arouse a particular expectation or interest, while others are treated with indifference. Some objects are known, some unknown, and some misapprehended. Some serve
as relays: transitory or transitional in nature, they refer to other objects. (209).

3. Theming and semiotics

Exploring the representation of the city in the material form, within the re-constituted and themed environments of Little Havana in Miami, involves considering various concepts associated with the analysis of symbols. This applies most pertinently here to the consideration of the production and consumption of an imaginary Havana as a function of social processes (Barthes 1972; Eco 1986; Baudrillard 1983).

It is useful to correlate this reading with Gottdiener’s own envisioning of the way in which we deal with objects that are signifiers of certain concepts, cultural meanings, or ideologies of beliefs – both ‘signs’ and ‘sign vehicles,’ or in other words, objects carrying meanings with them and/or purposefully constructed to convey meaning (1998: 9). Within the theming of Havana-related bars/restaurants for instance, the spaces themselves, that comprise of the bars, restaurants, landmarks and other sites/sights highlighted in this chapter, become sign-vehicles of an imaginary Havana, which we then denote with meaning. In Little Havana, these signifiers, as symbols of a pre-Revolution Havana, also convey meanings that exist at the connotative level, as a result of social and historical context. Material and tangible objects in the Havana themed-environment, such as items available for purchase at its various nostalgia stores, operate on numerous levels to affect the experience of the visitor. In short, the visitor to Little Havana both experiences signs as objects, and as material forms, whilst social activities convert objects into signs in order for them to function properly. Both processes operate simultaneously, and are dependent on the personal frame of reference of the visitor (9-10). For this reason, Havana-themed environments are essentially polysemic in nature, in that they have capacity to have multiple meanings (or rather “double meanings”) to the visitor, and our reading of them as experiential spaces is determined by our unravelling of the code used to ascribe social meaning to the events, emotions, and objects which we associate with Havana, as exemplified below. The visitor’s understanding of these sign systems, as Umberto Eco observes, relies on their internalization of the appropriate cultural codes and their ability to involve the appropriate semantic field in discourse (1986).

Considering the role of semiotics in the discussion of the themed environment, it is also useful to draw again upon Baudrillard’s writings on Disneyland explored in Chapter One, in which the author comments on simulations of the real that are taken
to the extreme. He exemplifies this using the Disneyland castle, with its design based upon similar buildings in Europe, and the theme park’s Main Street USA, a reproduction of a turn-of-the-century American town. These forms, in addition to their surrounding environs and the country, partake in what Baudrillard calls the ‘third order’ of simulation (1983: 25). This is exemplified below in my interpretation of reconstituted Havana sites, such as in the stores at CubaNostalgia and at La Bodeguita del Medio in Little Havana. These Havana-themed environments, my readings will propose, are in danger of becoming third-order simulations, generating the notion of Havana as hyperreality, or rather as a city without a real origin. The suggestion of Little Havana as hyperreal links to Lefebvre’s discussions on the organicism of spaces. This type of organicism seen in re-constitution is summarised by Lefebvre as that which occurs when an institution loses ‘its birthplace, its original space, and feels threatened,’ and ‘it tends to describe itself as “organic”’ (1991b: 274-5). It is identified, he notes, by ‘an origin that legitimates and justifies’. Importantly, the very notion of Little Havana as an organic or pure space also implies the myth of its origin (the actual Havana), and its reconstitution makes void its ‘genesis’ (274-5).

However, whilst we may consider the possibility of Havana-themed environments as third-order simulation, it is simpler to see them as second-order simulations in which the fake and staged environments appear authentic, because they embody our romanticized conceptions of what the space should look like. This process is simplified somewhat in that such representations are readily available – we can touch them, experience them, and authenticate them as “real”. Further elaborating on Baudrillard’s theory, the next section will continue to explore the Havana-themed environment as a type of “hyperreality,” constitutive of a production of what the consumer, spectator and/or visitor might want their own Havana reality to be.

4. (Re)imagining Havana: Miami, Little Havana and Calle Ocho

In Miami, Cubans live, or try to live, in a Cuba de ayer – the Cuba of yesterday. It is a mythical country we have fabricated, where nostalgia and myths abound.

4.1 Little Havana and Calle Ocho

The reconstitution of Havana within public space in Miami is rooted in what Baudrillard refers to as “idealization” (1983: 44), and as AlSayyad has observed, such idealized urban replicas create landscapes outside of time where the idea of community is ‘naturalized’ and ‘political history’ is erased (2006: 213). As Sorkin adds, this creates a landscape that ‘inscribes utopia on the terrain of the familiar’ (1992: 226). Therefore, Little Havana should not only be seen as a representation that is a reflection of reality but also as a perversion of the real, as a sort of recollected Havana. As a result, Little Havana is representative of Baudrillard’s simulacrum, a form of representation that has no further relationship to the original (1994: 2).

Since Miami became a settlement for Cubans, it has been widely regarded as the most Latin of U.S. cities, and due to its geographical location (the southernmost metropolis in the country), the city is also closer to Havana, Cuba, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, than any major U.S. city. By the start of the twenty-first century however, Cubans could be found in great numbers throughout the rest of Greater Miami. Louis Pérez Jr states that the demographic importance of the Cuban presence in Miami is evident in immeasurable ways, and as a result, the consumable idea of Havana in the city is manifested not only in demonstrable terms, through the cultural economies discussed, but also in a more intangible manner, such as in ‘ambience’ (2001: 97), what the writer David Rieff has called an ‘atmosphere’ (1987: 93). This notion of a consumable idea of Havana as ‘atmosphere’ is central, my readings suggest, to the circulation of an imaginary Havana in Miami, and, therefore, contributes to the wider construction of Havana outside of Cuba in the global imaginary. Rieff continues by suggesting that modern Miami has its roots in the fantastical as a result of the abundance of theme-parks that have been constructed in Florida over the course of the twentieth century; ‘[e]verything is a theme park; every place is really someplace else, or can be if you want to be badly enough’ (10).

This is also exemplified by the way in which the city has been re-invented as a “magic” city by image-makers within western visual-culture, glamourized in television and film in works such as Brian de Palma’s Scarface (1983), Michael Mann’s Miami Vice television show (1985-89) and film Miami Vice (2006). To the exile in Miami, Quiroga suggests, Cuba has served as a memorial to and from the past. Originally, it was an ‘alternate reality,’ not a nostalgic entity, but a parallel universe. However, since the 1990s, he insists, Cuba has more frequently been
regarded as a memorial from the past – something left in time (Quiroga 2005: 204). This theming of Havana in Miami is reliant on a condensed diasporic commemoration of specific spaces, which Quiroga observes as ‘collecting around a common centre fragments that have shattered’ (204). This is supported by Rossi, who insists that the city of Miami today assumes the form of the collective memory of its people, and like memory, it is therefore associated with objects and places (2000: 171-3). Patricia Price, in her discussion of the shaping of cities and urban theory, also highlights the interplay which takes place between the “real-and-imagined,” alluding to the ‘peculiar affective patina’ provided by over half a century of Cuban exiles’s presence in the city of Miami (2007: 92). It is their memories, she observes, that act to shape and form the urban space both literally and figuratively; ‘the imposition of master narrative rooted in these memories and a particular political agenda, and the powerful demographic, affective, and political presence of this waning, but still important, sector of its overall Latino/a population’ (92). She adds:

[…] while Miami can ground theory that purports to the explore ‘the city’ as site of ‘memory’ and ‘exile’ in a real city with the real memories of real exiles, it cannot fully speak for other Latino/a population in the US, or even for those within Miami who do not share the Cuban exiles’s particular history and concerns. (93)

Indeed, the discussion of the reconceptualized spaces below appears to mimic exact and specific ‘memories’ held by exiles of Havana/Cuba, and serve as ‘literal and figurative scaffolding’ for the re-construction of a consumable idea of Havana. Such memories reside in diverse places, and can be found, not only in the oral histories of the exiles who live there but in specific spaces, such as through the repeated memorialization of José Martí in streets, parks and plaques throughout the city, through museums, in the nostalgia stores along Calle Ocho, and in Little Havana. This notion of the material documenting of Havana’s presence in Miami is further highlighted in the form of numerous businesses, such as the bars and restaurants mentioned above, that have preserved their old Cuban names, thus referencing Cuba, Cuban, Havana (or la habana) and Varadero in their titles. Many other business names retain references to the other major Cuban cities and towns in the form of Mantanzas, Pinar del Río, Camagüey, Holguín, and Baracoa (Levine and Asis 2000: 143). Others recognize Cuban’s Indian heritage with names such as Taíno, Cacique, Bohío, and other retail shops have taken their name from stores that can no longer be found in Cuba. Miami streets, named after heroes of Cuban history and culture, also
memorialize Havana to similar effect, despite the streets originally having numbers rather than names – José Martí Street and Máximo Gómez Avenue are examples of this. However, most important is the notion of Miami, and the re-presented Havana as a re-location of “home” that is instilled both literally and figuratively in the themed-environments discussed below.

4.2 CubaNostalgia

The thriving process of ‘theming’, still prevalent today in Little Havana, is an interesting case-study for considering the way in which nostalgic sentiment, and the circulation of images of the Cuban capital, still drives an economy for Havana-related material-culture. Most significant as a flagship for the theming of Havana in Miami is the CubaNostalgia trade fair/exhibition, which takes place annually in Miami-Dade at the Fair-Expo Center, and is now running in its twelfth year. CubaNostalgia’s website describes the event as; ‘a journey back in time for those who remember the island’s glamorous times – and for those who never experienced them.’

Most interesting is the way in which the expo seeks to re-present the space of Havana to its visitors, in a form that does not replicate the city today but remembers the city as it was before the Cuban Revolution. Journalist and author, Ana Menéndez, has commented on CubaNostalgia as a space ‘where history is a marketing concept and memory is always priced for a quick sale’ (2006). Her understanding is shared by José Quiroga, who writes: ‘Time itself, and history, have been codified by the memory of exile, frozen by the memory of empire, and placed on a permanent soft focus with nostalgias of meaning lost’ (2005: viii). Furthermore, as my readings in this section will address, CubaNostalgia represents a themed-space in which image lies at the core of both its existence and operation. As the fair’s founder, Leslie Pantín Jr, has noted:

For every year you live in Miami you hear 20,000 stories about Cuba, you get confused […] Sometimes when I’m talking about Havana, I can’t remember if it’s my own memory, if somebody told me about it, or if I looked it up in a book of photos. (cited in Sokol: 2010)

At CubaNostalgia, mock-Cuban cafés, bodegas, and other stands serve up traditional Cuban fare (pan con lechon (pork sandwiches), medianoches (a traditional sandwich recipe originating from Havana), croquetas (Cuban croquettes), tamales (a traditional corn-based Cuban dish), and mariquitas (plantain chips). Traditional Cuban soft-

drinks are on offer (Cawy (lemon/lime), Materva (mate), and Jupiña (pineapple), and quite symbolically Coca-Cola. As with the Coca-Cola advertisement seen in Walker Evans’s *Havana Citizen* image, discussed in Chapter Two, the soft-drink here serves as symbolic vehicle representative of North American capitalism and the Americanization that was more visible in depictions of a Havana pre-1959. The website for CubaNostalgia even goes as far as to note that Coca-Cola’s first plant outside of the United States was constructed in Cuba. A similar, politically-determined signifier is retained for Bacardi, whose samples are offered to visitors and also used to make “authentic” Cuba libres for guests. Notably, various staged façades, in the shape of Hollywoodian or Disneyfied backdrops, form the places for the exchange and trade of the above items. One of the most striking themed-environments is seen in the replication of El Encanto. Havana’s most famous department store in pre-Castro Cuba, and heralded in the same league as similar U.S. establishments such as Bloomingdale’s. Constructed in 1888, by partners Jose Solis and Aquilino Entrialgo, the original department store was located on Galiano and San Rafael, and known as “La esquina del pecado,” or “Sin Corner”, due to way in which attractive young Cuban women would frequent the locale. The re-imagination of the shop’s façade, complete with a window display and a similar sign mimicking the typeface of the original, could be seen at CubaNostalgia fronting an exhibition of photographs of the original store. “La Bodeguita GOYA” serves a similar role in its replication of a general store in Havana, with its imposing fake columns and mock-stone façade, and wooden interior stocked with tinned GOYA products. A scale from the turn of the century sits on the counter, black and white photographs of elegant Cuban women from the 1950s hang behind the canned products and mock sacks of beans, rice and sugar “hecho en Cuba,” “made in Cuba,” serve as props to heighten the authenticity of the scene as representative of the “more real than real” Havana. Additionally, a bookstore, set up within a production of a Habana Vieja building, sells photobooks of Cuba and pre-Revolutionary copies of the magazine *Bohemia*, highlighting a demand for Cuban images that supplement the imaginaries promulgated by the event. A colossal, blown-up aerial photograph of Havana, from 1953, also allows visitor to re-locate the site of their previous lives, and then to live out memories and/or fantasies in front of the various staged façades at the exposition. This sense of theatre is epitomized by a mock-up of Havana’s Malecón (see figure 3), in which an imitation battered and stained wall is situated in front of a canvas backdrop of la Bahía de La Habana (the Havana Bay) and depicts the Faro Castillo del Morro (Havana’s
On closer inspection, graffiti on the wall reads “ABAJO FIDEL” (“DOWN WITH FIDEL”) alongside the typical Cuban names you might find scrawled on the actual wall, which read “CHORI” and “PEPITO”. The inclusion of this graffiti serves to both stage an ‘authentic’ photo opportunity, whilst re-visioning a “real” space from Havana within the confines of an idealized anti-Castro imaginary. This re-imagination of the Malecón abroad in this context is perhaps most fascinating due to its difference from the other “attractions” available at the event as a result of its supposed representation of the present. The process of being photographed in front of the replica wall, a fake-backdrop, represents a visual deception in which the visitors are not only surprising those who will see the photograph of the staged scene, but are also happily pretending to themselves that they are “on location” in Havana. This re-staging of a specific Havana city space, the Malecón, in such a photo-opportunity also has much in common with the simulated, hyperreal themed-environments that Baudrillard observes (1983), and recalls the similar staging involved in the Kodakization of theme-parks. This re-staging of the Malecón is important in that it recalls a particularly iconic landmark from the actual Havana city-space but re-locates it to a space in which its original, denoted meaning is lost. The values implanted by Cubans in the Malecón, described with reference to Bailey’s photography in Chapter Four, who see the site as
a space of mediation and reflection, are reversed here. Visitors at CubaNostalgia become part of the process in which this replicated landmark is transformed into a touristic sight outside of the confines of the real city. This converts the meaning of the site and contributes to the highly specified imaginaries of Havana and constructions of the city from a viewpoint outside of Cuba. This is also similarly exemplified in Viernes Culturales, a cultural event which takes place on the last Friday of every month on Calle Ocho in Little Havana, and one that functions in a similar way to CubaNostalgia. The Latin-themed event picks up on the aforementioned tropes of CubaNostalgia, offering attractions which span the Little Havana neighbourhood and draw, once again, upon existing imaginaries of Havana. These include domino tournaments, cigar rolling, Cuban coffee, mojitos, art exhibitions showcasing work from local artists, tours of the neighbourhood, street performers and live music. Importantly, this serves as a similar backdrop onto which Cuban-Americans, and other visitors, can engage in the performative memorialisation of Havana, and further develop the idealized imaginary of what Havana means to them. Subsequently, this also contributes to constructions of a romanticized vision of the city an imaginary.

As noted earlier in this chapter, more concretized establishments throughout Miami, and most notably in Little Havana, also serve as nostalgic themed-reconstructions of spaces which were originally located in Havana, and mainly assume the form of bars and restaurants. For instance, the glitzy Bodeguita del Medio in Miami, discussed in greater detail below, shares little in common with its humble namesake in La Habana Vieja. El Gato Tuerto (“The One Eyed Cat”), still one of Havana’s most popular late-night bars, is re-imagined on Calle Ocho as a liquor store. Sepia images of a pre-1959, downtown Havana in its window depict the presence of monolithic Bacardi signs in an Old-world Havana. Similarly, in Calle Ocho’s McDonald’s restaurant, images of authentic Havana tourist sights and sites adorn the walls. These are reminiscent of photographs used on picture postcards, such as the Catedral de la Virgen Maria de la Concepcion Inmaculada de La Habana in the Plaza de la Catedral, in Old Havana.

In addition to these bars and restaurants, stores in Little Havana stretching along Calle Ocho, such as Sentir Cubano (to feel Cuban) and Little Havana’s Official Souvenir Shop, specifically target consumers (both tourists and Cuban-Americans). In Sentir Cubano, images and icons of pre-Revolutionary Havana hang from the walls and the ceiling in the form of photographs, paintings and posters, picturing film stars, dancers, famous baseball players, and pre-Revolutionary heroes. However, most
interesting is the proliferation of mock-travel posters, such as those reproductions of the paintings of the contemporary American artist Kerne Erickson. In his re-imagining of a 1920s Pan American airways tourist poster, Erickson memorializes a figure directly lifted from Walker Evans’s own photographs of city-dwellers in depression-era Cuba. In the image, a gentleman is depicted looking out onto the Bahía de la Habana dressed in an outfit mirroring the suit worn by the Havana Citizen discussed in Chapter Two. The figure also plugs into cinematic archetypes of the foreigner visiting Latin America, seen, for example, in the Technicolor musical films of the 1930s and 40s, and discussed in further depth in relation to Wim Wenders’s Buena Vista Social Club (1999) in Chapter Seven. Furthermore, idealized and re-imagined depictions such as Erickson’s form part of the projection of pre-existing images of Havana which serve not only to amplify established imaginaries of Havana and to more concretely manifest romanticized notions of what we may expect Havana to be, but to affirm the way in which the Cuban capital may be seen as a consumable geography.

Figure 4. 1920s Pan Am tourism poster, Kerne Erickson, 2000 © Greg Young Publishing.
In his text *Life on the hyphen*, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, refers to the Miami’s memory of Cuba as ‘a fantasy island untouched by time or history,’ describing the Cuban exile population as caught in the ‘substitutive stage’ in which they believe they are ‘still there’ and, as such, stuck in a ‘time warp’ (1997: 8). This phenomenon, he notes, is related to what Lisandro Pérez has termed ‘institutional completeness’ (1992: 93), suggesting that Miami be seen as an ‘ethnic enclave,’ which provides for the needs of its citizens, with ‘little need of contact with the outside, non-Cuban world (Pérez-Firmat 1997: 8). To exemplify ‘substitutive fantasy’ Pérez-Firmat cites Arturo Cuenca’s art-project (see figure 5), in which the English phrase “THIS’NT HAVANA” [sic] is superimposed onto images of Miami. He presents this as an artwork that is striving to highlight the failures of this ‘substitutive fantasy’ (1997: 9).

A Cuban artist, born in Holguin in 1955, Cuenca’s artwork represents a process of what he himself has called ‘para-consciousness’ through which he creates an internal vision from exterior “realities”. He questions the fragility of the photographic image and written language, by combining text and image, in order to highlight discrepancies between the mind and the eye. Cuenca employs a process that he calls his ‘Photosophy,’ which involves the blending of photography and philosophy, in his study of internal-essential processes interacting with external (photogenic) phenomena, and he has described his artwork as his own ‘utopia’. The images that constitute his *THIS’NT HAVANA* collection (1990) are artworks that comment on political and social displacement, and still, as my readings below suggest, resonate in discussions of the reconstruction of an imaginary Havana today. His *THIS’NT HAVANA* collection consisted of twenty-four images of Miami, focussing predominantly around Calle Ocho and Little Havana.

In the image below (see figure 5), the “THIS’NT HAVANA” phrase is layered onto a photograph of a man standing by a riverbank, just off José Marti park, with the figure looking out onto the river and the bridge between downtown Miami and Little Havana in the background. The former’s towering high-rise buildings appear to cast a shadow over the scene, this is clearly visible in the river, and notably over Little Havana, with the silhouette of Miami’s stereotypical palm trees filling the foreground.

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35 Arturo Cuenca – Interview, a conversation ii, arturocuenca.com; http://www.arturocuenca.com/index2.html#texts/?cat=texts&sel=10
The overlaying of the text in this image creates an ethereal presence, suggestive of a palimpsest, in which the linguistic message reveals, “this is not Havana”, whilst a secondary message to the Cuban in Miami acknowledges that they are “not there”. Cuenca’s image bears obvious connotations with René Magritte’s captioning in his famous artwork *La Trahison des Images* (1929), in which he writes *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* and highlights the very questionable nature and politics involved in the act of representation. In a similar vein, Cuenca’s work emphasizes that re-imaginations of Havana in Miami are performing within a similar treachery of image-making or a “treason of images” as Magritte’s painting is often translated. The two images (Magritte’s painting and Cuenca’s image) have most in common in their separation of the linguistic signs and plastic elements, which Foucault (1968) refers to, in reference to Magritte’s artwork, as a process that equates to their ‘equivalence of resemblance and affirmation’. Moreover, the use of text here reintroduces discourse to the photograph (representative of Little Havana and the Cuban-exile community as a whole), where the “real” historical context and linguistic element have been scrupulously eliminated, or even distorted. As Foucault suggests, this leaves the image to rest quietly in a discursive space, and it is within this space that the representations of Havana in Miami discussed above appear to reside.

The transformation of the Little Havana images represented in Cuenca’s *THISN’T HAVANA* series also correlates with Magritte’s *La condition humaine*
(1934), in which the artist depicts a painting in front of the landscape the artist is portrays, Magritte’s inference being that that the scene in the painting is as “real” as the one behind it. Like Magritte, Cuenca appears to be erasing the distinctions between the spaces of representation (buildings, public landmarks) and representational spaces (photographs), and by removing these Cuenca dispels the illusion that the Little Havana represented in his images corresponds to reality. Just as Magritte’s paintings both represent a world, and affirm their status as unreal, Cuenca’s images self-reflexively suggest the space of Little Havana as rooted in the imaginary. His artwork neatly encapsulates Kevin Hetherington’s definition of heterotopia, outlined in Chapter One of this thesis, in that Little Havana represents an imagined or reconstituted space in dialogue with a ‘real’ space (1997: viii). By nature of its utopic origin, Little Havana is not representative of the ‘real’ Havana, but appears to mirror the real, albeit in a distorted fashion. As Pérez-Firmat observes (1997: 10), this results in the construction of a ‘nowhere place, void of real meaning,’ in which the reconceptualization of Havana becomes at the same time, nostalgic, divided, and foundational. 36

4.4 (Re)imagining Havana: La Bodeguita del Medio

The following section of this chapter locates a more specific, material Havana-themed environment (La Bodeguita del Medio, in Little Havana) in order to further investigate the mimetic representation of the city, tracing the way in which imaginaries of Havana define the reconstruction of an actual Havana space outside of Cuba. La Bodeguita del Medio, as mentioned above, is a noteworthy example of this, most importantly due to its apparent relocation of a business which has existed in the actual Havana old town since 1951. It is a name which has been used to identify similar establishments throughout the world that offer variations on the Havana-themed experience. However, the literal re-location of this site/sight to Miami provides an interesting comparative themed-space to compare with its namesake in the Cuban capital, and therefore reveals the way in which a consumable idea of Havana is further constitutive of the construction of an imaginary Havana. Joseph Pines and James Gilmore (1998) have outlined five key experience-design principles found in the themed-environment,

36 Arturo Cuenca’s NORTH HAVANA, his most recent project, exhibits images working in a similar fashion to those discussed here, again illustrating the substitutive nature of Little Havana in Miami. In these images, he has superimposed snow onto familiar Havana landmarks as an apparent comment on the on-going spatial/temporal displacement of Cuban (and Havana) culture and identity in the Calle Ocho neighbourhood.
and my reading below will focus upon these principles, which constitute; design elements such as the façade, the harmonization of the visitors’s impressions with positive cues and the elimination of negative cues, the use of memorabilia and kitsch to provide a sort of personal souvenir making process, the construction of an entire mise-en-scène and backdrop for photographs that the visitor may take away with them, and the sensory stimulation of the customer (97-105).

Before examining the design elements listed above, it is useful to reconsider the notion of the hyperreal with relation to La Bodeguita del Medio. In his essay ‘Travels in Hyperreality,’ Umberto Eco focuses on the effective hyperrealistic representation of space in Disneyland (1986: 43). He re-visions Baudrillard’s theory of the hyperreal outlined in Chapter One, and suggests that through the representation of fantasy individuals draw upon a fantastic past/dream that we are able to grasp within our imagination. Moreover, as an idealized reconceptualization of the “real” city-space, the Bodeguita del Medio in Miami is linked directly to the consumer’s nostalgic desires for an old-world Havana, and represents a valuable site/sight for the interpretation of how Little Havana contributes to imaginaries of Havana.
Since the 1950s La Bodeguita del Medio in Havana, known as “La B del M” in both Miami and the Cuban capital, has been seen as a bohemian haunt, famous for the way in which it has been frequented by artists, celebrities and literary characters such as the writer Salvador Allende, the poet Pablo Neruda, the writer Ernest Hemingway, and Gabriel García Márquez, and for being the birthplace of the Cuban cocktail, the mojito (Moruzzi: 92-3). It was marketed following the Special Period as a supposedly typical Cuban/Havana bar with a “Cuban” atmosphere, and the bar is now expensive and heavily tourist orientated. It is famous for its array of kitsch objects, for the photographs which adorn its walls, and is renowned for its graffitied interior which boasts the signatures of celebrities and tourists alike.

As noted above, La Bodeguita del Medio in Miami differs notably to the original Cuban nightspot. First and foremost, the elegant architecture of the Little Havana representation of the bar contrasts with the unassuming façade of the original in Cuba. The Miami location notably draws upon the colonial architecture of pre-Revolution Havana, with its imposing pillars and ornamentation (see figure 6). Outside the building two 1950s automobiles, Batista-era police cars, act as loaded signifiers and recall an old-world Havana where the brand new cars once roamed the city’s streets. The cars here serve a similar purpose to the way in which they are represented in other visual constructions of the city, for example in Bailey’s photographs of automobiles in Havana (2006), but also have different meaning in that they are representative of the oppressive Cuban state prior to the 1959 Revolution, and are therefore synonymous with the political outlook of the anti-Castro exilic community in Miami.

Lefebvre comments on the façade as inextricably linked to the realm of the visible (1991b: 99), whilst also referring to the feature as ‘designed both to be looked at and to provide a point of vantage’ (315). He adds that the street’s continuity is ‘founded upon the alignment of juxtaposed façades,’ as they ‘animate’ the street and, therefore, contribute to the creation of urban space. Furthermore, to paraphrase Sontag, the aestheticization of the façade at La Bodeguita del Medio serves to “neutralize” the distress of post-1959 tensions (1979: 109). For example, the Batista-era police cars are fetishized as part of this process. This understanding is charged with further credibility by envisaging the automobile in this photograph as representative of the ‘purely magical object’ suggested by Barthes in his essay on ‘The New Citroen’ (2000: 88), in which he describes the car as a ‘superlative object [...] at once a perfection and an absence of origin, a closure and a brilliance, a
transformation of life into matter (matter is much more magical than life), and in a word a silence which belongs to the realm of fairy-tales’ (88). Whitfield also groups such objects of tourist nostalgia as ones that compete with what would otherwise be ‘more straightforwardly the recuperation or perpetuation of the Cuban Revolution,’ noting:

[a]mong these objects are the tranquillity of a necessarily slower pace of life, slowed less by the late arrival of modernity than by the stubborn rejection of capitalist technology and exemplified by the prerevolutionary cars, although a broader interest in love of material lack is also part of this repertoire. These same now-rickety Cadillacs are signs of a further nostalgia: for the hedonistic abandon of tourism in Cuba in the 1950s, that for U.S. citizens might also represent longing for calmer, less problematic relations between the two countries. (2008: 28)

As “superlative objects,” the 1950s cars at La Bodeguita del Medio therefore symbolise the favoured Little Havana imaginary of a once paradisiacal Havana. These automobiles perform a similar function to the fake palm trees that are found inside the themed environment. Synonymous with the exotic and a signifier of the tropical climate of the Caribbean, these “fake” replicas also recall the post-war American tourist posters of the 1940s and 50s, in which a “Cuba – So Near … And Yet So Foreign” was promised (Moruzzi 2008: 64). These posters invariably included palm trees in their depiction of Cuba and Havana as a nearby paradise. The fake palmae are also important signifiers of a paradisiacal Havana, and are representative of kitsch.
Whilst distinctively weak in value, as Baudrillard would contend, they operate as symbolically charged pseudo-objects for a particular pre-Revolutionary Havana imaginary (1998: 111). As he writes:

> In this logic of distinction, kitsch is never innovative: it is defined by its derived and weak value. This weak valency is, in its turn, one of the reasons for its unlimited multiplication. (1998: 111)

Additionally, relics of the original Bodeguita del Medio, which take the form of framed pictures of Che Guevara and other images of cultural icons, are replaced in Miami by kitsch, such as the colossal chandelier that provides a decorative focal point of the ground floor bar. This is deployed in order to obtain a nostalgic response from the visitor, once again recalling the decadence of a pre-Revolution Havana. Gottdiener refers to the use of these symbols and motifs as a ‘postmodern implosion’ of varied referents which exploit a sense of longing in the consumer. Baudrillard also writes at length on the subject of kitsch in *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, labelling it as follows:


Kitsch, for Baudrillard, is the equivalent of the ‘cliché’ in speech and a category difficult to define. He classifies it as a cultural category and pseudo-object – ‘a simulation, copy, imitation, stereotype, as a dearth of real signification and a superabundance of signs, of allegorical references, disparate connotations, as a glorification of the detail and a saturation by details’ (110). The proliferation of kitsch, Baudrillard observes, has its basis, akin to mass culture, in the sociological reality of the consumer society. This involves the reproduction and vulgarization of objects, and in Little Havana these take the form of the bygone, and the exotic “readymade signs” that already exist within pre-Revolutionary Cuban visual culture.

The symbolic motifs discussed above, illustrated in the various examples mentioned (the façade, the 1950s automobiles, the palm trees, and the décor), combine to create a range of common fantasies in the visitor. These establish Havana as a nostalgic site (a pre-Castro utopia), and in these spaces, the past is recycled through the idealized signs of nostalgia. Each of these elements propose a vision of Havana
which is then consumed by individuals who rediscover a history not through text but through the themed-environment’s simulation and visualization of the past. Authentication of these histories is determined through other circulations of images prevalent within the Little Havana neighbourhood, in images and texts, found in nostalgia stores, in filmic representations and other visual projections. Furthermore, the extent to which these images of Havana and Cuba are used and consumed within Little Havana, and the periods which they span, serve to demonstrate the supply and demand, and proof of the currency still involved in the circulation of photographs which recall a pre-Revolutionary Havana.

5. Summary

Following on from my discussions regarding the advertising image in Chapter Five, this chapter has aimed to explore the materialization of the city in the urban form, by drawing upon the way in which the city-space of Havana is reconstructed, reconceptualized, and ultimately re-imagined outside of Cuba. As my readings have aimed to elucidate, this replication of sites/sights is rooted within previous visualizations of the city-space and, as such, supplements the demand for the circulation of images of Havana within the global imaginary that both dominate and authenticate the way in which these reconstructed spaces are conceived and perceived.
CHAPTER SEVEN:  
WIM WENDERS – BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB

In the third part of this thesis, my readings will explore the production and consumption of the city-space in the filmic text. As my scrutinization of these texts will aim to reveal, the films examined share a reliance on the viewer’s re-familiarization with that which is already known and acknowledged within existing constructs of the city. Therefore, the texts scrutinised can be seen as mirroring a number of the imaginaries that have emerged in my interpretations so far in this thesis. Accordingly, my observations will aim to expose existing spatialities of an exoticized Havana, that come to the fore as both the observer and viewer seek to recognise and identify the lived spaces of the city. Furthermore, the filmic texts form part of a process of displacement and sublimation in which the viewer attempts to grapple with existing idealized visions of the city. These visual constructs, my interpretations will deduce, are representative of the fervent spectacularization and apprehensive dislocation of both the Other and the outsider.

Chapters Seven and Eight will also propose that the values of the filmmakers and/or artists play a significant role in the formation of the spatialities that emerge from the respective texts. Additionally, the way in which the filmmakers fetishize the city-space involves a utopian re-imagination of the lived spaces of Havana, and my interpretations of the stylistic devices and modes employed by the respective image-makers will aim to examine the way in which they do so to create a vision of the city within a particularly individualised construct. Inevitably, this involves the spatial and temporal displacement of the city-space within the confines of the documentary film. Moreover, this process also involves the reawakening of memories of various critical historical moments previously outlined in this thesis that are both historically and temporally at odds with the spaces depicted on screen to the viewer. Additionally, despite dealing in footage of a transitory Havana, the filmic representations discussed risk freezing the historical moment, similarly to fictional manifestations of the city, and contribute to the formation of the highly exoticized construct of Havana that exists in the global imaginary and dominates understandings of the city today.
Both texts examined in the third part of this thesis constitute constructs of the external filmmaker’s re-appropriation and manifestation of Havana from an external stance, within which re-production of a highly stylized Havana space is aimed at a foreign audience. As has been demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six, manufacturers and cultural producers outside Cuba have employed elements of this cultural imaginary extensively, and, as such, have promoted a trade in Havana as a consumable geography. The films discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight continue this discussion, focussing on the notion of Havana as a site for consumption. Furthermore, these are also filmic texts in which the nostalgia for both a pre- and post-Revolutionary Havana converge the realms of an Old World city and one entrenched in cold war aftermath, and the spatial and temporal displacement described above lies at the very foundations of the various imaginary Havanas that exist today.

1. Introduction

In 2000, British documentary film-maker and author Michael Chanan published an essay simultaneously in *New Left Review* (1999) and in *La Gaceta de Cuba* (1999) entitled ‘Play it again, or Old-time Cuba Music On the Screen’. In the essay Chanan discusses the merits of Wim Wenders’s documentary film *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) and questions why the film was proving to be as popular as it was. It was clear that, as José Quiroga has written, in a way akin to *Fresa y Chocolate* (1994), *Buena Vista Social Club* was ripe for literary debate, because in spite of its emphasis on music, there was something intellectual and thus literary about it (2005: 161). Over the course of the last decade the conundrum posed by Chanan in 2000 regarding *Buena Vista Social Club* is one which has remained a point of constant debate in the field of Cuban studies.37

By specifically scrutinizing the project’s representation of Havana, through its depiction of space following the 1990s and “ongoing” Cuban Special Period, this chapter will focus predominantly on Wenders’s film. Additionally, this chapter will reflect upon techniques and methodologies used in *Buena Vista Social Club*, which correspond with those employed in Wenders’s ‘diary’ films, such as *Tokyo-Ga* (1985) and *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (1989).

As noted above, my interpretations in this chapter will posit the notion of Wenders’s film as representative of the construction of a real-and-imagined city-

37 See appendix for DVD version of Wenders’s film.
space, constitutive of post-Special Period Havana, within the confines of the documentary film. Broadly speaking, the spatial representation of the city by the filmmaker in *Buena Vista Social Club* is manifest in Wenders’s depiction of two spaces, representative of the touristic and performance spaces of the city and these form the foundation from which various binaries begin to emerge, as outlined below. Whilst there are elements of staging throughout Wenders’s film, in his depiction of these respective spaces, the filmmaker incorporates a range of modes, including the observational and performative, and these also delineate the way in which the city-space is constructed as a “real-and-imagined” Thirdspace for the viewer.

As my interpretations in this chapter will elucidate, Wenders’s film would have an enduring effect on the representation of Havana in the new millennium, and this is evidenced by the spatialities that emerged in the post-Special Period epoch, explored elsewhere in this thesis in Chapters Five, Six and Eight. As my readings in this chapter will reveal, the success of Wenders’s film is rooted in the way in which his images of Havana maintain a relationship between the “conceived” (conçu) and the “lived” (vécu) spaces of the city, as outlined by Lefebvre, and highlighted by Soja, and therefore between “representations of space” and “spaces of representation” (1996: 30). In Wenders’s film we see examples of both spaces. The lived spaces in *Buena Vista Social Club*, what Soja refers to as passionate, “hot,” and ‘teeming with sensual intimacies,’ contrast with the conceived spaces of the city, which Lefebvre refers to as ‘intellectual, abstract, “cool,” and distantiating’ (31). Moreover, as my readings in this chapter will expose, these different spaces are exemplified in the documentary, and are found in specific binaries that are located and represented by the filmmaker. The merging of these different spaces in the documentary-film, my interpretations will observe, is crucial to the depiction of the city-space as both real-and-imagined, and, therefore, as a type of Thirdspace (31).

2. Theory: *Buena Vista Social Club* and Thirdspace

For Soja, *Thirdspace* offers a way of observing the meanings and significance of space that takes place in the composition of the ‘inherent spatiality’ of human life, incorporating place, location, locality, landscape, environments, home, city, region, territory, and geography (1). With this theoretical tool, Soja offers a way of expanding upon the capacity and ‘critical sensibility’ of already established spatial or geographical imaginations that are socially constructed by ‘spatial beings’ (1).
Moreover, in his writings on *Thirdspace*, Soja comments on the definition of space and spatiality as becoming increasingly ‘muddled and misconstrued’ and postulates that this is occurring due to both the way in which ‘the baggage of tradition’ and older characterizations of space have become outdated over time (2). He defines *Thirdspace* as a ‘third existential dimension’ which lies between the historical (temporal) and social (sociological) imaginations, and suggests that the infusion of the two presents critics with new modes of thinking and interpretation (2). By theorizing the primary texts in the third part of this thesis as “vehicles” of *Thirdspace*, my readings will reveal a multiplicity of perspectives and alternative ways of seeing the documentary-films discussed. Furthermore, my interpretations will aim to explore what Soja refers to as “thirling-as-Othering,” in order to open up these spatial imaginaries to alternative ways of thinking and to pursue a way of responding to the “binarisms” that exist (3). Furthermore, my explorations of these filmic texts decipher the representation of *Firstspace* (the “real” material Havana), and *Secondspace* (the “imagined” Havana), in order to deconstruct the “real-and-imagined” Havanas represented (4). As Soja clarifies, *Thirdspace* is the ‘product’ of the “thirling” of the spatial imagination and creates another mode of thinking in regards material and mental space but also expands the relationship between “real-and-imagined” spatialities (11). Soja’s methodology on *Thirdspace* draws upon the work of both Michel Foucault and Homi Bhabha, and for this reason their own insights prove to be valuable tools to my discussion of constructions of the city-space in Part Three, and are outlined below.

2.1 Havana and heterotopias

Before exploring *Thirdspace* in Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club*, it is firstly necessary to recall Soja’s reading of Foucault’s heterotopias, outlined in Chapter One. As revealed at the beginning of this thesis, Foucault observes a number of binaries that exist in the space in which we live, in which he further locates ‘oppositions’ that govern the way in which we interact with space (2008: 16). These spaces include; public and private space, family and social space, cultural and useful space, leisure and work (16). In *Buena Vista Social Club*, the representation of these respective “inner” and “outer” spaces form the basis for the way in which the city-space is projected by the filmmaker as both “real-and-imagined”. Furthermore, my
interpretations in this chapter will aim to establish the manner in which these “binarisms” are further constructed by the filmmaker

2.2 Bhabha and third space

Homi Bhabha’s third space differs to Soja’s broader concept, but, as the latter theorist observes, it is a useful alternative form of ‘enunciation’ to consider when exploring the notion of hybridity (1994: 139). For Soja, Bhabha’s third space represents another form of “thirding-as-Othering,” in which additional binaries (here and there, back and forth) coincide with the inner/outer spaces theorized by Foucault. As my interpretations below will reveal, these combined binaries, selected from Bhabhian and Foucauldian thought, and are visually manifest in Buena Vista Social Club. These binaries delineate different temporal and spatial memories that are both recollected by the social actors on screen and evoked in the viewer’s imaginary. In his introduction to The Location of Culture (1994), Bhabha situates his own third space, within which lies the question of culture, in the realm of ‘the beyond’ (1). He observes that the crossing of space and time produces a number of pairings; difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. These binaries are epitomized, he adds, by the French terms au-delà, meaning here and there, on all sides, and fort/da, meaning hither and thither, or back and forth (1).

As I will postulate below, the questions that we face when considering Thirdspace, heteropology, and third space, in relation to documentary, becomes a case of asking; how does “thirding-as-Othering” open up a space for further interrogation and what are the binaries that exist that make this possible?

2.3 Wenders and space

As Buena Vista Social Club exemplifies, Wenders’s imagery in his films is above all an emotional response to the places and spaces he represents. In the words of the German actor Hanns Zischler, referring to Wenders’s Wings of Desire (1987), the filmmaker maintains the ability to “hypnotise space,” and is both aware of what architecture means, whilst having an understanding of the linkages between different spaces, for example the town and the home. Wings of Desire saw this shift, which would prove to be further demonstrated in Wenders’s later works, such as Buena Vista Social Club, in which not only landscape played a significant role, as it had done in so
many of his earlier films, but roads, houses, rooms, and living spaces, along with the lives of “real” people, had a real presence. This dovetails with Dudley Andrew’s theorizing of film as inextricably linked to the representation of the real and the unreal, as it participates, he suggests, in the ‘familiar world of our ordinary experience’ but then slips into its own ‘quite different screen world’ (1984: 41). Moreover, film exists, he states, between two extremes as an interplay between ‘the real and the image’ (41).

In his essay ‘Impossible Stories’, Wenders explains his fascinations with space, and particularly the city (1997: 33). ‘I thought of myself as a painter of spatial images,’ he writes ‘who was searching for temporality […] It never occurred to me that the missing element was “storytelling”’ (1997: 33). Furthermore, as Mark Shiel observes, cinema is a ‘peculiarly spatial form of culture’ due to the way in which, as a medium, it operates and is best understood in terms of the organization of space: both space in films and films in space (2001: 5). Space in films, he suggests, is represented by the space of the narrative setting, by the geographical relationship of various settings in sequence in a film and by the mapping of a lived environment (5). Films in space are defined, he suggests, by the shape of lived urban spaces, by film as a cultural practice and by the spatial organization of its industry at the levels of production, distribution, and exhibitions and by the role of cinema in globalization (5). Perhaps as consequence of this, Wenders has continued to challenge the problems we are posed with when dealing with images and has wrestled with the idea of representing reality. As Rodríguez Falcón proposes, Tokyo-Ga (1985) and Lisbon Story (1994) are useful examples of Wenders’s films in which the filmmaker uses music and architecture to create a ‘metaphorical background’ where the past colludes with the present in order to put into question our celebrated modernity (2008: 36). This is best exemplified in Tokyo-Ga, in which we see Wenders make a pilgrimage to Tokyo in order to find traces of a city filmed by the acclaimed filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu. As Rodríguez Falcón notes, Wenders finds a city overrun by images and appears to ‘lament the abandonment of traditions and the lack of ‘transparent images’ (36), a notion explored in Tokyo-Ga by his friend, the German filmmaker Werner Herzog. In the film Herzog states; “it is not that easy to find something on this planet that shows the transparency of images that once existed. I would go anywhere to find that.”

Indeed, Havana appears to offer Wenders the chance to explore the ideal and ‘transparent image,’ or what Rodríguez Falcón calls ‘a metropolis lacking what normally characterises every contemporary metropolis, the never-ending consumption of the image,’ in which a ‘consumerism and taste for the virtual rather than the real has not yet been developed’ (36-7). The way in which Wenders observes Havana, as a place of uniqueness and authenticity, is testament to this fascination with transparency and otherness, and an example of what Anton Kaes has called Wenders’s belief in film’s ability ‘to explore, rediscover, and thus redeem the physical world’ (1997: 264). Of course, the veracity of the transparency of the city in documentary lies in the fact that the mise-en-scène of the film is not constructed and that, despite the problems faced by the filmmaker in representing the historical world, an ‘expectation of transparent access remains’ (Nichols 1991: 43). In Buena Vista Social Club, by bringing Havana into sight, the viewer is faced with, as Urry observes, three dichotomies: whether Havana is a space of romantic or collective tourist gaze; whether it is historical or modern; and whether it is being presented as authentic or inauthentic (2002: 94). As an object of the collective gaze, we are faced with questioning Wenders’s representation of Havana as ‘historical’ and ‘authentic’ (2002: 94) and our fascination with it lies predominantly in our physical affliction towards nostalgia, in which we direct our gaze onto utopias as ‘smellscape,’ ‘tastescapes,’ ‘geographies of touch,’ and, particularly in the case of Buena Vista Social Club, onto a ‘soundscape’ (146).

Further scrutinizing this notion of gazing at the historical world, Dopico writes that in the ‘zone of images’ which ensued following the worst years of the Special Period, Havana became, rather than a real example of urban crises or profound social experiment, an ambient or virtual city, an atmosphere more than an urbis (2002: 453). Further exploring this concept, what is perhaps most perturbing here is that the images synonymous with such a successful project as Buena Vista Social Club only represent a small portion of the ‘real’ city. This reality infers that Havana’s geography is a consumable one and one which engulfs that which surrounds it and has the danger of becoming, at least under the gaze of the foreign lens, a concrete and valid representation of the city of Havana. Moreover, some explanation for this can be identified in Wenders’s earlier discussions on film. For example, when posed with the existential question “Why do you make films?”, Wenders responds quoting the film theoretician Béla Balázs, stating that he talks about the ability and responsibility ‘to show things as they are,’ and that cinema can ‘rescue the existence of things’ (2001:
Wenders also goes on to quote from Cézanne, claiming; ‘Things are disappearing, if you want to see anything, you have to hurry’ (159). However, as Michael Renov observes, there is always a danger of ‘issues of selection’ intruding on the work on the filmmaker, such as the camera angle, film-stock or type of shot. These ‘multiple interventions,’ he writes confuse the cinematic signs of what we see on the screen and their referents, or rather what previously existed (7). This notion is explored by Hernandez-Reguant with relation to Buena Vista Social Club, who groups Wenders’s film with a genre that Renato Rosaldo, ten years previously, called ‘imperialist nostalgia,’ likening Buena Vista Social Club to films like A Passage to India, and Out of Africa (2000: 7). For her, these films share with Buena Vista Social Club a yearning for a colonial past void of political and economic inequalities (7). Furthermore, Catherine Russell suggests that this type of ethnographic allegory implies a foregrounding of ‘the time machine’ and ‘a discursive production of the Other that may construct an Edenic, pastoral, authentic site of otherness, but only as a fantasy’ (1999: 6). However, Wenders’s film also becomes a device capable of retaining an identity as a result of its ability to depict an apparently authentic picture of physical existence and in turn to freeze the city’s transient appearance.

3. Contexts

3.1 Cuban context: Special Period Havana - the set-up

1990s Havana, as referenced earlier in this thesis, was a time of harsh shortages and decreasing living standards, in which foreign image-makers focussed their fascinations upon a Special Period Cuba, and converged upon Havana as their focal point. In addition to welcoming outside initiatives, and external projects, the government’s response at this time was to legalise the U.S. dollar and to encourage tourism to a city that was now drawing upon elements of Americanization that the Revolutionary government had previously sought to eradicate. This entailed the reconceptualization and reconstruction of certain neighbourhoods, for example, La Habana Vieja, and touristic sites/sights, such as bars, restaurants and monuments, for the foreigner. This resulted in the emergence of a dual-city, a flux of pre- and post-Revolutionary Havana, that involved the blurring of the respective imaginaries and spatialities of the past and present. Consequently, over the course of the Cuban Special Period, according to Hernandez-Reguant, the nation had acquired a ‘distinct
aesthetic quality’ (2009: 13) within the global market. With these newfound visual characteristics, Hernandez-Reguant notes, the Cuban Revolution took a ‘backseat’ to images of ruin and decay in which ‘the music sounds of yesteryear were presented as signifiers of authenticity and resilience rather than as of socialism’s failure’ (13). Furthermore, the increase in production of both documentaries and fictional films about Cuba from a western gaze at this time further powered the internationalization of a ‘Special Period aesthetic’ (46).

3.2 International context: the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon

*Buena Vista Social Club*, the recording, was released in Europe in June 1997 by World Circuit Records, and in September of the same year in the United States. Upon its release, the recording climbed the *Billboard* charts boosted by a Grammy (for Best Tropical Latin Recording) and by Wim Wenders’s eponymous film (see figure 1), which opened in February 1999. The film itself was also a financial success and three months following its U.S. premiere the film had grossed $38 million. Wenders’s documentary had been seen by millions, especially following its later broadcast by PBS, in the U.S., and by both Channel 4 and Film Four in the UK. As Chanan notes, those who were buying into *Buena Vista Social Club* were ‘affluent, well-educated music buyers,’ whose interests were piqued by a sense of the exotic, and whilst the music itself was not commercial, and although it has become a ‘brand’ as such, it was not evidently a product (1999: 3). Moreover, as an apparently non-commercial product, the *Buena Vista Social Club* phenomenon has seemed to implore a heightened nostalgia for its recalling of lost imaginaries of Havana.

Before the original *Buena Vista Social Club* recording, Juan de Marcos González had brought together the *Buena Vista Social Club* musicians after Ry Cooder had visited Cuba with the intention of meeting with Nick Gold and a group of musicians from Mali (Quiroga 2005: 159). The Cuban musicians consisted of Compay Segundo, Omara Portuondo, Ibrahim Ferrer, Eliades Ochoa, Rubén González, Barbarito Torres, and Orlando “Cachaíto” López. These members would become *Buena Vista Social Club*, for the original recording, with the addition of Ry Cooder and his son Joachim. The recording enthused different Cuban styles, from the 1920s and 40s, and critics have suggested its success lies predominantly in its exploration of not simply one aspect of Cuban music, but many (159). The choice of the album title also tied closely to the 1940s theme, recollecting the social club from the period, one
which had long disappeared (66). This is reiterated in the film by Cooder’s references to Ibrahim Ferrer as a sort-of ‘Cuban Nat King Cole,’ one which Jan Fairley suggests, evokes an ‘apolitical’ vision of a lost musical elegance, further explored below (66). Cluster and Hernández add to this in their historical account of Special Period Cuba, referring to the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon as evoking ‘the magical images of Graham Greene and Ernest Hemingway buried in the memory of the West’ (2006: 268).

3.3 Wenders in Havana

Originally, Wenders’s film was shot on digital video, and then digitally re-mastered, before being transferred to celluloid for cinema distribution (Chanan 1999: 7). The effect of digitally re-mastering the Havana footage was to achieve the overexposed colour and lighting effects that affect the viewer’s experience and visual consumption of the city as a type of tropical utopia.

In the film, Ry Cooder, himself a successful U.S. based musician, gathers the aforementioned group of elderly musicians in Havana.\(^{39}\) Wenders’s film follows the musicians from their modest surroundings in Havana to New York City, the finale

\(^{39}\) Cooder had passed the recording on to Wenders during the filming and subsequent scoring of The End of Violence (1997).
climaxing with the collective’s performance at Carnegie Hall. Two concerts are interspersed with footage of the musicians in Havana throughout the film, shows in both Amsterdam, at Le Carré theatre, and in New York. The Havana storyline is driven by the members’s personal accounts of their respective histories, in scenes Wenders refers to as “little portraits”⁴⁰. These “portraits” are shot digitally with mini-DV cameras, Digital Betacam, and in colour steadicam footage. In these testimonies the viewer watches as the social actors tell stories and anecdotes about their lives and explain their own personal philosophies and outlooks.

In order to further interpret the construction of the “real-and-imagined” city-space in Wenders’s film, there is a need to re-cap upon the role of the mythology which served to re-assemble the city within a nostalgic narrative. As Perna has suggested, *Buena Vista Social Club* has ‘the ideology of revival, with its constant calls to cultural authenticity,’ rooting itself in an idealized image of the past (2005: 46). Indeed, whilst there are a number of different *Havanas* presented in Wenders’s film, the director tends to focus predominantly on La Habana Vieja. Here, the director appears to wander with his camera through the streets of the city’s old town and locates the main streets which had been gradually restored in sections in the 1990s, under the guidance of Eusebio Leal, the city historian (Fairley 2009: 17).

In spite of its detractors, critics have labelled the project as the single most internationally recognizable face of Cuban music (Erlich 2008: 121), even going as far as to suggest *Buena Vista Social Club* has single-handedly increased appeal towards Cuba on a global scale (Corbett 2004: 46), propelled, one might argue, by what went on to become one of the most successful documentary films ever. Accordingly, Wenders’s film became an inseparable ‘visual register’ to what was and is the ongoing *Buena Vista Social Club* phenomenon (Quiroga 2005: 159), and is therefore key to the representation of Havana within the global imaginary.

4. *Buena Vista Social Club* & the observational mode

As my readings below will explore, from the opening scenes *Buena Vista Social Club*, the filmmaker observes a number of “binarisms” that form the basis for the blurring of time and history that takes place over the course of the film. For example, in the first sequence of the documentary, the filmmaker brings his audience from total darkness, in a fade-up from black, as the viewer hears the sound of what appears to be a violin.

⁴⁰ These comments, in addition to other Wenders references quoted in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Wim Wenders’s commentary on the *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) Film4 DVD.
practicing before a concert, to a shot of the famous Cuban photographer Alberto Korda showing a selection of his famous images to the camera (see figure 2). The presence of these photographs here has the effect of binding the present to the past, exemplifying Bhabha’s “au-delà,” or here and there, whilst also linking the post-Special Period Havana of the present directly to other photographic moments in history. These “moments” are mapped out by images presented on screen from the time following the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, playful prints of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro enjoying a game of golf and in photographs of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The camera focuses on these photographs in close-ups, which fill the frame, along with the photographer’s pointing hands, and then pans onto a close-up of the bearded and weary Korda. Malin Wahlberg stresses, with reference to Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* (1980), the importance of the photo-trace and its relationship with extratextual knowledge in documentary (2008: 101). It allows us, the author notes, to ‘explore the relations between history, memory and imagination’ and the ‘temporal and mnemonic contingency’ of the photograph (101). Therefore, by using these images here, the filmmaker heightens the authenticity of the documentary from its inception, matching the historical and iconic photographs of Cuba to their author, whilst also highlighting the ‘real’ Havana of the present, which is depicted by Wenders in the observations mode and is explored below. Furthermore, the scene epitomizes the binarisms that make up Soja’s *Thirdspace*, as the fixed and flowing footage of the documentary contrasts with the static nature of the photographs shown to the filmmaker/viewer. This represents a merging time and history, and spatial/temporal contexts, in a way that develops further over the course of the film.

**4.1 Opening scenes**

In the subsequent opening scenes of Wenders’s film the viewer’s spatial understanding is, again, immediately confused, and by employing Soja’s notion of “thirding-as-Othering,” we are able to locate the broader binaries that appear to manifest. The second scene, following on from the Korda footage above, jumps in cutaways between shots of the Amsterdam concert and of Compay Segundo searching for the original site of the Buena Vista Social Club. As the concert begins in Amsterdam, the viewer is again returned to scenes from Havana but now an additional linguistic message ‘Havana, 1998’ affirms their initial observations of the space presented to them. The Chevrolet Fleetline seen speeding across the Malecón, see
figure 3, contrasts with this linguistic message. This, as Rodríguez Falcón distinguishes, is an example of Wenders’s employment of ‘visual anachronisms,’ aiding the definition of the city as a space frozen in time, and as an Other to western urbanities (2008: 37). Moreover, I would further this notion to suggest that Wenders’s documentary is dependent upon these anachronisms in its creation of a filmic Thirdspace that blurs the lines between past and present, and between the material and the imagined.

In the same sequence we hear ‘Chan, Chan’ being played in the Amsterdam concert, and the viewer’s registering of the Malecón, along with the subsequent revelation of ‘Havana 1998’, which also suggests, as Rodríguez Falcón notes ‘Havana’s different temporality’ (37). She goes on to refer to Havana as a ‘utopian space where people enjoy the happiness of having nothing and needing nothing […] [a] de-commodified society where ‘false’ needs are suspended’ (37). The use of ‘Chan, Chan’ in the opening scene is also an example of the filmmaker’s evoking of emotional realism. The anthemic nature of the two chords used at the opening of the song (Dm/F), played in unison by the entire collective, are instantly recognizable as the group’s most famous song and, as the lights come up on the stage in Amsterdam, in footage intercut with Havana street scenes, Wenders imagines for his viewer a reawakening of a supposedly forgotten generation. This ‘feeling of exuberance’ (2001: 93) can be induced by Wenders at this early stage in the documentary as, although we

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41 A contemporary version of a 1920s Cuban peasant song.
have no real understanding of the characters or place thus far, we make a cognitive recognition between the social actors and Havana, and this is recalled for the viewer in his editing, cutting between shots of the band on stage in Amsterdam and the montage of scenes Havana’s lived spaces.

In cutaways mixed between footage of the Amsterdam concert, the viewer is introduced to Máximo Francisco Repilado Muñoz, otherwise known as Compay Segundo, as he and Wenders’s film crew try to find the original site of the Buena Vista Social Club (see figure 4). They are literally in search of something which no longer exists and this scene, slotted into the opening sequence, serves as a metaphor for a lost Havana imaginary which Wenders endeavours to expose to the viewer over the course of his documentary. Whilst Wenders’s crew do not locate the original site, they appear to be surrounded by locals, who become part of the narrative and themselves are transformed into signifiers of the Havana space in which they are discovered. Local habanero/as in Marianao stand around, watching the crew, returning the gaze of the camera. Their presence contrasts against the caricatured Compay Segundo, who sits in an open-top car, in a panama hat, smoking a cigar.
The existence of “real” people in this scene suggests a credible authenticity to the documentary at its inception, which is important as it further serves to blur the lines between “real-and-imagined” representations of the city-space. Furthermore, the DV-camera shots of Compay Segundo inside the car, and the sequence in which he exchanges tips for a hangover cure whilst in conversation with other viejos, also presupposes the intimacy with which Wenders’s crew is able to capture the city and its citizens. Whilst interpreting these scenes, the viewer is faced with deciphering the veracity of Wenders’s footage in the observational mode. Alluding to Bhabha’s third space, one might envisage these scenes, and those explored below, shot in the observational mode, as part of a filmic ‘musée imaginaire,’ in which Havana’s spatial and temporal contexts are universalized. In turn, this footage both appears to be fascinated by the presence and performance of the Other but also renders them as fundamentally unreal, framing them within a virtual space (Bhabha 1990: 209).

4.2 The moto con sidecar scene

The footage that follows these opening scenes is perhaps the most significant scene in Buena Vista Social Club, as Ry and Joachim Cooder enter Havana on a moto con sidecar. In the scene we see wide shots from a tracking vehicle and a more touristic vision of the musicians shot by DV-camera. The scene is full of short takes, quick cuts
and ellipses in time, and this is suggestive of tourist snapshots, despite the seamless editing of the scene, in which the shots comes together as one but also illustrate jumps in time at each break and cut in the film. This jumbled representation of the city, in such an early scene, is illustrative of the film’s composition as a whole. By Wenders’s own admission, the scene is completely staged and therefore this explains to some extent the uncomfortable nature of what the viewer sees on screen. In his commentary to the film, Wenders expresses his delight at capturing this sequence because of Ry’s modesty, someone who, in the director’s words “always tried to stay in the background in every respect”.

Apart from Compay Segundo’s entrance in the opening scene, the cars of Havana in *Buena Vista Social Club*, normally centrepieces in visualizations of the city (seen in Chapters Five and Six), serve only as a backdrop (Rodríguez Falcón 2008: 38) and this distinguishes Havana from the cities documented in Wenders’s other ‘diary’ films.

As the father and son enter the urban environment along the Malecón, the waves crashing upon the seawall behind them, the viewer acknowledges their apparent freedom in the city-space, on their hired, ragged old motorbike with, traversing what appears to be a ‘free Havana’ (see figure 5). Notably, this does not fit with Cuban laws of the period which prohibited the tourist from using anything other than state-licensed vehicles. Wenders asked for this trip to be made, one usually made by Ry and Joachim by car, by moto con sidecar for the one occasion that they would be filmed en-route to EGREM. Therefore there is, at the director’s admission, an element of idealization and exaggeration at work here in this staging of the scene which appears to mix the Firstspace and Secondspace in its depiction of the “real”. The scene also recalls Wenders’s earlier fiction-film, *Kings of the Road* (1976), in which similar shots of a duo on a sidecar motorcycle are used to imitate the sense of adventure found in the American road movie. In *Buena Vista Social Club* this plot device serves as a cognitive function in that it leaves the viewer to ponder the focus of Wenders’s film as either the Cooders’s adventure or the Buena Vista Social Club collective’s own journey, therefore placing further importance on the their interpretation of the film.
The sunglasses which both Ry Cooder and his son wear in this scene are further illustrative of the notion of their limited perception of the city-space mentioned above. The viewer cannot see where they are looking and, by looking for themselves, are limited to making their own observations of the city. Furthermore, Rubio highlights the clothing worn by the two musicians in this scene, which, in all its garishness, differentiates them from the other habanero/as around them (2004: 123). The role of the sunglasses here also serve to prevent eye contact between themselves and the citizens of Havana, which sets them up, Rubio adds, for a semiotic imperialist or revolutionary entrance into the heart of the city (123). Moreover, as they are pictured arriving in this imperialistic fashion, we hear Cooder, in a voice over. These references, Rubio notes, establish the discursive voice of both Ry Cooder and Wim Wenders, voices which link the footage directly to the portrayal of the city in the artists’s own image (123). Moreover, the footage might also be seen as a heterotopic representation of the tourist’s encounter with the city-space, in which the inner and outer spaces of the urban are manifest in the respective depictions of the tourist (the Cooders) and the city (Havana).

As noted above, Joachim also uses a mini-DV camera which he makes a number of shots with from inside the sidecar (see figure 6). This implies a sense of the visitor or tourist being at one with Cuban culture and identity, whilst also echoing scenes from numerous other Wenders films in which his “characters” assume control of the camera (Rubio 2004: 123). In an interview regarding the differences between the use of the handheld and the film camera, D.A Pennebaker likened the different
mediums to that of a pistol and rifle, in that it allowed him to “get closer” and “get beyond the edge” in his filmmaking (Hegedus 2002: 51). The obviousness of its presence in this scene appears to be a case of Wenders highlighting the possibilities it brought to documenting Havana. Furthermore, the usage of the mini-DV camera here appears to be at the same time a comment on authorship and a nod towards the growing usage of the camcorder/DV-camera in filmmaking at the end of the 1990s. In the scene Wenders relishes in the Dogme technique of letting others film for themselves, whilst allowing the viewer to experience the city-space from the first-person perspective. Cooder is given free-reign to film the city as he sees it and this alludes to a more effective and “real” representation of the reality of Havana.

Towards the end of this scene, Cooder begins speaking to the viewer. He becomes the voice of the documentary and in doing so conveys both his own and Wenders’s social point of view. This is a distinct change in roles from Wenders’s other ‘diary’ films, in which he himself conveys his own abstract views in his narration throughout. Whilst we are clear that the voice is Cooder here, his omniscience is suggestive of “voice-of-God” or “voice-of authority” commentary used in documentary to address the viewer directly and lay out its point of view explicitly (Nichols 2001: 47). His role here as both a musician, and artist, and as a narrator becomes a method of artistic proof in Wenders’s film, and the serious but authoritative tone of his voice is also key to its several effects. The first piece of narration used in Buena Vista Social Club exemplifies this. Cooder begins:

Figure 6. mini-DV footage from inside the moto con sidecar in Buena Vista Social Club (1999)
© Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.
“My son Joachim and I came back down to Havana in March 1998 […] One of the great things about that record turned out to be Ibrahim Ferrer. He’d come in off the street kind of like a Cuban Nat King Cole. You stumble on someone like this maybe once in your life. We wanted to try recording with him make a solo record - let him be heard.”

As the narration pauses, following Cooder’s invitation to ‘Let him be heard,’ the viewer hears Ibrahim Ferrer beginning to sing, the next scene takes us into the EGREM studios, and is, therefore, given time to ponder Cooder’s narrative introduction. Cooder’s accent is at its strongest when he narrates, with a cowboy’s slur, “I came back down to Havana”. Consequently, the musician’s accent also alludes to an American story-telling tradition, in which films would reveal their plot, and the perspective of filmmakers on the world they created, through an imagined world, on the historical world they shared with others (Nichols 2001: 91). Moreover, Cooder’s narration formalizes this sense of storytelling and provides authenticity to the Havana presented by Wenders. However, the moto con sidecar scene also correlates with Henri Lefebvre’s discussions of abstract space, discussed in other chapters. His reading of ‘the person who sees and knows only how to see’ connotes directly to my interpretation of the gazes of Ry and Joachim Cooder in the scene. The perception of the subjects as tourists is key to interpreting this passage of film as representative of abstract space. As Lefebvre comments, our perception of abstract space is reliant on the ‘eye’ and its movement within the visual field, which in the scene is represented by hand-held camera footage recorded from the sidecar. Therefore, by limiting the viewer to this touristic gaze, the scene is rendered with a reductive quality in which spatial abstraction endows the footage with a ‘half-imaginary, half-real physical existence’ (1991: 313). What is key to this scene is that the viewer is instilled with the belief that they too can lose themselves in a “real-and-imagined” Havana backdrop, and this once more blurs the lined between the spatial/temporal constructs presented by the filmmaker.

4.3 Havana street scenes

In other use of the observational mode, the viewer later observes Ibrahim Ferrer, shot ambling down his street, in an image that breathes life into the original publicity image for the project (see figures 1 and 7). In such scenes, Wenders suggests that his small crew enabled filming to be both more effective and efficient. The director felt
they could shoot without anyone in the vicinity observing them specifically, reacting to Ibrahim but not to the camera crew. In the scene, the viewer sees a medium shot of Ibrahim Ferrer and his wife talking as they walk through the street. Ibrahim sings to himself, waves to neighbours and enthusiastically offers a group of struggling removal men a hand carrying a fridge, which appears to be as old as Ferrer himself.

Figure 7. Ibrahim Ferrer and wife in Havana in Buena Vista Social Club (1999) © Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

The focus here is on the quiet everyday and vernacular stillness of a sleepy Havana but the noise of the city’s crumbling walls seems to resonate in Wenders’s colourized images. It is a scene in which ‘we imagine the screen pulled away’ allowing the direct encounter with the social actors we are confronted with, and in turn this appears to heighten the viewer’s experience of the documentary (Nichols 1991: 43). However, in his commentary of the film, the director suggests that they felt like they could do whatever they wanted to in the city and that he had never shot in a place like Havana before. Wenders compares this to shooting in other western places where the public’s awareness of the camera is distinctly different. He exemplifies this by describing places where certain people might request payment for shooting in front of their house, for instance. However, despite Wenders’s claim, the scenes which picture the film’s characters in the city’s streets appear to reject this, and the habanero/as captured on film seem excited both by the presence of the performers and by the panning of the camera’s lens. An example of this is found in the portrait of Omara Portuondo, which is depicted in a medium shot, mirroring the previous street scene of
Ibrahim Ferrer. Portuondo ambles through her own neighbourhood – she waves to people who recognize her and sings both to herself and to them, as more and more people fill the frame (see figure 8). In the scene, a woman at the side of the street joins Portuondo in a duet, in what is, according to Wenders, a genuine, chance occurrence that wasn’t planned. Wenders explains; “if I had tried to stage that, I mean I couldn’t have done it, I would have had to rehearse all day.”

Figure 8. Omara Portuondo in Havana Buena Vista Social Club (1999)
© Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

Portuondo’s scene, see figure 8, is reminiscent of the musical films popularized by the Freed unit in the 1940s and 1950s, that included Singin’ in the Rain (1952), but also subconsciously pertains to earlier theatricalised Walt Disney productions, such as Song of the South (1946), famous for its Academy Award winning song "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah." Notably, the film serves as reductive portrayal of the Afro-American, and in a famous scene from the film, “Uncle Remus,” a character rooted in African American folktales and played by the Afro American actor James Baskett, sings the aforementioned song in live action footage that presents the subject traversing an edenic paradise, whilst singing along with anthropomorphized animals. Wenders’s framing of Portuondo appears to work to similar effect. As with other similar scenes in Wenders’s film, the gestures of the city-dwellers, that constitute the lived space of the city behind the subject, are key. This footage of the city-dweller singing along with Portuondo represents a Disneyfied gesture sequence that takes place within the confines of the ‘ideal city’ in which ‘all the passersby have beloved faces,’ and
‘whose streets are familiar and safe’ (de Certeau 1984: 148). The scene equates to idealized visions of Havana as a harmonized Arcadia, and again suggests the city-space as at the same time both “real-and imagined,” problematizing the footage and working against the filmmaker’s representation of the “real” Havana.

Moreover, the footage of supposedly “dead” or “empty” time which unfolds for the viewer in these scenes, in which ‘nothing of narrative significance occurs but where the rhythms of everyday life settle in and establish themselves’ (Nichols 1991: 40), is key to Wenders’s representation of Havana and the spatial/temporal continuity of the narrative. The presence of the camera ‘on the scene’ here testifies to Havana’s presence in the historical world, suggesting, as Nichols notes, a ‘commitment or engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal that is comparable to what an actual observer/participant might experience’ (40). For this reason, in the scenes illustrated above, these examples of Wenders’s filmmaking in the observational mode, despite elements of staging, use of apparent stylistic nuances, careful composition, and fictional filmmaking techniques, appear to offer the documentary’s most accessible and honest footage of the city to the viewer, and, therefore, further serve to blur the lines between the representations of the “real-and-imagined” city-space. Moreover, as my readings above have revealed, this footage both “animates” the street and turns it into a sight/site of what Lefebvre calls ‘spontaneous theatre’ (1991: 314-5), in which the observer and observed are spectacularized by the filmmaker.

5. “Little Portraits” and the performative mode

These films [in the observational mode] ask the viewer to see in a different way, to “read” the film as an almost fictional offspring of its documentary parent. (Sherman 1998: 263)

Importantly, *Buena Vista Social Club* documents Wim Wenders’s first trip to the city. His original plan was to solely film in Havana and he returned with over eighty hours of material. Consequently, as Hernandez-Reguant observes, the Cuba remembered in *Buena Vista Social Club* is one which the Americans left behind; ‘[…] not one of right-wing dictatorships and bloodshed, but one of rural platitude and cigar-smoking peasants’ (Hernandez-Reguant 2000: 7). For this reason, the “characters,” as they are referred to by Wenders, transcend into “movie characters” and, therefore, their authenticity lies in their old age as they become physical embodiments of an old world
Havana (Hernandez-Reguant 2000: 7). Moreover, this also contributes to a sense of these city-dwellers as Other, and, therefore, to the depiction of Havana’s Otherness. For example, Wenders describes Pío Leyva as “rather like Groucho Marx having returned to act one last time […] [t]hey were all so suave and elegant and funny, sometimes I really forgot they were musicians” and Cooder similarly described Rubén González as a cross between ‘Theolonious Monk and Felix the cat’. Subsequently, the importance of caricature in Buena Vista Social Club also appears to be reliant on the role of nicknaming each character. They have their own personalities as habanero/as but tend to assume the role of character, as suggested for the most part by their monikers, especially in performance. Furthermore, the viewer is also reminded in the documentary’s performative scenes of early fairytale musicals which depended on the ‘integration’ of music as naturalized amongst contrived scenes and situations. As Altman states, these situations included: a conveniently placed piano, an empty stage, a public dance floor and characters who ‘just can’t stop singing’ in an imaginary kingdom (1987: 300). These scenes form part of a “visual phenomenology” in which performing natives are presented in visual clichés or theatrical walks (300). Consequently, the notion of mixing artificiality and integration, and the staging which occurs as a result, is crucial to the following interpretation of Wenders’s documentary filmmaking in the performative mode.

The concept of nicknaming was employed forty years earlier by Jean Rouch, an ethnographic filmmaker, who famously declared fiction as the only way to penetrate reality (Winston 1997: 529). Rouch’s Moi, un noir (1958), is an example of a documentary that also turns ‘real people’ into stars, perhaps more self-reflexively than Wenders does in Buena Vista Social Club. As with Rouch’s film, Wenders’s “characters” are also encouraged to live out their fantasies. The western mythological alter-egos, suggested by Wenders and others, are symbolic of a sense of colonial possession. However, whilst Rouch manages to explore the flux of the everyday in Treichville, our understandings of Havana in Buena Vista Social Club, my interpretations in this section will propose, are arguably never fully reconciled. Moreover, Wenders’s representation of the city-dweller could also be seen as representative of what Bhabha calls the ‘restaging’ of tradition, which in itself, he notes, is a ‘partial form of identification’ (1994: 2). By introducing ‘incommensurable cultural temporalities’ into the ‘invention of tradition,’ the scenes are representative of a process of estrangement that denies access to the ‘originary identity’ of the Cuban (2). Moreover, as Bhabha postulates, there is a need for the subaltern subject to assert
their indigenous cultural traditions, or repressed histories (9). However, whilst this appears to happen in Wenders’s film, through the oral testimony of the subject, a fetishization of identity also takes place, in which a celebritization and romanticization of city-space occurs, homogenizing the history of the present depicted in the performative mode.

In this mode, Wenders introduces his “characters” in what he refers to as “little portraits”. These talking head sections of the documentary are notable in that Wenders’s crew approach the subject frontally rather than chasing them as he does in the observational mode. As Peter Curran (1999) suggests, these “little portraits” echo the filmmaker’s motif in *Wings of Desire* (1987), in which the soundtrack allows the viewer access to solitary characters’s thoughts. In these scenes we acknowledge both the musicians’s emergence on the world stage, as well as gaining insights, and small “portraits,” into the lives they have led in Havana. Wenders himself has suggested that every image bears a truth “only in relation to the characters of that story” (2001: 379). Therefore, one might suggest that images of Havana presented in the film only resonate as a result of the “performances” of these characters. These are presented and introduced in a careful sequencing over the course of the documentary, interspersed with the observational footage of them navigating the city and in the aforementioned concert footage. Furthermore, Wenders’s use of the Buena Vista Social Club collective as social actors in these portraits is dependant on their candidness in front of the camera. Their testimonies are imparted in order to fill the viewer with a sense of emotional involvement with both the social actors themselves and with the struggles communicated via their oral histories. These character portraits are also employed as moments of psychological realism in which Wenders conveys their inner states in a plausible and convincing way (Nichols 2001: 56). The viewer is faced with correlating the *Secondspace* of these testimonies with the real, material *Firstspace* of the city presented on screen, as this, once more, represents the process of “thirding-as-Othering” taking place. Furthermore, to ensure that the viewer fully understands the emotions felt by these “characters,” Wenders employs a number of inventive techniques, which will be explored below. Additionally, in the performative mode, the “actual-and-imagined” are combined in order to underscore, as Nichols states, ‘the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions’ (2001: 131). Moreover, in this mode, Wenders appears to liberally mix the expressive techniques that normally give texture and density to fiction (such as point-of-view shots, renderings of subjective states of mind, and other
oratorical techniques) (Nichols 2001: 134), and these form the basis of the my interpretations below.

5.1 Rubén’s portrait

Figure 9. Rubén González plays the piano in Buena Vista Social Club (1999) © Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

Footage in the performative mode in Buena Vista Social Club exemplifies Bhabha’s ‘in-between spaces,’ and therefore plays a role in the hybridization of Cuban culture and identity in the film. In these scenes, the ‘private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social’ binaries converge and develop an ‘interstitial intimacy’ of Havana for the viewer (Bhabha 1994: 13). For instance, this is exemplified in subsequent scenes, in which the camera seeks out Rubén González via a long steadicam shot that leads up a stairwell into an empty gymnasium on the Paseo del Prado (see figure 9). It is an example of a more constructive and definite piece of filmmaking by Wenders, in which a single take appears to “hunt” out the piano player, and a scene which Phillip French (1999) has referred to as one of considerable ‘visual power’ due to the way in which it contrasts with the ‘crude, stabbing quality’ of Wenders’s observational footage of the city. As Wenders notes in his commentary, the scene was “slightly staged,” yet, as the scene is shot in a single take in the cinéma vérité tradition, the footage gives the impression of the scene as unstaged. Furthermore, most striking in the scene is the grandeur of the architecture inside the
building, a former casino before 1959 and now home of a national ballet school, as the steadicam slowly takes in a wide shot of the edifice before closing in on Rubén. The bright light that pours through the windows, mixed with the over-exposed colourization effect of the footage, and the palatial surroundings of the gymnasium, is suggestive of an almost celestial space. Whilst Rubén is framed within a space usually identified with performance, we see apparatus (mats used for floor exercise, a weary looking pommel horse, still rings that hang motionless, and parallel bars), as with other portraits, we listen to Rubén play alone, in an empty visual vacuum. Moreover, the way in which the steadicam seems to float gently into the scene, whilst climbing the regal-looking staircase, juxtaposes with the previous scene of night shots of a barren, run-down Havana. The stairwell in this scene is also an example of liminal space, which Bhabha describes as ‘in-between the designations of identity,’ and represents ‘the connective tissue’ between the here and there (1994: 4). In Wenders’s film this stairwell is representative of a temporal shift between the present day Havana of the street and the old world Havana of the former casino, and, according to Bhabha, is representative of the ‘interstitial passage’ that defines cultural hybridity (4). This is further highlighted in the following footage of Rubén, which jumps between scenes of him speaking to the camera in a Havana park to images of the gymnasium, where the pianist is now surrounded by dozens of ballerinas, and a high angle medium shot from the steadicam dizzily encircles Rubén and the dancers from above.

Due to the way in which the scene blurs the spatial and temporal qualities of Havana, this footage also instils the film with a dreamlike quality. Lefebvre is interested in the way in which the dream is at once imaginary and real, describing it as a space in which ‘dispersed and broken rhythms are reconstituted,’ and where situations can be poetically reconstructed (1991: 209). Rather than a place for fulfilling hopes and aspirations, he notes, it is where they are ‘proclaimed’ and is a ‘theatrical space even more than a quotidian or poetic one’ (209). Consequently, in the “portrait” of Rubén this “theatrical” space, my readings have revealed, is representative of Thirdspace.

5.2 Eliades’s portrait

The use of the steadicam is also employed in other portraits. For instance, the viewer sees footage of Amadito Valdés alone in an empty bar, Manuel Mirabal Vázquez in a

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42 Ballet School and National Center for Gymnastics, formerly the Merchants Association, Paseo del Prado 207 (at the corner of Trocadero), Habana Vieja
vacant restaurant space, and Eliades Ochoa recounting his own testimony whilst we hear and see him playing guitar on what appear to be deserted and lifeless railway tracks outside Havana (see figure 10). The latter image is an important one, as it contradicts the typical imaginary of the railway. The steadicam circles Ochoa in the scene, revealing empty railroads and a static train behind him.

Figure 10. Eliades on the railway tracks in Buena Vista Social Club (1999)
© Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

The space of the railway in this scene is of particular relevance to the way in which the viewer envisages Havana as Thirdspace. As Ingham notes, the railway line can be seen to connect two different environments, the city and the village, and, therefore, invites comparisons between the two, whilst functioning as a potential threshold (2008: 105), and for Bakhtin this would represent a space of transformation (2002: 248). Furthermore, as Foucault notes in relation to heterotopias; the train is an ‘extraordinary bundle of relations, because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by (2008: 16). However, in the portrait of Eliades Ochoa, the perception of the railway track as a transitory space is reversed, and instead it becomes a scene of stasis, in which the only apparent movement is that of the musician playing his guitar. The space of the railway therefore becomes representative of an “anti-threshold”. As with Wenders’s other footage in the performative mode, these scenes constitute carefully composed images removed directly from the transience of everyday Havana and the lived space of the city. They rather imagine,
for the viewer, the existence of a bustling pre-Revolutionary Havana that has failed to survive, and this is supplemented by the oral narratives that play out over the different sequences.

Dimendberg makes a similar observation to my reading above, comparing Edward Hopper to film noir, and focuses on the American artist’s painting, *Approaching a City* (1946) (see figure 11). Dimendberg describes its representation of the railroad, which lies at its compositional centre, suggesting that the painting invokes the ‘nonsynchronous’ (2004: 16). Analogous to my reading above, of Eliades Ochoa on the empty train tracks in Havana, Dimendberg suggests that the spatial traces of the train, within the representation of the urban, creates the impression of a void, or, as my readings have revealed, a visual vacuum. However, as Foucault would remind us, this visual vacuum is a not to be confused with a ‘void,’ but instead is a space that presents the viewer with a ‘set of relations that delineate emplacements’ (2008: 16). This re-positioning of the city-dweller and the city-space is problematic in that without proper context these emplacements ‘cannot be equated’ (16). Moreover, Wenders’s filmmaking in these scenes also becomes a way of suspending, neutralizing and inverting this set of relations. His images designate, mirror, and/or reflect existing spatialities, and these converge in the projection of the city as both “real-and-imagined” (17). Furthermore, these spaces epitomize Foucault’s heterotopologies, as they mix the “in-between spaces mentioned above whilst mirroring pre-existing imaginaries of the city-space. The resulting footage produces a

Figure 11. Edward Hopper, *Approaching a City* (1946)
© The Phillips collection
simultaneously mythic and real contestation of Havana (17). These amount to what Foucault calls ‘heterochronisms,’ or ‘slices of time’ that function as a result of breaks from traditional time (20). In *Buena Vista Social Club*, these are subsequently experienced, my interpretations attest, by not only the social actors, but by the filmmaker and the viewer.

5.3 Staging the domino game

Figure 12. Pío Leyva and Manuel Licea play domino in *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) © Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

Another “staged” scene is seen in footage of Pío Leyva and Manuel Licea playing domino in a courtyard (see figure 12). In this steadicam footage, the camera appears to float onto the scene, mimicking cinéma vérité techniques and capturing close-ups of the social actors. This staged scene takes place in a courtyard between two buildings, a spatial arrangement referred to as an “obra cruzada”, meaning “transverse construction,” and is therefore once again representative of an inbetween-space. In the scene, Jörd Widmer’s steadicam lingers on the musicians’s cigars and portly waistlines, whilst conveying the greenery of the courtyard. Depicting a contemporary scene, these signifiers once again mix messages of the urban and the pastoral. The scene also plays out in a way that gives the viewer the impression that the social actors are within the confines of the recording studio, whilst in fact they are in a different building, next door to the EGREM studios. It is a scene in which an
important cultural signifier, the dominó game, is theatricalized by the filmmaker and is representative of the “virtual space” described by Foucault through his analogy of the mirror and the cinema, a space that is both real and unreal (Foucault 2008: 16). The scene represents that which it is surrounded by, the “real” Havana, but in order for it to be acknowledged by the viewer it must pass through a ‘virtual point,’ and, once again, represents Havana as Thirdspace (Soja 1996: 160). The domiño scene is also representative of the ‘theatrical space’ theorized by Lefebvre in his outlining of spatial architectonics (1991b: 310). The ‘theatrical space’ is one that is produced, he writes, as a result of the ‘interplay between fictitious and real counterparts and its interaction between gazes and mirages in which actor, audience, ‘characters’, text, and author all come together but never become one’ (310). Therefore, as the “characters” in the domino scene pass from the “real” to a perceived space, they enter Lefebvre’s own ‘third space,’ which is at the same time both ‘fictitious and real’ (310).

Wenders’s use of the performative mode is also employed most evidently in his footage of the spaces of the home, and poignantly in his depiction of the domestic spaces of Compay Segundo’s bedroom and Ibrahim Ferrer’s living room. This footage of interior, or inner spaces, represents filmmaking that is serving a dialectical relationship with the other exterior/outer scenes, and is therefore also key to the representation of Havana as both “real-and-imagined”. As referred to in Chapter One, Bachelard notes that, rather than living in empty spatial contexts, humans live in spaces that are imbued with intrinsic qualities. The house, for Bachelard, represents an intimate space that mirrors the body itself, and defines and confines the subject (1994: 5-7). These domestic spaces, my interpretations reveal, form part of the phenomenological construction of identity, that becomes manifest in the representation of Havana as Thirdspace. Both of the interior spaces mentioned above are deployed by Wenders in order to illustrate both the housing of the subject and their desire to traverse outside the confines of their local environs. By matching these histories, which surround them and are evoked by Wenders’s close-ups on their ageing visages, to their hopes, which lie beyond their familiar surroundings, the filmmaker further contributes to the notion of Havana as a dual-city, embodying “real-and-imagined” qualities.

43 The role of Pío Leyva as a “character” was further developed in a fictional Buena Vista Social Club spin-off, Música Cubana (2004)
5.4 Interior scenes: portraits of Compay and Ibrahim

The “little portrait” of Compay Segundo (see figure 13), shot on a Sony Handycam, depicts the musician at home as he sings and talks about his childhood, and the camera notably zooms in for a close-up of Compay with cigar in hand. This close-up shot is one which mimics earlier Wenders footage in *Tokyo-Ga* (1985), in which, by focussing his camera for an extended amount of time on the elderly Japanese film actor Chishu Ryu’s hands (see figure 10), he evokes a sense of nostalgia in the viewer. It is an example, characteristic of the performative mode, in which for the purposes of effect, Wenders allows his camera to linger. In the scene, Compay proclaims to have smoked from the age of five, as he used to light cigars for his grandmother. “We had to have that close up of the cigar,” Wenders states. Moreover, the use of the handheld camera, over the tripod camera or steadicam, gives the scene a certain intimacy and refrains from allowing the cinematography to become, in Wenders’s words, too “academic.” The close-up on the cigar also pre-supposes the focus of the scene to the viewer, who is invited to accept the crux and legitimacy of the story, the man who has smoked for eighty-five years, but also to revel in a longing for an Old World Havana.

![Figure 13. Close-up on Compay Segundo in Buena Vista Social Club (1999)](image)

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Compay’s bedroom represents a definable space within the home. For Bachelard, this familiar space is representative of the physical embodiment of the ‘interminable dream,’ as Wenders’s camera lingers on the ‘nooks and corners’ of the space of the bedroom (1994: 136-47). Additionally, his focussing upon the kitsch objects on top of
a television represent a visual play on the apparent youthfulness of the subject, and this is discussed more comprehensively below. Furthermore, as Bachelard insists, in the space of the home, childhood is animated and ‘poetically useful’ (136-47). Therefore, in my interpretation of Wenders’s depiction of the space, the ‘poetry of the past’, described by Bachelard, is maintained and concretized through memory, and, as such, implores a nostalgic response from the viewer that they then equate with the “real” space of Havana. This is heightened, for example, by the signifier that is Compay’s cigar. This might be seen as exemplary of Nichols’s “smellscape” (1991: 146), in which the viewer experiences an intensified sentimentality, whilst observing the scene, by imagining the aroma of Compay’s cigar.

![Figure 14. Close-up of Buzz Lightyear doll and other toys in Buena Vista Social Club (1999)](image)

© Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.

In the same scene Wenders focuses on elements of what Dopico calls ‘household kitsch’ (2002: 480) to convey messages to the viewer. For instance, in Compay’s portrait, the film cuts between shots of him and a Buzz Lightyear action-figure, surrounded by a host of other toys, that, as Wenders notes, did not belong to the musician but to his grandson (see figure 14). However, by allowing his camera to linger on these figurines, the viewer is invited to link Compay’s oral testimony, in which he describes his childhood, to the objects on screen. This, I would argue, constitutes a further Disneyfication of the Cuban in a way that mirrors Omara’s street scene, described above. Furthermore, Compay’s portrait is also representative of what Bachelard refers to as a journey to the land of ‘Motionless Childhood’ (1994: 5). As he observes, ‘we feel calmer and more confident when in the old home, in the house
we were born in, than we do in the houses on streets where we have only lived as transients’ (43). The Buzz Lightyear doll mentioned above is the key signifier here. As Bachelard would insist, as a toy, it is an object that we associate with childhood, and to our familiarity with toys and the reality of toys (149). These kitsch objects also represent the ‘privileged objects’ described by Lefebvre, which arouse a particular ‘expectation or interest’ in the viewer, and, equally known and unknown, are both subject to understanding and misapprehension (1991b: 209).

Furthermore, in the final portrait, Ibrahim Ferrer appears to invite the filmmakers into his home (see figure 15). The singer visibly beckons the cameraman, in ways serving to break the fourth wall, and transforms the filmmakers’ and viewer’s experience into something more intimate. This, I would argue, represents an alterative process of “thirding-as-Othering,” in which our association with the city-space is dependent on the performance of the social actor.

![Figure 15. Close up on Ibrahim Ferrer and his staff in Buena Vista Social Club (1999) © Wim Wenders, used with permission of Verlag der Autoren.](image_url)

Moreover, as Ibrahim tells the crew to make themselves at home, he also speaks directly to the audience. He articulates emotionally charged reminiscences that correlate with the final portrait shots of Ibrahim Ferrer, and lasting images of the documentary. The scene closes as he is seen discussing the issues of santería and his mother in his home, in footage which is juxtaposed with the New York City concert scenes. These interior scenes represent metacinematic moments in which the viewer attempts to interact with heterotopian emplacements. However, as Foucault observes,
this interaction is in fact only an illusion, in which by entering the viewer is also excluded (2008: 20), and this therefore further situates the social actor’s Otherness.

6. Critical responses

As criticism from Cubans in Havana highlighted, the way in which the Cuban capital was depicted in Buena Vista Social Club as both “real-and-imagined” laid at the heart of their contempt towards the documentary. For example, in Temas (July-December 2000), debate centred around Wenders’s problematic aestheticization of the city and his exportation of Cuban culture via the foreign lens, which critics, including Ambrosio Fornet, judged both unfair and unbalanced, underscoring the scenes depicting run-down Havana neighbourhoods as particularly problematic. Fornet condemned Wenders’s modes of representation, finding his use of cultural codes and signifiers, in regards to Havana, particularly problematic (2000: 163). Germán Piniella also saw the documentary’s representation as neither valid, nor innocent, suggesting that the filmmaker’s intentions were flawed (171).

The lack of context in the film also angered Rufo Caballero, who compared Wenders in a negative light to Rainer Fassbinder and Werner Herzog, among other German directors. He condemned the director’s stereotyping of Havana as well as his use of montage, which he saw as having an underlying political motive. Caballero claimed
that Wenders was not an “artista verdadero,” due to the way in which he reductively portrayed the Cuban capital (2001: 133-50). Germán Piniella also found the film upsetting in that it juxtaposed shots of the revolutionary slogan “La revolución es eterna” (see figure 16) with shots of dilapidated cars pulled by donkeys, or to the Karl Marx theatre with a broken letter (see figure 17). He considered it ‘badly intentioned,’ observing, ‘yo, como comunicador, tengo que analizarlo como un hecho de comunicación y lo considero mal intencionado’ (2000: 171). Others expressed concern over the lack of any political reference in film, for instance, that no one had mentioned the negative impact of the U.S. embargo on artists and the public. Juan De Marcos González concurred suggesting that the message of the documentary as a whole was a wrong one, referring to Wenders as an existentialist filmmaker. He referred to Wenders’s depiction of the city as a ‘very grey Cuba’ and called it ‘a massively destructive vision of Cuban reality’ (cited in Foehr 2001: 160).

Outside of the island, critics such as Ana María Dopico, suggested that the multiplication and replication of particular images of the city further highlighted the importance of those images which were left out, noting that the film set out ‘to locate a Havana that people vaguely remember but cannot situate’ (2002: 452). The result she claims is a quest for age and merit, which lends ‘an insidious appeal to its commercial pastiche and kitsch sentimentality’ (452). These anxieties are supported by Rodríguez Falcón, who observed that Wenders’s omission of the larger hotels, ‘designed under the premises of modern architecture during the 1950s and now highly
visibly in the city’s skyline, the Habana Libre, the Melia Cohiba and the Riviera’ (2008: 38), and the omission of many blocks of social housing, also pointed towards the film’s omission of important characteristics of the city as geopolitical space. These views were shared by Hernandez-Reguant, who referred to Wenders’s depiction of Cuba as a ‘treasure island [and] representation that says more about US neocolonial imagination than about Cuba itself’ (1999: 11). For her, the film added to the mystique of Cuba, generating a fake nostalgia in its mise-en-scène, and an ‘imperialist nostalgia’ for pre-revolutionary Cuba (11). More recently, Birkenmaier and Whitfield have commented on the way in which representations of the city such as Buena Vista Social Club summoned ‘armchair visitors’ to the city, were drawn to the visions of decay that circulated in other visual manifestations of Havana, and as such were encouraged to ‘read Havana’s ruins allegorically’ (2011b: 4). Furthermore, Emma Álvarez-Tabio Albo (2011: 166) has described the view of Havana from outside the nation today as one that ‘reveals a fascination with ruins’ that not only has its origins in the world of the photographer, citing Walker Evans, but in films such as Buena Vista Social Club (2011: 165-7). Furthermore, she suggests that such depictions of the Cuban capital have “consecrated” visions of the city in a manner that has made it difficult to locate other Havanas (167). Moreover, her reading of this phenomenon, likening it to a process of sanctification, has obvious connotations to the construction of Havana as a “real-and-imagined” city-space, and therefore to my own readings of Wenders’s film as representative of Thirdspace.

7. Summary

Examining the legacy of Wenders’s film in relation to the visual construction of Havana today, it is useful to recall Giuliana Bruno’s notion of the fiction of the city as developing alongside the spatial trajectory of its visual representations, a notion outlined in Chapter One (2002: 66).

As this chapter has explored, Wenders’s film plays a crucial role in the process of constructing the architectonics of lived space in Havana and, furthermore, has continued to narrate, and influence, the way in which the city is represented within the global imaginary. Wenders’s documentary constitutes a filmic afterimage that remains, to borrow from Bruno’s terminology, imprinted upon our own spatial unconscious (66). This is conveniently epitomised by images that coincided with the tenth anniversary of the original Buena Vista Social Club recording (see figure 18),
upon the release of *Buena Vista Social Club – Live at Carnegie Hall*. In the image, a clever, digital manipulation depicts Ibrahim Ferrer sauntering down West 57th Street, New York City, in front of Carnegie Hall's marquee, in what represents the culmination of a problematic relationship of displacement and dislocation that has emerged following the success of *Buena Vista Social Club*, and has shaped the representation of the city in subsequent imaginaries. Furthermore, the afterimage that lingers today, as explored elsewhere in this thesis, comprises of a visual space that is representative of an imaginary encounter which takes place between First and Third world, and between the “real-and-imagined.”

As my readings in this chapter have revealed, the re-appropriation of the city-space in *Buena Vista Social Club* constitutes the construction of a series of “real” and “imagined” Havanas. As arguably the most significant visual manifestation of the city in recent memory, the dialogic relationship between the city-space and the filmmaker, and the signifiers that emerge over the course of the film, have not only evoked multidimensional interpretations of Havana as a type of Thirdspace, but have also been reflected in other subsequent filmic works. Consequently, the following chapter, exploring Russell Thomas’s documentary film *Our Manics in Havana* (2001), exemplifies the way in which filmic representations of the city in the wake of the *Buena Vista Social Club* phenomenon sought to marry the filmmaker’s and artist’s own ideological imaginaries, whilst mirroring the visual representation propagated by Wenders’s film.
1. Introduction

Broadcast two years following the release of Wim Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), Russell Thomas’s documentary film *Our Manics in Havana* (2001) is exemplary of the way in which a “Special Period aesthetic” (Hernandez-Reguant: 2009: 13) was perpetuated by visual representations of the city-space into the new millennium. Thomas’s film marries an ideological imaginary that exists in Wenders’s representation of the city, visually mirroring an already developed construction of Havana, whilst also attempting to manipulate his own representations of the Cuban capital. As my readings will reveal, both productions form part of the narration of the city-space, and have a crucial role in the process of constructing the architectonics of lived space, explored by Giuliana Bruno, and outlined in Chapter One. As Bruno observes, film creates a twofold interaction between architectural narration and “the image” of the city (2002: 66).

Whilst Thomas’s film documents the band’s visit to the Cuban capital in 2001, seven years after the worst times of the Special Period, which were seen between 1991-1994, the filmmaker plays upon similar ‘visual anachronisms’ to those depicted in *Buena Vista Social Club* (Rodriguez-Falcón 2008: 37). Thomas’s film documents the Welsh punk rock band Manic Street Preachers’s visit in 2001 to Havana. Upon playing a rock concert at the Teatro Karl Marx, the band reached notoriety in becoming the first Western rock band to play in post-Revolutionary Havana. The film not only documents the concert itself, but includes footage of the artists’s interviews with local media, dialogues between the filmmakers and city-dwellers, the band sightseeing and their two encounters with the then Cuban head-of-state, Fidel Castro. *Our Manics in Havana* was the first of a series of documentary-films that would document the visits of other western music artists to Havana and Cuba over the course

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44 *Our Manics in Havana*, dir. Russell Thomas (Channel 4, 2001)
45 See appendix for *Louder than War: Manics Street Preachers – Live in Cuba* (2001) DVD, which incorporates footage discussed in this chapter in a director’s cut of Thomas’s documentary-film, in addition to extra images and videos.
of 2000s. The majority of these films, noted below, would cast the city in a similarly reductive light to that of the films mentioned above. However, *Our Manics in Havana* differs significantly to these other filmic texts, released over the last decade, for a number of reasons, and this reinforces my motive for incorporating this filmic text into my readings in this thesis. As will be outlined below, Thomas’s film represents a visual construction that incorporates a synthesis of different filmic mediums, techniques and documentary modes. These filmic mediums constitute the director’s use of Super-8, archival footage, and digital and 35mm film. Together these form part of the constructed reconceptualization that takes place over the course of the film. In relation to the film’s narrative structure and content, the employment of multiple textures and formats constitutes a repletion of the documentary style of filmmakers that boomed at the end of the 1990s and 2000s. This is seen in the documentary work of Michael Moore, a filmmaker renowned for his use of film-clips, newsreel footage and music to supplement his narrative, in films such as *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and *Sicko* (2007). This is also visibly repeated in Cuba-centric documentary films such as, Oliver Stone’s *Comandante* (2003) and Dollan Cannell’s *638 Ways to Kill Castro* (2006). Furthermore, in *Our Manics in Havana*, within the different mediums mentioned above, different film techniques appear and these alter the film’s representation of the city-space, along with the filmmaker’s use of different documentary modes (observational, interactive, poetic). These modes are utilized in the construction of tourist space (representative of the travelling camera of the tourist), social space (constitutive of lived space), and performance space (envisaged through the footage of the performance of the aforementioned concert, at the Karl Marx theatre, which comprises of both handheld and 35mm footage).

By incorporating these different elements in his film, my readings will infer that Thomas’s *Our Manics in Havana* represents a multi-angle interpretation of Havana that blurs the boundaries between the “real-and-imaginary” spaces of the city. Consequently, the spaces represented in the film (tourist space, social space, and performance space) combine in the construction of what Soja calls *Thirdspace*, outlined in Chapter One and explored in Chapter Seven, and this multiplicity of representations reconceptualizes the city-space as a journey to various “real-and-imagined” *Havanas* (1996: 11). By scrutinizing Thomas’s mixing of the city’s ideality with its reality, my readings will observe that the “real-and-imagined” become mutually reinforced, and are transformed by the city’s “theatricality,” or what
Lefebvre calls; ‘a sort of involuntary mise-en-scène’ (1991b: 74). Moreover, the film is important to the readings in this thesis as its construction is rooted in the creative imagination, representation, and digestion of the city of Havana as a possible spatial world and/or geographical space. It is also an example of a construction of city-space that necessitates further scrutiny, due to its spatial representation of Havana as a consumable geography. The merging of these different mediums as Thirdspace also represents a synthesization that takes place between the observer and observed, between the self and other, in which the artist and the image-maker are constitutive of a reflection of the grandiose self. This notion corresponds to Freud’s concept of the "purified pleasure-ego," and, used here, suggests that within the documentary, the filmmaker and artist locate themselves within an idealized construction of Havana that is removed of the unpleasurable traits of the city, whilst retaining what is gratifying to them (an imagined, nostalgic and exoticized Havana). This synthesis is ideologically manifested by the presence of music in the film, in which the band’s shared ideology further objectifies the city-dweller and the city-space of Havana, and makes this representation particularly problematic.

1.1 Havana and rockumentary

Thomas’s ‘rockumentary’ traverses a range of geographical sites and sights, including footage of both the United Kingdom and Cuba. Film in the UK (shot in Cardiff, Wales and London) incorporates interview and airport footage. The footage in Cuba, shot entirely in Havana, ranges from sites more commonly associated with tourism such as the airport, various hotels, the Plaza de la Revolución, the architecture of Centro Habana and La Habana Vieja, and sites associated with the youth of Havana such as the Parque de los Rockeros and la Universidad de la Habana, alongside a performance space, seen in the Teatro Karl Marx. Categorizing these locations in this way, and by scrutinizing Thomas’s film, the discussion in this chapter will highlight these lived spaces of the city; focussing on the touristic space, and the performance space. A number of sites/sights will be presented as exemplary of these different spaces and will be elaborated on in the subsequent sections of this chapter. By exploring the touristic space, Chapter Eight will focus on images prevalent within the documentary than can be viewed as epitomizing the tourist gaze of the filmmaker, who appears to be drawn towards the “Special Period aesthetic” synonymous with the

46 The term rockumentary is a neologism referring to a rock documentary about rock music and its musicians.
previously discussed documentary film *Buena Vista Social Club*. Similarly, Thomas’s film incorporates stereotypical images of city-dwellers, Cuban transport, Cuban architecture, and tourist sights/sites, which include hotels and cultural sites (such as Radio Progreso). As my reading will reveal, within these depictions of city-life, the lines between the tourist and social space are blurred. Furthermore, this chapter will also focus on interpreting the performance space, and will concentrate the analysis on the representation of the Teatro Karl Marx (the Karl Marx theatre) in Thomas’s film.

Following on from my interpretation of *Buena Vista Social Club* in Chapter Seven, public space in this chapter is not only considered as a stage where urban life occurs, but as a material backdrop for social relations, which are repeatedly performed and produced. These social spaces are only static once they cease being used, traversed, occupied, and inhabited, otherwise they are constantly changing and evolving, taking on new roles and new meanings, shifting from the symbolic abstract spaces of power and spectacle to ones of everyday life, and this poses problems for the filmmaker. For Lefebvre, everyday life represents the ‘concrete’ form of human nature (1991b: 34). The *Other* spaces of *lo cotidiano* (the everyday) presented in this chapter are demonstrative, therefore, of varying representations of social space which also shape the spatialities of the city of Havana and which are contained within the global imaginary.

In order to interpret the three lived spaces of the city depicted in Thomas’s documentary (tourist, social, and performance space) this chapter will, as in Chapter Seven, employ Soja’s notion of “thirding-as-Othering” (1996: 3). By utilizing this concept, I will draw observations on the broader “binarisms” (Soja 1996: 3) that exist within each of the aforementioned spaces, before exploring the additional binaries that contribute to the fetishization of the city as *Thirdspace* in the documentary. Furthermore, as my readings will reveal, the representation of the city-space in Thomas’s film appears to locate two converging forces, represented in the binaries that will be discussed below. Within the confines of the documentary, these appear to pull the city in different directions and affect the way in which it is perceived by the viewer. However, first and foremost, Thomas’s twofold vision merges a visualization of a paradisiacal Soviet-era Cuba with a post-Soviet Havana reliant on tourism. By illustrating the city in flux in this way, the filmic text, my readings will propose, hybridizes the city-space, blurring both culture and identity in the production of Havana as *Thirdspace*. 
2. Culture, Identity and the Music Film

The music documentary-film has many paradoxical qualities in that it involves the formation of a number of different spaces. Firstly, the music film creates a space of community amongst those people who are listening to it in real time. Secondly, it creates a virtual presence or space, the space that it is representing, for example, specific Havana spaces. Thirdly, the music film creates a space on screen that is free from semantic domination. Keith Beattie credits rockumentary for having turned ‘direct cinema into a commercially and widely available form’ (Beattie 2008: 81). It is a mode of filmmaking, he observes, that mixes the ‘reactive observationalism’ of pure direct cinema with interviews and prompted discussions, and allows for ‘a mutually conductive approach favouring congeniality over antagonism, in the process hoping to elude moments of intimacy, emotional honesty and revelation from people quite amiable and used to the camera’s presence’ (81).

Music has historically formed part of the narrative process of film and accompanies its images, and, in turn, is central to defining how we feel about culture and identity. As Andy Bennett notes; ‘the search for social and cultural meanings in popular music inevitably involves an examination of the urban […] spaces in which music is experienced,’ whereby music, ‘plays an important role in the narrativization of place – and therefore is important to identity’ (2004: 2). In addition to this, as more recent debates on the relationship between music and film have surmised, discussion of the two forms within visual culture studies has been explored very minimally and debated only in very reductive terms (Beattie 2005, Stahl 2008, Leonard and Strachan 2009). Moreover, as this chapter and, indeed, the third part of the thesis as a whole argues, this reluctance towards an examination of the documentary film regarding musicians and musical events has left, or rather has opened up, a space which deserves further interrogation. In Our Manics in Havana, music is experienced not only by the audience seen in the film, and by the audience at home in the UK, or Europe, but by the performers themselves, who appear to immerse themselves in what they see as the lived spaces of the city over the course of the film, in turn, forming part of the visual construction of the city. Moreover, by appearing to desire to both construct and consume this imaginary, their involvement transcends into the fetishization and memorialization of Havana as both a “real-and-imagined” city-space. This reading fits with notions explored by Bennett, who observes: ‘people look to specific music as symbolic anchors in regions, as signs of community, belonging, and
a shared past’ (Bennett 2004: 3). As my readings in this chapter will reveal, music plays a significant part in the way that both the filmmaker and the artists, Manic Street Preachers, author the Havana spaces presented in the film in question, in which the music of the artists is creatively combined with ‘local knowledge’ and ‘sensibilities’ (Bennett 2004: 3) in ways that might tell particular stories about the local, and impose collectively defined meaning and significance upon spatialities of the city.

3. Historical context: the continuation of a “Special Period aesthetic”

For the purposes of the discussion in this chapter, it is worth recapping on the historical context that followed the release of *Buena Vista Social Club*. This context is important, as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, as *Our Manics in Havana* appears to be in dialogue with Wenders’s film in its contribution to the previously discussed ‘internationalization’ of a Special Period aesthetic (Venegas 2009: 46), which was due predominantly to the increase in production of both documentaries and fictional films about Cuba from a vantage point outside of the island. Moreover, this chapter suggests that Thomas’s film supplemented the ‘zone of images,’ described by Dopico, which existed following the worst years of the Special Period, and, as I will reveal, Thomas’s film also contributes to the construction of Havana as both a ‘profound social experiment’ and as an ambient or virtual city, ‘an atmosphere more than an *urbis*’ (2002: 453). As explored elsewhere in this thesis, this constant re-working of themes of nostalgia and exoticism, in visualizations of the city from a western gaze, provoked widespread debate both in Cuba and abroad in regards to the role of the foreign image-maker. This posed questions of the authenticity of these representations of the city and, therefore, highlighted their post-Special Period visual constructions of the city-space as particularly problematic. Paraphrasing Cristina Venegas, what was perhaps most problematic about this “speed-up” of globally circulated audiovisual representations of Cuba (exemplified by photobooks such as David Bailey’s *Havana* text, which is discussed in Chapter Four) was that they ‘enlarged, diversified and propagated’ the images of Cuba that would linger in the global imaginary (2009: 47). As she writes, these representations, ranging from travel guides to advertising images, depicted Cuba as a ‘small, sometimes irritation, sometimes glamorous, widely forbidden, always exotic, always socialist speck of an island now looms as a much larger, louder, more colourful and textured all-encompassing enigma on the world stage’ (47). Furthermore, in my readings below,
these characteristics emerge in a synergy of different visual styles, techniques and modes, as noted earlier, and Venegas’s observation correlates with my reading of Thomas’s film as representative of a visualization of a “real-and-imagined” city.

4. Cultural context: Manic Street Preachers and Havana

![Manic Street Preacher – Masses Against The Classes (single cover) © EPIC](image)

Having recapped on the historical context, it is worth recalling the artists’s own cultural context at the time of making the film, as this links the synthesis that appears to take place in the film between the artist and the Cuban. Moreover, the band’s shared ideology appears to further objectify both the city-dweller and the city-space of Havana.

Just months after the success of Buena Vista Social Club (1999), in January 2000 Manic Street Preachers released a limited edition single entitled ‘The Masses Against The Classes’. The single was heralded as a return to the band’s punk ethic. Without promotion from the band or an official video, the single rocketed to the number one slot in the UK charts to become the first new number one of the new millennium. Their forthcoming album, Know Your Enemy (2001), had the working title Fidel and was highly political, employing pro-Castro themes with tracks entitled ‘Baby Elian’ and ‘Freedom of Speech Won't Feed My Children’. The ‘Masses Against The Classes’ single became instantly recognizable for its cover (see figure 1), the
Cuban flag with the star removed, suggesting that the song itself had more to do with the band’s own socialist ideology rather than that of Cuba itself. However, the single would prove to be an instigator for a larger Havana project which over the course of the following year would culminate on the 17th February 2001 when Manic Street Preachers would play to a sold-out Karl Marx theatre in Havana, performing in front of 5000 people. By doing so, the band became the first mainstream western rock band to play Cuba and affirmed themselves amongst a select group of popular music acts who themselves had played landmark concerts over the course of the twentieth century. The entire project, as music critic Simon Price suggests, was either ‘a clenched fist, a call to arms against creeping Americanisation,’ or ‘a sophisticated and well-worked publicity stunt’ (2001: 2).

Since the turn of the millennium in Cuba, The Ministry of Culture, and the Cuban Institute of Music, have shown themselves to be more open towards rock performances in Havana, and on the rest of the island, and have allowed a variety of concerts to take place, a notable shift from Fidel Castro’s previous condemnation of rock ‘n’ roll as a type of ‘intellectual diversionism’ (Phelan 2001). Over the last decade these acts have included, in addition to Manic Street Preachers; Basque punk outfit Negu Gorriak, Asian Dub Foundation, Sir George Martin directing Cuba’s National Symphony Orchestra, Audioslave, Rick Wakeman, Air Supply, Simply Red, Sepultura, Manu Chao, Elbow, Juanes and the Catalan outfit Ojos de Brujo. As mentioned in the introduction, with these artists have emerged numerous other documentary-films, along with spin-off albums, as a result of their visits. Consequently, a number of these texts have further contributed to exoticized and/or nostalgic representations of the city that have promulgated the idealized construction of a “real-and-imagined” city-space.

5. Theorizing Our Manics in Havana and the music film

An amalgam of different documentary modes are used in Thomas’s film. Whilst these modes, categorized by Bill Nichols, are explored in Chapter Seven, it is worth recapping the processes involved in those that apply to Our Manics in Havana. In the
film, footage in the observational mode is employed by Thomas, mimicking the direct cinema style made famous in the United States in the 1960s, recalling films such as D. A. Pennebaker’s *Don’t look back* (1967). This footage is rooted in notions of realist filmmaking and photographic realism (Nichols 1991: 92), in which the viewer is reliant on the documentary’s ‘indexical relation to the historical world’ (27). Thomas’s photographic realism in his shots of Havana is used to generate a supposedly accurate portrayal of time and place, through the specific use of location and straightforward filming. This footage, in the cinéma vérité tradition, is used to represent the lived space of the city to the viewer and Thomas deploys these moments of lived-time in order to propel the narrative. As was the case with *Buena Vista Social Club*, the footage in this mode serves as a form of ‘story time’ and Thomas deploys this in *Our Manics in Havana* to convey the band’s experiences of the city-space in tourist locations. Additional footage of the city’s lived spaces is also presented in the poetic mode, in which the filmmaker reassembles fragments of Havana poetically.

Lacking in specificity, this involves the representation of the city as abstract space, in a way that further renders Havana as *Thirdspace*, and examples of these modes are explored in my readings below. This blurring between the idealized and the ideological is heightened by Nichols’s footage in the performative documentary mode, in which the actual and imagined are combined in order to underscore, as Nichols states; ‘the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions’ (131), and using this mode, Thomas also freely mixes the expressive techniques that texturize fiction. In his footage, these techniques constitute point-of-view shots, the merging of different mediums, freeze frames, slow-motion, and other editing techniques. As was seen with the use of this mode by Wenders in *Buena Vista Social Club*, and as Nichols notes, these nuances of the filmmaker should remind the viewer that the documentary film does not attest indisputably to the “real” representation of the city-space, but often fails to do so. Furthermore, these different ways of seeing the same subject (Havana), in different techniques, styles, modes and mediums, correlate with the framing of the *Thirdspace* they produce, and are aligned with the variation of recurring spatial themes that Soja finds so problematic (1996: 9).
6. Our Manics in Havana

6.1 The touristic space

By observing footage from Our Manics in Havana that is shot in the observational and poetic modes of documentary filmmaking, the following section of this chapter will now focus on the representation of social space. In my readings below, the filmmaker is noted as affecting the viewers understanding of the Havana spaces presented. To do this, Thomas draws from stereotypical visions of the city, which are defined by his use of camera techniques, and stylistic choices, for instance, in his use of Super-8 film. Moreover, Thomas presents the viewer with an exoticized, consumable idea of Havana which both the filmmaker and the band desire to become part of, and, through his filmmaking, invites the viewer to experience Havana in a similar way. As my readings below detail, these spaces are represented in digital footage of the band shot in and around the tourist sites/sights of the city, such as the Plaza de la Revolución, the Malecón, the Hotel Nacional, and the Tryp Habana Libre. Footage of these spaces in the ‘tourist gaze,’ explored by Urry (1990) and also examined in Chapter Four, is crucial to developing an understanding of how the touristic space of Havana is presented to the viewer in Our Manics in Havana. Thomas’s documentary footage shot in the observational mode, Urry would argue, is representative of the non-tourist practices that anticipate and construct, and, subsequently, reinforce and sustain the tourist gaze. These non-tourist practices are reliant on other spatialities that emerge from film, photography, television and other visual form, which construct and reinforce the gaze of the observer. By lingering on the tourist spaces mentioned above, as Urry suggests, these locations are visually objectified by the filmmaker, and are ‘endlessly reproduced and recaptured’ (1990: 3). This is also closely linked to the processes of fetishization and hybridization outlined above, and is therefore involved in the production of Thirdspace.

This is exemplified, for instance, at the beginning of Our Manics in Havana, at which point the viewer sees a title sequence in which the documentary’s title is retrofitted over footage of the Cuban flag blowing in the wind, which is actually a close-up shot of the flag in the gardens of the Hotel Nacional in Havana. The font of the titles in this sequence recalls the picture postcards of Havana from the 1950s, a tranquil vision of the city before the Cuban Revolution. The title in itself, a play on the Graham Greene novel Our Man in Havana (1958), and Carol Reed’s eponymous
film (1959), harks back to the spatialities that emerged from these respective texts, and therefore connotes to the exoticized and nostalgic construction of the city-space that emerges in Thomas’s film. This title also signals towards the way in which the narrative of the film is rooted both in the “real-and-imagined” representation of the city, and therefore further locates the film within *Thirdspace* and *third space*, for not only is this title sequence suggestive of Havana as both “real-and-imagined” but it also alludes to the “au-delá” described by Bhabha, the here and there (1994: 1).

By revisiting Urry’s list of the key characteristics that outline the socially constructed way of seeing and recording within the tourist gaze, it is possible to further elucidate why the filmmaker chooses to echo these stereotypical visions. Thomas’s representations of the aforementioned real touristic spaces of Havana, such as the Plaza de la Revolución, the Malecón, the Hotel Nacional, and the Hotel Habana Libre (see figure 2), are examples of what Urry refers to as images giving ‘shape to travel’ and form part of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ in which the filmmaker seeks out images which have been seen before and are subsequently associated with the “real” touristic spaces of Havana (127). Furthermore, this method of interpretation involves the recycling of a particular framing of the aforementioned tourist spaces, and therefore, to the *Kodakization* of the city-space, in a way that promotes the construction of Havana as a type of *Thirdspace*. The shots of these touristic sights/sites contrast with images of Cubans in the city, creating binaries suggestive of difference and identity, as explored below. Furthermore, Scarpaci and Portela have observed that the tourist’s perception of Havana is guided profoundly by media portrayals of the city and by visual elements of the tourist landscape (cobblestones, palms, verandas) as well as exotic pastimes (cigar smoking and drinking) carried out in exotic places (2009: 112). The authors also note Cuba’s similar political appeal, on a global stage, and the way in which the tourist’s gaze is attracted as a result of the country’s continuing socialist regime (117). This appeal is highlighted by Thomas’s film, in which part of the allure for the band appears to be the way in which the Cuban Revolution champions the causes of antiglobalizationists, denounces neoliberal economic policies, and supports antihegemoic forces. This is founded in the filmmaker’s and artists’s imposition of an interpretation of the city-space and is evidenced in the scenes scrutinized in this section. Representative of *Thirdspace*, this footage presents the viewer with a ‘third existential dimension’ which lies somewhere between the historical (temporal) and social (sociological) imaginations (Soja 1996: 3).
This is epitomized in subsequent scenes in the documentary in which a computer-generated collage mixes ‘snapshots’ of the Malecón, street scenes in the city, black and white newsreel footage of Fidel on the podium, the band on stage at the Karl Marx theatre, and the repetition of the medium-shot of a flag waving in the gardens of the Nacional. The repetition of shots of, and around, the Hotel Nacional serve as constant reminders of the tourist space represented by Thomas, and frequented by both the filmmakers and the artists. Moreover, the fetishization of Havana as rebel space, Thomas’s use of newsreel footage linking to my discussion of photojournalistic constructions of the Revolution in Chapter Three, merges with his Super-8 images of the city. These two spaces are constitutive of the Firstspace and Secondspace respectively, and as my readings in this section will reveal, this creates a binary that separates and differentiates the filmmaker/artists and the city-dwellers, normalizing the role of the tourist and further alluding the habanero/a as Other.

These scenes also represent the visual appropriation of city-space, which is heavily loaded with historical symbols. For instance, the Hotel Nacional, located on the Malecón, is loaded with historical significance in that it was seen as a powerful anchor in expanding tourism away from the “old” city (Havana’s old quarters in La Habana Vieja) into the new “city” (in Vedado) (Scarpaci and Portela 2009: 122-3). However, in Thomas’s film, the hotel serves only as a reminder of the presence of the tourist, and the unrelenting tourist gaze, which permeates the documentary. The additional newsreel footage at the beginning of the film plays a similar role to the photographs shown to the viewer by Korda at the beginning of Buena Vista Social Club, and is representative of idealized metacinematic traces of an imagined socialist utopia. As
noted above, this once again connotes to Bhabha’s “au-delá” (1994, 1) and links a paradisiacal soviet imaginary to contemporary images of the city, that themselves attain a dream-like quality due to the Super-8 format in which they are captured, discussed in greater depth below. By alluding to this state of reverie in his filmmaking, Thomas depicts the ‘theatrical space’ of the dream described by Lefebvre and envisions a space that is both “real-and-imagined,” and where space can be ‘poetically reconstructed’ (1991b: 209). In these images of Havana street-life, the social, historical and spatial become confused and inseparable and the product of this is a filmic Thirdspace that wistfully fragments of other existing images and spatialities of the Cuban capital.

Following the opening sequence of the film, the viewer sees interviews with the band in London, shot in 35mm black and white film. A linguistic message “Rehearsals – The Depot, North London 07/02/01” creates a further binary, between the locations of London and Havana, and this pairing of difference is symbolized in the mixing of footage of the band, rehearsing before their Cuba trip, with colourized Super-8 and digital footage of Havana.

Figure 3. Still from Super-8 footage of Havana street scene in Our Manics in Havana (2001) © Sony Music

These Super-8 shots of Havana’s street scenes (men and women smoking cigars, people congregating in parks, children playing football, people peering over balconies, old cars, Cuban flags) heighten the viewer’s sense of Cuba as notably Other and exotic. These scenes are examples of what Bhabha calls ‘in-between spaces,’ and serve a role in the hybridization of culture and identity. In these scenes, the ‘private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social’ binaries outlined by Bhabha
converge and develop an ‘interstitial intimacy’ for the viewer (1994: 13). For example, this is epitomized in a contemporary image of a busy Havana street (see figure 3) in which Thomas’s Super-8 footage re-visions the contemporary lived space of the city to the past. He does this by drawing upon the pre-Revolutionary “farmacia” sign but also through his selective use of the Super-8 medium.

As the viewer sees these images, voice-overs from members of the band refer to their preconceptions of Havana and Cuba before their visit, describing the nation as the last place fulfilling a “communist ideal.” Footage of the modern day Havana is intercut here with additional newsreel footage of Fidel and the barbudos entering the city in 1959, with a message reminding the viewer of the figurehead’s tenure in Cuba and the U.S. embargo that remains in place. In these scenes, the footage depicts Havana as utopia. Recalling Foucault, these shots, which relate analogically to real spaces in Havana, in either a direct or inverted manner, present Havana in a perfected form through the way in which they are composed, constructed, and carefully edited together. In these scenes, Thomas toys with the imaginative cache of Revolutionary images. For instance, the viewer observes the above footage of a bustling Centro Habana, as the film cuts away to Nicky Wire, the band’s bassist, reminding the viewer that the first concert of their previous tour was played in Kettering. The filmmaker here appears to be gesturing towards the exotic nature of the trip, and subsequently continues to highlight Havana’s Otherness to the viewer. This juxtaposition of mediums also fetishizes the city-space by contrasting a “black and white” UK with the spectacularized Cuba, and Thomas’s layering of different mediums has the effect of creating a palimpsest of the image of the city of Havana rather than a depiction of the “real”. In these scenes the Firstspace of the “real,” material Havana is represented by the DV-cam footage of the band at home or traversing the city’s tourist sites, whereas the Secondspace, or “imagined” Havana, is located in Thomas’s Super-8 recording. Furthermore, this Super-8 footage is also key to the process of layering different representations of the city, in that it is a dated format which originates with the early handheld cameras of the tourist. Moreover, this footage has the effect of nostalgizing the filmmaker’s representation of the city, and contributes to the construct of Havana as a timeless cityscape. In interviews the filmmaker has explained how his own Super-8 camera, which he took to Havana with him, had a “dodgy” lens, which gave the effect of blurring the sequences shot with the camera slightly.48 This admittance

48 These observations regarding the Our Manics in Havana documentary, in addition to other comments referenced in this chapter, were made by Russell Thomas in personal correspondence between the author and the director [Thursday 29 July 2010].
both serves to explain the blurry effect of the representation of the city, which unfolds in this sequence of the documentary and affects the filmmaker’s representation of the touristic space of the city, whilst providing the film with a dreamlike quality. Furthermore, by framing other footage of the band’s trip to Cuba within this Super-8 footage shot in the observational/poetic modes, Thomas looks to authenticate the experience through the objectification, and subsequent signification of tourist sites, locations and images. In addition to this, Thomas’s usage of grainy, hand-held footage, in the Super-8 format, in his depiction of various real locations also alludes to the cinéma vérité style, discussed in Chapter Seven, of the early music documentary-films, which have influenced Thomas’s filmmaking. By employing these mediums, the filmmaker also rejects the glossy, digitally colourised professional processes, and replaces it with grainy, distorted and at time blurred image of Havana. The effect of this is to cast the rest of the documentary, and the city-space, in a particularly nostalgic-light. The intercutting of black and white newsreel footage of Castro taking the city also achieves a sense of timelessness and has associations with a past aesthetic that relates to photography and particularly photojournalism, which has associations with ‘representing reality’ by its very genre and nature.

In the observational footage in the film, the group are shot by Thomas traversing the city in a red Cadillac (see figure 2). The American car here becomes an object of tourist nostalgia and is suggestive, Whitfield argues, ‘of the tranquillity of a necessarily slower pace of life, slowed less by the late arrival of modernity than by the stubborn rejection of capitalist technology’ (2008: 28). In the same sequence, the band
are shot in the Plaza de la Revolución, they stand in front of the Ministerio del Interior and pose for photographs, again assuming the role of tourists. As Scarpaci and Portela point out, whilst Cuba is a socialist island, there are relatively few political monuments from the revolutionary era, and, although there are communist monuments to Mao in China, Kim in North Korea, and Soviet leaders in the former USSR, there are no monuments to Fidel (2009: 109). For this reason, sites such as Havana’s Plaza de la Revolución, formerly the Plaza Cívica (and completed for the most part during the Batista government of the 1950s), take on even greater meaning in their role as tourist sites, and become the focal points of the documentary.

This footage also exemplifies Augé’s conceptualization of space and place, outlined in Chapter One, which he suggests has more to do with the frequentation of places which exist as a result of ‘double movements’ between the traveller and the snapshots that are hurriedly collated by the tourist whilst traversing the city (1995: 85-6). Augé sees the process of travelling in itself as one which constructs a fictional relationship between the gaze and the landscape (86). Furthermore, in line with Augé’s notion, Thomas’s vision might be seen as a ‘deflection,’ or a ‘reversal of the gaze,’ in which the ‘would-be traveller’ is presented with advanced images of different Havana spaces but in their own image, an anticipated image, which is then interpreted by the viewer (86). This also fits with Bruno’s reading of the filmmaker as a spectator, rather than “fixed” in place as a voyeur (1997: 10). Instead, in the scenes scrutinized later in this chapter, Thomas becomes a “voyageur” who assembles views according to whom and where he is and what he wants to see, and, subsequently, constructs the city-space in his own image. This is to say that the Havana reconstructed in his filmic text is representative of his own responses, feelings and sentiments towards Havana.

This notion of the site directing the filmmaker exemplifies Lefebvre’s reading of the ‘ego,’ here contained within the objectified body of the filmmaker, who extends himself mentally and physically through his work. His arrangement of objects, within which we include the social actors represented, individuals conducting their “normal” lives in front of the camera (Nichols 2001: 5), and other material spatial forms, exemplify a concrete form of spatialization. However, the way in which these images are presented to the viewer, as they become mental constructs, further affects the way in which these spatialities are understood and digested. Lefebvre observes space as both a medium and a product (MacCannell 2004: 212), and as such the filmmaker’s
representations of tourist space in *Our Manics in Havana* alludes to the notion of Havana as a consumable geography.

Shot in the poetic mode, this footage represents a mystiquing of the everyday Havana by the filmmaker, who draws upon existing spatialities within the global imaginary that the filmmaker may associate with the city. Thomas’s shot recalls the gaze of the early documentary photography movements of the 1920s and 1930s, and is reminiscent of Walker Evans’s *Interior, Barber Shop* image, analysed in Chapter Two. This shot epitomizes Thomas’s attempts to capture and re-appropriate very specific performances of Havana’s lived spaces. Whilst the film here presents the viewer with a scene from 2001, the distinct aesthetic of Super-8 film stylizes the filmmaker’s representation. The format of the footage recalls home-video filmmaking and instils the film with a sense of intimacy and a nostalgia for Havana. In turn, the filmmaker both promotes a particular vision of a familiar scene of lived space from a tourist gaze and, at the same time, suggests it as “frozen in time”. This barbershop image also exemplifies Lefebvre’s *isotopia* (1991b: 366), the ‘same place’ environment that we equate with the local and therefore familiarize with accordingly. For Lefebvre this exemplifies the space of representation (with qualitative, fluid and dynamic qualities), which is in danger of being appropriated and dominated by an authority, in this case the filmmaker. Moreover, Thomas’s footage in the poetic mode represents a visual dialogue that takes place between the filmmaker and existing representations of the city, for example Walker Evans’s depictions of Havana, and epitomizes the process in which an imaginary lived space is revisioned and reaffirmed.
During other observational footage of the city, the viewer also sees close-ups of heavily cartoonized Afro-Cuban figurines at a tourist market, clad in bright clothing and chomping on huge cigars (see figure 5). In a cutaway, Thomas correlates this image immediately with a real life Afro-Cuban woman, also smoking a cigar (see figure 6). It is a highly problematic association which, once again, alludes to the “binarisms” explored by Soja (1996: 3), and to Bhabha’s au-delà, the here and there, and fort/da, back and forth (1996: 1), and posits the habanera as an object of cultural hybridity. By aligning my readings here with Bhabha’s work on hybridity and culture, it could be observed that these scenes represent a fetishization of the subaltern subject as Other, in which the romanticization of the social actors on screen involves homogenizing the history of the present (1994: 9). Furthermore, this footage also appears to mirror the visual anachronisms found in Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club*.

This stylized approach is echoed in the observational documentary footage of the band’s trip to Radio Progreso, which seemingly authenticates the stereotypical, and somewhat reductive, visions of the city mentioned above, of Havana’s lived spaces such as the barber-shop, by demonstrating the band’s interaction with actual habanero/as. In these scenes, Thomas depicts Radio Progreso as a heterotopic Other place (Soja 1996: 155), which is at the same time a public and private space (Foucault 2008: 16). Additionally, as an inner space, the building is situated in opposition to the exterior (tourist) spaces seen earlier in the film.
An establishing shot of the Radio Progreso building (see figure 4) alludes further to the notion of Havana “frozen in time”. The camera’s highlighting of the name of the station itself, “Radio Progreso” appears as an ironic play on the arrested development of the nation. The low angle establishing shot of the building encourages the viewer to gaze nostalgically upon its 1950s architecture, fading façade and peeling paintwork. The radio station also serves as an important reminder of the golden years of radio in Havana in the 1940s and 1950s (Cluster and Hernández 2008: 173-188), at which point the city boasted thirty-four radio stations. Its presence (and the importance of its role in the film, despite its decrepitness, appears to point again to a lack of development and progress. This is further demonstrated in the interior shots at Radio Progreso, as Thomas zooms in for close-ups on old radio equipment, highlighting the dated “en el aire” sign and the dials in the studio, allowing his Super-8 camera to linger. These signifiers all add to a constructed sense of nostalgia that commonly frames post-Special Period images of the city of Havana today (see Chapters Four, Five and Seven) and these signs also appear to be charged with phantasmagorical qualities which evoke responses from the viewer – most notably, a nostalgia for a forgotten Havana. From a Foucauldian perspective, the way in which the filmmaker hunts out these images becomes a way of suspending, neutralizing and inverting these signifiers, and these designate, mirror, and/or reflect existing spatialities that project the city as both “real-and-imagined” (2008: 17). Furthermore, these spaces epitomize Foucault’s heterotopologies, as they mix the in-between experience and mirror pre-existing imaginaries of the city-space, whilst producing a simultaneously “real-and-imagined” contestation of Havana (17).
Bailey’s wistful snapshots of revolutionary kitsch from the 1970s and 80s in his *Havana* text, and are echoed in the reductive advertising images of Havana city-life in the *Nothing Compares to Havana* campaign. These shots also appear to be in dialogue with Wenders’s *Buena Vista Social Club*, and particularly to his observational montage of the cityscape shown towards the end of his film, in which the filmmaker’s footage focuses on the slogans found within the city’s murals. Furthermore, the shots captured by Thomas in the radio station also amount to ‘heterochronisms,’ or little ‘slices of time’ (Foucault 2008: 20). These function as breaks from traditional time, of the present, and return the viewer, via Super-8 footage, to an imaginary Havana founded upon the aforementioned constructs. By mixing the observational and poetic documentary modes in these opening sequences, Thomas only manages to reassemble certain, heavily stylised fragments of lived space, which is framed within a particular tourist gaze. Consequently, his depiction of the city of Havana is a limited one. In the poetic mode the social actors presented on screen, the habanero/a, are not ‘full-blooded’ characters with psychological complexity and a fixed view of the world, and instead function on a par, as Nichols suggests, with raw material (Nichols 2001: 102). Moreover, in *Our Manics in Havana* the city-dweller becomes part of the two-dimensional part of the backdrop of the city, in the same way as the ballerinas in the street ballet image in Chapter five, and therefore appear to become mere objects. Consequently, although observing the city in real-time, Thomas’s film lacks a true historical and social context. Moreover, the resulting affect of the filmmaker’s merging of the various binaries discussed above, and his use of different film mediums, is that the spaces represented in the documentary in this footage (the tourist space and the lived space of the city) become muddled, the ’product’ of the “thirding” of the spatial imagination of the viewer, in a way that further suggests the Cuban capital as both “real-and-imagined” (Soja 1996: 11) and this adds to the visual construction of the city as a fetishized post-Special Period utopia.

6.2 Performance space

In this section, my readings will observe representations of the space of performance, shot in the performative mode of documentary filmmaking. In these scenes the lived spaces of the city are represented by the filmmaker at the location of the Karl Marx theatre, a site which represents an exchange between the external artist and the Cuban. The consumable idea of Havana in these scenes is charged by the desire of the
filmmaker and external artists to localize their performance and heighten the authenticity of their film. For the band, this occurs through the symbolic use of flags, expressions of solidarity and through other gestures that infer towards their genuine interest in taking something away from the experience. However, the filmmaker’s representation of a consumable Havana in these scenes is again reductive and once again points to a notion of Cuban culture and identity as underdeveloped. This is exemplified, similarly to the scenes shot in the observational and poetic modes, through the camera techniques the filmmaker employs and the stylistic choices he makes, particularly in post-production, and these are elaborated on below.

In the footage of the set-up for the concert, the viewer is introduced to Anselmo Montiel, from the Institute of Cuban Music. He highlights the careful orchestration of the seating plan and the locations where the diplomats, the public and the institute will sit. We see a close-up of the flags which cover the bands amplifiers whilst on-stage, the shot drifts slowly from right to left focussing firstly on the welsh flag (typically seen on stage with the band) and the Cuban flag. This close-up on the two flags side by side is suggestive of the act of solidarity taking place, whilst also drawing some correlation between the political incentives at work in the documentary. Footage follows involving the band expressing their desire to have the Cuban flag as a backdrop on stage, and this further emphasizes both the notion of the visit as an act of solidarity and of cultural exchange between the observer and observed.

Figure 9. Still from footage of Yasek Manzano Silva in Our Manics in Havana (2001) © Sony Music
The themes of solidarity and cultural exchange are hinted at by the filmmaker in later scenes of the documentary, in which Thomas shows footage of an established Cuban musician, Yasek Manzano Silva, performing on-stage with the band in the song song ‘Kevin Carter’. Moments before in the documentary we see the trumpeter, sitting on a bucket, practicing whilst propped up against a wall with two young Cubans watching on. The mural behind him is faded, the paint peeling off and, despite the musician’s relative youthfulness, the scene points more towards notions of a “Special Period aesthetic” rather than one of development. This is to say the filmmaker seems more interested in the reductive qualities of the scene, rather than the artistic merit of the Cuban.

In the following scene, James Dean Bradfield invites the musician to the stage, referring to the trumpeter as a “local Havana musician to give us a hand on the trumpets.” A process of transition is acknowledged by the viewer, in which the habanero has been taken from the street and is now part of the performance. The scene allows the viewer to equate the crumbling beauty of the musician’s surroundings with the innocent faces of himself and the two other Cuban youngsters observed in the frame. Such images in the film, picturing buildings, silent, decayed, and ready for renovation, bridges, as Dopico suggests ‘a historical and ideological gap’ and constitute ‘neutral’ aesthetic objects deployed by the filmmaker to represent an imaginary of Havana that has survived ‘the political and imaginative blockades of the Cold War’ (2002: 465). Moreover, these scenes are followed by establishing shots of the Karl Marx theatre, an important framings of the Havana music hall that locate the site of the band’s performance. Shot again on super-8 film, this footage paints a nostalgic picture of the Karl Marx theatre. The close-up on the “Karl Marx” sign itself serves as a linguistic message to the viewer. This Super-8 footage, inferring towards antiquity and intimacy with its associations with private movie making, suggests an important, and exclusive dialogue taking place between the observer and observed that constitutes the reflection of the grandiose self. Here the filmmaker and artist retain what is gratifying to them, an imagined, nostalgic and exoticized Havana, symbolized by the Karl Marx theatre, a space re-appropriated following the Revolution. The shots also mirror Wenders’s footage of the city, used to different effect and explored in Chapter Seven, in which the footage highlights the Karl Marx theatre’s sign with a missing letter. Furthermore, it is also a reminder of the band’s

49 Formerly the largest venue in the world, the music hall was confiscated by Castro’s government, who made changes to the venue in order to hold political conventions. Following the Cuban Revolution the site became a space for the performances of both international artists and of the singer-songwriters of the nueva-trova (including Carlos Varela, Silvio Rodriguez and Pablo Milanés).
own socialist/revolutionary values which seem to fit here with the reimagining of the venue as a soviet relic, and this was highlighted in promotional images of the trip that featured a Moscovich in the foreground. This affiliation to the socialist cause is echoed in the lead singer Bradfield’s attire on the evening of the concert – he takes to the stage wearing khaki military fatigues that mimic Castro’s own uniform, in a display representative of the re-appropriation and performance of identity of the artist.

The concert footage in Thomas’s film was shot on 16mm with camera equipment borrowed from the TV stations in Cuba, and the filmmaker has noted that recording the event was incredibly difficult. On the night of the concert, the crew had a camera plan, with cameras positioned throughout the theatre. As the crew did not have time to test the cameras’s working order before the performance, they only realised later that one of the cameras was faulty, the film was not passing through the gate correctly, and a faulty magazine was also being passed between the different cameramen. The film shot with this equipment had subsequently blurred. The faulty camera turned out to be Thomas’s main close-up camera for the performance shots, and whilst the resulting film upset him originally, he also felt the distorted film worked with the “feel and vibe of the show”. In addition to the footage on-stage, DV-cameras positioned amongst the crowd (see figure 10) also capture the audience throughout the concert and this is intercut with the 16mm reverse angle shots of the band onstage.

The handheld footage of the concert borrows from various seminal rockumentaries in the way in which it is filmed and edited together. As with Martin Scorsese’s The Last Waltz (and David Myers’s cinéma vérité footage in Woodstock) the camera is insinuated in the action, either as a player in the band or as a member of the audience, and therefore implicates the viewer as part of the audience (see figure 11). Thomas’s footage of the event was blended by the director in post-production with Cuban TV’s own footage. Due to its sub-standard quality, in Thomas’s opinion, it also, similarly to his Super-8 footage, seemed to fit, he felt, with the muddled quality of the concert film as a whole and was, for that reason, included. This footage was then re-edited in post-production, and cut up once more before being put back together. The effect of this gives the concert footage a distorted quality, which not only matches the disfigured earlier sequences portraying the city, but merges with the filmmaker’s nostalgic constructions of lived space from earlier in the film. These processes of distortion are representative of the temporal, social, and spatial relations that are constantly reinscribed throughout the documentary by the filmmaker.
Moreover, by doing this, Thomas further contributes to the idealized and/or reductive vision of the city, and the nation, that exists within certain imaginaries of the city today and this perpetuates the notion of Havana as “real-and-imagined”.

Figure 10. Still of footage from inside the Karl Marx theatre in Our Manics in Havana (2001) © Sony Music

Thomas’s post-production of the concert footage also introduces a number of visual editing techniques, nuances which are used to capture the feel of the musical performance and the space in which it is carried out. These methods include repeated rapid zooming of the camera lens from a wide shot to a close-up, split screens and attempts to match visual images to lyrical phrases – for example, upon seeing the performance of the song ‘Found that Soul’ James Dean Bradfield’s singing of the title lyrics are methodically synchronized with images of habaneros in the audience. The primacy of the live performance in Havana has a clear function in terms of representing a sense of authenticity. It serves as both visual and aural ‘proof’ of the act’s real performance itself along with being a shared cultural moment between the band and the Cuban people, and therefore the space itself becomes emblematic of solidarity. As mentioned above, the flag here remains an important signifier just as it does throughout Our Manics in Havana – a gesture which was centred in on by the Cuban national press. For example, the importance of this gesture was highlighted by Eduardo Montes de Oca, commenting on the front page of Juventud Rebelde:

Y lo decimos porque la Manic Street Preachers no necesitó oropeles, ni una escenografía con afanes de espectacular […] para desenvolverse en escena. […] Eso sí: como telón de fondo, estaba desplegada una gigantesca bandera
cubana. Todo un símbolo a los ojos del cronista, que recordó la idea martiana de abrirse el arte universal, entre otros motivos porque la nación está hecha de raíces multiples, varias, y su producción espiritual rezuma sincretismo, transculturación – vaya “ajiaco” sabroso. (2001: 1)

Following on from my interpretation of performance space, it could be noted that the footage of the band’s Havana concert represents a product of “thirding” of the spatial imagination, and this not draws upon both material (the Karl Marx theatre) and mental space (our enjoyment of the concert) but also inscribes the scenes with meaning (Soja 1996: 11), and this constitutes a further hybridization of the city-space. Moreover, as I have alluded in this chapter, the film appears to depicting both a simultaneously real and imagined city-space (both and also) it is also constitutive of a journey to the “real-and-imagined” space of the city, and is therefore representative of a simultaneously ‘historical-social-spatial’ palimpsest (Soja 1996: 18).

7. Summary

To conclude, in Russell Thomas’s Our Manics in Havana various different documentary modes converge (observational, poetic, participatory and the performative) and various film styles, techniques and mediums (Super-8, 35mm, DV cam, and others) are employed, in the creation and reconstruction of a particularly stylized and more accessible representation of the city and its lived spaces. As this chapter has exemplified, via my readings of the text, Thomas’s deliberate mixing of
different formats and styles in *Our Manics in Havana* involves blurring of lines between the “real-and-imagined” city-space. Thomas’s portrayal, similarly to other depictions of Cuba that have continued this trend following the film’s release, results in a film that is as visually alluring as it is problematic. On the one hand, the film further constitutes the rockumentary and music film as an immensely popular form of documentary practice which continues to exert a strong audience appeal (Beattie 2005: 35-6). To paraphrase musicologist Matt Stahl, the genre is one that can be drawn upon in the construction of particular kinds of stories about the “real world” (2008: 57). However, in the case Thomas’s film, with this appeal we see the multiplication and repetition of pre-existing Cuban images, in a visual syntax that remains in danger of further festishizing the “real” city. Furthermore, most problematic in documenting Havana’s social spaces in the form of the music-film, and by then exporting these images abroad in global markets, is that whilst the documentary music-film is often alluded to as a vehicle for clarity, it is not, by categorization, necessarily an authentic representation of reality. The position of the filmmaker is therefore highly problematized whilst working in a city functioning, as Dopico would put it, as a historical theme park (2002: 464). For this reason, the filmmaker is then in danger of contributing to the circulation of images abroad that ‘normalize’ the island’s status in what the author calls a ‘post–Cold War secular order’ (464). Thomas appears blinded by this visual phenomenology, in turn aestheticizing the economic deprivations that produce “friendly” Cubans and a charmingly ruined Havana (465), in addition to propelling visual tropes and clutching at a persistent romance with socialist decay and “Latin essence” (486).

As my readings have aimed to expose, in Russell Thomas’s *Our Manics in Havana*, the viewer experiences Havana as *Thirdspace*. Rather than witnessing a representation of reality, the viewer experiences an inscribed journey to a “real-and-imagined” place (1996: 11), in which the film blends visions of *Firstspace*, the “real” material Havana, with *Secondspace*, an imaginary Havana, and presents his viewer with a visual form of *Thirdspace*.

My readings of *Thirdspace* in the filmic texts used in Part Three have aimed to disorder intentionally and disrupt existing imaginaries of Havana, and to question the way in which the city-space is represented as both “real-and-imagined” by the filmmaker. By exploring alternative envisionings of spatiality, theorized with the aid of the heteropologies of Foucault, the trialectics and thirdings of Lefebvre, and the hybridities of Homi Bhabha, my interpretations have endeavoured to challenge
directly, and at times deconstruct, preconceived notions of the filmic representation of Havana, in line with conventional modes of spatial thinking. The respective *Havanas* depicted by these films are representative, in line with Soja’s readings, “other spaces” that not only constitute part of a global imaginary but are also “other than” the established modes of spatial thought. They should not be seen as secure and fitting representations of the “real” Havana, ‘poured back into old containers’ as Soja writes, but rather should be seen as an opportunity for ‘detonating’ new ways of re-thinking and deconstructing spatialities of Havana (1996: 163).
In the introduction, it was proposed that this thesis would aim to make parallelisms between the “real” city of Havana, and representations and reconstructions of the “imagined” city. Accordingly, the texts used in my analyses have presented an opportunity to examine the way in which space is at the same time lived, conceived, and perceived across different cultural and social contexts. I have examined these texts within a theoretical framework that offered opportunities to investigate the different representations of the city as lived space, imagined space, and Thirdspace. In Chapter One, it was explained that a theoretical overview on these respective spaces, both in the real world and those represented within visual culture, was needed in order to carefully define terms used over the course of this thesis with relation to the texts examined.

Part One, focussing on Havana and lived space, aimed to analogize representations of social space in the key photographic texts discussed, specifically highlighting the role of the city-dweller. By taking the early, and seminal, documentary work of Walker Evans from 1933, Chapter Two looked to explore multidimensional interpretations of a selection of key-images, with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of lived space in the construction of the city, via the photographic form. Focussing on Burt Glinn’s photographs of the 1959 triumph of the Revolution, Chapter Three highlighted novel approaches to looking at iconic images of the historical moment in a photojournalistic context. In this chapter, discussion drew upon a series of precise locations (the street, the hotel and the park) with a view to further developing an understanding of how the lived spaces of Havana have played an important role in the construction of imaginaries of the city. Furthermore, my interpretations of David Bailey’s post-Special Period photobook, *Havana* (2006), in Chapter Four, explored the way in which a synergy of different photographic styles have been used by the image-maker to depict abstract, absolute and touristic spaces, spatial confines that have come to define subsequent re-imaginations of the city in recent years. Therefore, Part One of this thesis located a series of temporal shifts, representative of “moments” in Havana’s history, that continue to be reproduced, reconceptualized. Moreover, as my readings have aimed to reveal, these photographic texts are constitutive of the way in which different modes of image-making have shaped the foundations for the now established imaginaries that have developed.
within contemporary constructions of the city (seen in Parts Two and Three). Furthermore, Part One also highlighted that, over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, a photographic taste for the city has developed a flavour for a virtual Havana. The speed-up of images on a global level following the advent of the internet, and its various formats of, and vehicles for, visual representation (including Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube), has further highlighted the necessity of reconsidering the responsibility of image-makers and cultural producers.

In order to further explore notions of a virtual Havana, and the city as “imagined space,” Part Two looked to two individual case-studies (the Havana Club brand, exemplifying the city’s role in advertising discourse, and the neighbourhood of Little Havana in Miami, an example of the reconstructed city-space) and interrogated the way in which the reconceptualization of Havana within the public imaginary has occurred in these contemporary examples with relation to the image. In Chapter Five, by drawing upon the contents of Havana Club’s Nothing Compares to Havana advertising campaign, I further scrutinised notions of typecasting, developed in Chapter Four, with relation to the city-dweller and the urban environment, and implied that such examples of advertising discourse were involved in the recycling and repetition of fetishized archetypical images of Havana’s Otherness. Chapter Six sought to decode the way in which other imaginaries of Havana are actualized in the urban form. Using the case-study of Calle Ocho, I have also observed how different processes of manufacture and production have concretized “idealized” images of Havana. As my interpretations in Part Two revealed, in both instances a demand for a virtual Havana has led to the construction of various “hyperreal” Havanas within a consumable geography, and this, my readings construed, has created a vulnerable space in which the boundaries between the “real-and-imagined” city-space has become progressively more fluid, indeterminate and undefined.

The notion of the “real-and-imagined” city-space of Havana was further explored in the third part of this thesis, in which I sought to expose the way in which images prevalent in the documentary film equate to a re-familiarization of the viewer with recognized visual signifiers that were discussed in earlier chapters. In Wim Wenders’s Buena Vista Social Club (1999) and Russell Thomas’s Our Manics in Havana (2001), I drew correlations between the methods in which the filmmakers mirror identifiable, ideological imaginaries of Havana in their respective representations of space in film. By exploring these texts alongside theoretical approaches to Thirdspace, I have envisaged these texts as symbolic of both the spatial
and temporal displacement of Havana and as differing exoticized constructs. These texts, I have observed, implore a nostalgia in the viewer for both a pre- and post-Revolutionary Havana, and these spatial/temporal zones described above lie at the very foundations of the various imaginary *Havanas* that exist today.

The evidence adduced in these various parts and chapters constitutes part of a growing body of thought concerned with the representation of cities in space, particularly in the urban context. This thesis has aimed to offer an original contribution to the field and I have endeavoured to do this, via my readings, in order to build upon the rapidly developing discussion of the relationships between the city and the visual. Moreover, in my textual interpretations I have also looked to resituate representational geographies of constructs of Havana in a way that I hope will encourage others in the field to focus more specifically on key significant texts. As I have identified, these texts have come to define the critical historical moments of the city’s relatively recent history. My study of the context of representations of Havana in visual culture has also revealed the complexity of dialectical relationships between image-makers and the images they project within the global imaginary. Above all, what this study has shown is the close relationship which exists between spatialities of Havana that span the best part of a century.

By aligning different imagined constructs, in photographic, “real” urban, and documentary forms, I have aimed to put forward an inventive way of focussing on emerging contemporary spatialities of Havana in a way that I anticipate will form the basis for further inquiry in regards to the visual construction and representation of the city. By looking at constructs on a global scale, and through exploring different media outputs, I have also intended to make correlations between the way in which these respective spatialities feed off pre-existing urban imaginaries. As José Quiroga has observed (2005: 3), an entire media archive devoted to all things Cuban has been compacted within the interactive and virtual realm of the internet and, consequently, the manner in which imaginaries of Cuba are now projected is one of the greatest concerns scholars face. Furthermore, as this thesis contends, it is only through returning to constructions of Havana, and by re-interpreting the way in which they represent lived space, imagined space and *Thirdspace* to us, that we may build upon an understanding as to how and why we have come to see the city as we do.
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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL VISUAL MATERIALS