

**Performing Greater Cuba:
Tania Bruguera and the Burden of Guilt**

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Sitting in a lower Manhattan bar with two dear Cuban American friends in the spring of 2000, we found ourselves somewhat overwhelmed with the psychic and political ordeal of simply being Cuban at that particular historical moment. We fumbled for the proper word to describe what we were feeling at that vexed time. We had spent weeks compulsively tracking the case of Elian Gonzalez, the six-year-old boy who was rescued by fishermen off the coast of South Florida in November of 1998. The irony that this was happening almost exactly on the twenty-year anniversary of another infamous Cuban immigration scandal, the Mariel boatlift, did not escape us. By this point in the ordeal the entire nation was familiar with the boy's tale: his tragic flight, the death of his mother at sea, and various magical realist details that punctuate the case, like the account of benevolent dolphins keeping the boy aloft on the inner tube and the manifestation of the Virgin Mary in the contours of a cracked mirror in Elian's bedroom in his Miami relatives' home. Miami Cubans rallied around the boy's Miami kin, who fought for custody of the boy. Cuban leader Fidel Castro, not one to miss the challenge of any symbolic war, pressed for the boy's return. As the situation escalated, the comportment of Cubans seemed odd and fantastic to non-Cuban viewers. Despite media representations to the contrary, Cuban Americans are not a monolithic bloc of right-wing zealots. There is in fact a Cuban American left, networks of people and individuals who believed that the boy should be allowed to return to his father and who furthermore—and even more scandalously—do not demonize the revolution but instead view it ambivalently.¹

That night, at the bar with Northern Cubans, I realized that we felt a structure of feeling that I can only call communal guilt. I realized that perhaps this structure of feeling linked Cuban Americans and Cubans. Certainly my right-wing relatives feel a sort of survivors' guilt in relation to those Cubans on the island, who they perceive as living in the shadow of a tyrant in a communist inferno. Cuban children in the United States are scolded for being wasteful and reminded of all the material possessions they have compared to their cousins who are deprived of capitalism's trinkets. As a Cuban American who believes in the importance of materialist analysis, the ultraconservative dominance of the community I grew up in has been a source of shame and guilt for me as an adult. As a proponent of pan-Latino coalition politics I feel this familiar structure of feeling in relation to the historical preferences and advantages Cuban immigrants enjoy in relation to the state-sponsored harassment that other Latino groups such as Mexicans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans encounter. Guilt envelops the Cuban American tradition. Guilt, according to the theorist of affect Silvan Tompkins, is a subcategory of shame (142). Guilt is akin to shaming others, and guilt itself is one way in which we introject shame.

In this essay I wish to use this commonality in guilt to do decidedly different taxonomical work than I did in the above paragraph. Rather than differentiate between different kinds of Cuban Americans—us and them, myself and the Other Cuban—I want to consider the way in which there are structures of feeling that knit *cubanía* together despite different national pedagogies and ideological purchases. Furthermore I am interested in putting pressure on the inside/outside Cuba binary that has become so central since the revolution. By focusing on guilt's relation to all of *cubanidad* I am attempting to render an analysis of what I will call, after the film theorist Ana López, Greater Cuba. López uses the term to talk about cinematic cultural productions by Cuban Americans outside of the island in relation to work from the island. Her expanded rendering of *cubanía* functions as a challenge to cold war rhetorics that are interested in a strict binarization of *cubanía*. While it is important in the case of other Latin American immigrant histories, such as the case of the Chicano, to differentiate between over there (Mexicans) and over here (Chicanos), I am arguing that this is not axiomatic for all Latino groups. Since the antagonisms that Chicanos have faced are remarkably different from the lesser state-sponsored obstacles that Cubans have overcome, it is safe to conclude that both cases are decidedly divergent. This makes different protocols necessary to properly understand different Latino groups, groups that nonetheless potentially work in coalition formation as *latini-*

dad. It seems that thinking past the stultifying rhetorics of what Gustavo Pérez-Firmat has called "life on the hyphen" will lead us to a more nuanced understanding of the affective contours of what it means to be Cuban in the extended and somewhat pretended geography that we will call Greater Cuba. (This map would include the island and South Florida but also highlight other hubs of Cuban production in New York and New Jersey, as well as spots in California and elsewhere in the Americas.) This geography is calculated in relation to affective considerations of space. I will propose that Cubans live in guilt, and that an affective geography of cubanía, built on this analysis of guilt as a structure of feeling, is particularly important at this historical moment. To this end I will consider the work of Cuban national artist Tania Bruguera.

Bruguera came to my attention after her work had been censored by the Cuban state in 1994. The offending art object was a journal that had the format of a newspaper and was titled *Memoria de la postguerra* (Memory of the Post War) that included Cubans inside and outside of the island expressing their feelings on the Cuban state at the moment. The government in turn did not invite her to perform at the 1997 Bienial. Bruguera nonetheless performed at her own residence during the exhibition as international visitors and local neighbors watched. Though Bruguera graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago in 2001, she considers herself to be a Havana-based artist and is returning to the island this fall to inaugurate a performance studies department at the Instituto Superior de Arte (the Havana Art Institute). I will consider her performance work, especially a piece titled *El peso de la culpa* (The Burden of Guilt), as a greater Cuban intervention that meditates and theorizes guilt and the Cuban condition.

Introjecting Guilt

The Burden of Guilt, a performance that was debuted in 1997 in Havana, is part of a series of performances that Bruguera calls *Memorias de la postguerra*.² The artist's own description about the themes she is attempting to foreground stresses a history of guilt in relation to the nation's foundation:

In this piece I specifically refer to the collective suicides of indigenous Cuban people during the Spanish occupation. The only way that some of them could rebel—as they didn't have any weapons and they weren't warriors by nature—was to eat dirt until they died. This gesture, which remained with us more as a historical rumour, struck me as hugely poetic. In a way, it speaks to our individuality as a nation and as individuals. Eat-

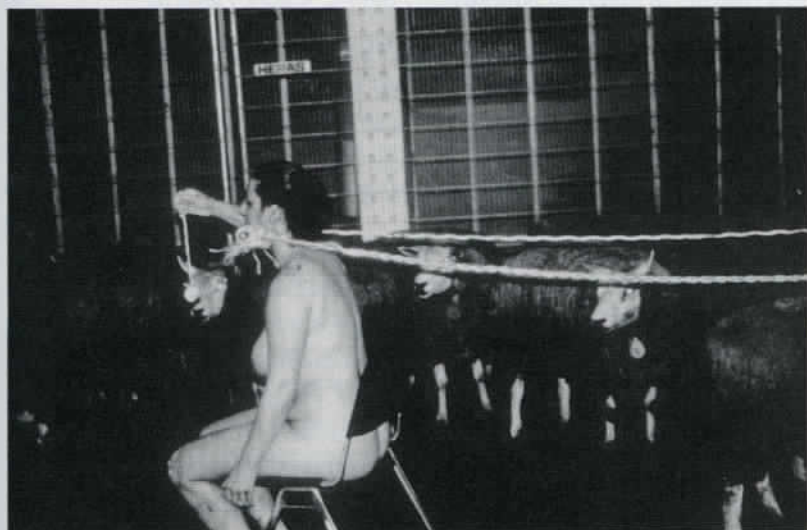
ing dirt, which is sacred and a symbol of permanence, is like swallowing one's own traditions, one's own heritage, it's like erasing oneself, electing suicide as a way of defending oneself. What I did was take this historical anecdote and update it to the present. ("Tania Bruguera")

The basis of this performance is a mythological origin story of Cuban guilt. The factual nature of this origin is partially relevant. We do know that Spanish colonization of Cuba was especially genocidal in relation to indigenous people. Nearly all indigenous people were wiped out during the shock of the colonial encounter. The eradication of indigenous people is the condition of possibility for Cuba's foundation. Bruguera describes the foundation of Cuban national consciousness as being formed by guilt over colonial brutality and mass killing. Guilt thus organizes and forms this particular origin narrative of Cuban consciousness. Bruguera's foregrounding of this tale calls on Greater Cuba to understand its formation in this scene of racialized violence. Stressing the tragic shock effects of the colonial encounter pulls Cubans away from the problematic and short-sighted understanding of the 1959 revolution as the crowning or central moment in Greater Cuba's history. Bruguera's work offers an expanded timeline of cubanía. Such an expanded historical mapping (which is also an affective cartography) displaces the 1959 revolution's central and organizing position, offering a more productive mapping of Greater Cuba.

The performance titled *El peso de la culpa* was performed in various sites and modified for each performance. The first version of the performance was staged at the Sixth Havana Biennial (1995). While Bruguera was not officially allowed to perform during this Biennial, she nonetheless staged an alternate performance inside her house in Havana. In this version of the performance, Bruguera awaits her audience inside her house. Behind her is a large and expansive Cuban flag that the artist has made out of human hair. She wears the headless carcass of a lamb like a vest of armor atop a white outfit. She is barefoot. There is a pot of Cuban earth in front of her, along with a deep plate of water and salt. She bows in front of the containers in a slow, mechanical fashion and carefully mixes the dirt and the salt water in her hand. She proceeds to eat the dirt slowly. Bruguera continues to eat dirt for about an hour. Eating dirt slowly in a ritualistic fashion is a performance of empathy where she identifies with the lost indigenous Cuban. The actual consumption of earth is an act of penance that connects the artist with the actual island itself. The salt water signifies tears of regret and loss. She consumes this charged symbol, too. In this performance the lamb is less a symbol of Christian cosmology and more nearly signifies syncretic African belief systems like Santería where the goat or lamb is a ritualistic creature of sacrifice. "For



1 and 2. Tania Bruguera,
The Burden of Guilt,
1997-1999. Photos courtesy
of Tania Bruguera.



me," she states, "the relation that exists with the Afro-Cuban religion is that the lamb is charged with energy rather than just symbolism. But I also play with the socially saturated sense in which the lamb becomes a Eurocentric, and hence 'universal,' symbol of submission. In other words, it's less local in its intent than it might seem. A sheep or lamb as everybody everywhere knows, lies down, just like the Cuban indigenous and like Cubans in the island" (Letter). The flag that hangs behind her is made out of the nation's actual body, or at least a part of that national body. Bruguera's work literalizes the metaphors of national identity and nationality. The function of this literalization reveals the material and corporeal weight of metaphors. As the case of Elian makes clear, the symbolic is routinely deployed within the rhetoric of Greater Cuba. Elian became a symbol for both the Cuban government and Miami-based Cubans. The boy's welfare and actual physical well-being were overwhelmed by the abstraction of becoming a national symbol. Bruguera's insistence on corporeal literalization makes us cognizant of the actual stakes of making people and bodies mere symbols. The stakes, as the performance's title suggests, are weighty.

If we consider the attachment of symbols of guilt to the body and the actual consumption of these symbols—native soil and salty tears—through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, we can determine a significant reversal that contributes to an understanding of the interventionist nature of Bruguera's performance. When considering the question of guilt in a reading of classical Hollywood cinema, Slavoj Žižek explains:

In psychoanalytic theory, one talks a lot about the transference or projection of guilt onto the Other (the Jew, for example); perhaps, we should rather reverse the relationship and conceive the very act of assuming guilt as an escape from the real traumatism—we don't only escape from guilt as we escape into guilt, take refuge in it. (38)

Cubans across the nationalist divides of the island and exile project guilt on each other and constitute each other as what Žižek would call the big Other. Certainly Castro is continually constructed as the big Other of Miami-based right-wing Cuban American rhetoric. Similarly the *gusano* (derogatory term used for Cubans who left Cuba after the 1959 revolution; literally "worm") is construed as the revolution's Other. Bruguera's work dramatically renders the challenge and political imperative to resist the urge to project guilt out on the Other and instead understand its incorporation into the Greater Cuba's disparate body. Elsewhere I have claimed that Cuban Americans live in memory. While I do not recant that particular formulation, I would layer another analysis. Greater Cuba, whose spa-

tial geography is an affective one, is also fractured by crisscrossing projections of guilt. But guilt is in fact the very affective terrain of the Cuban and not something to simply be deployed against the phantasmatic big Other. Bruguera's performance is a form of materialist critique that asks us to feel the weight of guilt and understand it as something incorporated into the Cuban body and the nation's body. Indeed, I would amend my previous statement by suggesting that Cubans also live in guilt.

In another performance, *The Burden of Guilt II*, part of the same series of work, this one performed in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Antwerp, Bruguera kneels nude on the floor before a dish containing lamb's fat. She slowly and methodically wrings the animal fat through her hands. At first it appears as though she is washing her hands with the substance and then it begins to look as though she is actually rubbing the strong smelling substance into her skin, giving one the sense that she wants to incorporate the substance into her physical being. She next kneels behind a lamb's head. She is positioned behind the neck of the animal as its eyes look out. She bows in the direction of the animal head and, as her head recedes into her body, the animal's head appears to look out into the audience. The sacrificial beast's head is now her own and she is becoming this creature, or at least suturing the symbol onto her own body. In this instance we hear Žižek's suggestion that we not project guilt out but instead understand the need for the interjection of guilt. To see the way in which guilt is always already inside us, and furthermore, a Kantian condition of possibility for the current situation of cubanía.

Psychoanalysis is useful as a heuristic tool. It narrates stories about subject formation that we can potentially harness to discuss group formations. Such a tactic is not always effective or even compelling. There is nonetheless a time and a place for such inquiry. Take for example Jean LaPlanche and J. B. Pontalis's useful description of the psychoanalytic project known as projection:

In the properly psycho-analytic sense: (it is an) operation whereby qualities, feelings, wishes or even objects, which the subject refuses to recognise or rejects in himself, are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing. Projection so understood is a defence of very primitive origin which may be seen at work especially in paranoia, but also in normal modes of thought such as superstition. (349)

This definition is useful to understand how the individualistic psychic process is relevant to larger formations within the social. The above explication, for instance, seems an especially apt definition to bring to bear on issues of ethnicity of affect. Affect is not only located in a particular

sense of self—but it is often projected onto the world. Affect, like shame and its offspring, guilt, are often projected onto a world, often contributing to a large social imbalance that can be described as a mass paranoia. Eve Sedgwick has talked about a particular imbalance in many of our critical practices, one in which paranoid readings have taken precedence over other interpretive strategies. Sedgwick instead calls for reparative readings (“Paranoid Readings and Reparative Readings”). A reparative reading is a mode of analysis that is not simply concerned with unveiling conspiracies and the secret (and seemingly always nefarious) mechanisms of power. Reparative readings are calibrated to call attention to the ways in which individuals and groups fashion possibility from conditions of (im)possibility. Reparative readings are about building and potentiality. People of color and other minoritarian citizen-subjects must continue to call on paranoid readings—some modes of paranoia are well-founded while others are simply rote and by now stale critical reflexes. Sedgwick is not calling for a simple reversal of critical methodologies; she is instead making a case for a diversification of critical approaches. Such a diversification seems equally true for the emergent body of knowledge that we can tentatively call Greater Cuban studies. Bruguera’s performance signals a potentiality for a new formation, another understanding and sense of cubanía that is not organized by routine and predictable antagonisms. Bruguera’s work signals another way of working with and through guilt that is not simply a cleansing of that affect or the traditional paranoid projection of such an affect.

Holding Guilt: Bruguera with Albita

Ricardo Ortiz, one of Greater Cuba’s most dynamic critics, has written about guilt in relation to the music of Albita Rodriguez, famed Miami-based recording artist and cabaret performer. Ortiz explains that Cubans are fueled by particular addictions—*café* and *culpa* (guilt). He writes, “One’s Cubanness should become the marker of one’s guilt, the incontrovertible sign of one’s culpability, results precisely from the necessity of bearing that mark, of confessing to one’s Cubanity outside Cuba” (69). This formulation is produced in relation to an astute textual analysis of Rodriguez’s lyrics, especially the third track on her album, *Qué culpa tengo yo*. I have often heard that sentimental anthem in a room full of Cubans, noticing how it stirs and unites groups of listeners. There is a certain force behind lines like “Qué culpa tengo yo que mi sangre suba? / Qué culpa tengo yo de haber nacido en Cuba? [What fault is it of mine that my blood rises? / What fault of mine to be born in Cuba?].” This invocation of Cubanness and guilt, in my experience, hits a note and ac-

cesses a structure of feeling. While Albita is older than Bruguera, she, like the performance artist, came of age in communist Cuba, and now both of these performers, newly internationalized and performing within the sphere of Greater Cuba, testify to the guilt that permeates *cubanía*. But any comparison between the way in which both artists negotiate *cubanía* and guilt is limited. In fact the two negotiate the affect of guilt quite differently. Ortiz explains how the song soars beyond self-torturing guilt. His expert reading of the song is worth citing: "Instead the tone of the song is pure defiance: to be Cuban is in part to love freedom, to bear adversity with optimism. It is also to bear in oneself a kind of blood that pulses and rises, that both captures one and sustains one at a level of passionate corporal intensity equal to the demands and challenges of having been born Cuban in this historical moment" (72). This song of defiance is extremely powerful and effective. The song's affective stance does indeed surpass simple self-inflicted and tortured guilt. Ortiz adroitly connects this defiance around *cubanía* to Albita's lesbian defiance. He reads the culpa of *cubanía* alongside the culpa of homosexuality. While I agree and am persuaded by Ortiz's argument, I am not certain that having one's blood rise under such particular terms helps *cubanía* surpass that impasse around guilt that I have described. While Albita's lesbian defiance seems especially necessary on either side of Greater Cuba, where queer possibility and visibility are often met with phobic antagonism, this defiance to the guilt of *cubanía* seems to not really function as a break with divisive Cuban nationalisms. I would suggest that Albita, who never fully comes out in the press or media, uses *cubanía* as an analogy for queerness. The genius of the song has much to do with the way in which it speaks queerness differently and potentially undermines homophobic ideologies. She addresses these Cubans by speaking to them of a shaming they think they know. But, like many analogies, this rhetorical move does present some dangers. What sort of defiant and perhaps unthinking nationalism does Albita reproduce through this analogical move? Perhaps when it comes to the culpa of *cubanía* we should do more than simply deflect it with the force-field of a defiant posture. Perhaps it is important to actually hold onto the guilt that shadows *cubanía* and not simply cast it out through a process of projection. What would it be to hold guilt? What knowledge of historical positionality avails itself to us when we attempt to know, interrogate, and actually hold the burden of guilt?

Toward A Politics of Introjection

Bruguera's performance practice entails just such a holding. It is a critical retention of shame instead of a more familiar and routine Cuban negotia-

tion of shame: rejection, outward projection, or cleansing. To hold shame looks very different than the defiance that Albita performs. A survey of Bruguera's performances that predate *The Burden of Guilt* is instructive when trying to understand the critical moves she makes. *Cabeza abajo* (Head Down), for instance, also displays a posture that is different than that of direct or simplistic rejections of shame. This performance, staged in December 1996 in the Espacio Aglutinador gallery, began with an invitation to local artists and critics. The participants were asked to lie down on the floor. Bruguera was dressed in a white robe of a false wool fabric and covered with a white Kabuki-like makeup. She carried a red flag on her back, like those used in Japanese feudal wars. She walked on top of her prostrate participants. Potato sack trenches separated the audience from the participants, further instilling a sense of battle, warfare, and conquest. The artist proceeded to mark her participants with red flags. Revolutionary anthems from the sixties and seventies played. In an interview, Bruguera describes the performance as being about the relationship between artists and power and as a general statement about the art world (29). This performance was staged at a moment in which the state was particularly interested in censoring any art that could be construed as antirevolutionary. Bruguera's journal/newspaper, *Memorias de la postguerra*, at this point was censored by the state. Each body becomes a colonized territory. But certainly other meanings can be deciphered if we attempt to understand the affective dimension of the performance. The art world denizens are conquered by an imperial specter. In the highly metaphoric field of Greater Cuba, this scene can potentially be read as depicting the colonizing force of the United States, Miami, or Castro, depending on one's particular ideological position. But that aspect is left open. The work does not target any one culprit; it is instead interested in unpacking a particular affective scene. Her work is a study of the ways in which Cubans are confronted by colonizing exterior force. Like the Indians invoked in *El peso de la culpa*, the participants in *Cabeza abajo* are not taking on a posture of defiance but instead performing a passive resistance. This performance can be seen as a rehearsal of sorts for the affective stance that Bruguera embodies in *El peso de la culpa*. In *Cabeza abajo*, the whitened artist plays the embodiment of power from above while her participants embody the passive masses. It would be a mistake to see this position as simple passivity. *Cabeza abajo* is a descriptive performance, rendering the ways in which a people survive their historical situation. The performance is not prescriptive, it does not suggest that the performed behavior is desirable; instead, it illustrates how Cubans withstand particular conditions of possibility assuming certain poses.



3. In *Cabeza abajo*, Tania Bruguera asked participants to lie down on the floor. Photo courtesy of Tania Bruguera.

Another performance, *Destierro* (Displacement) depicts a further representation of the Cuban condition, this time in the form of an object associated with the Congo religious roots of Cuban Santería, the *nkisi nkonde*. The mythical figure is a mystical object in which believers invest their hopes and desires. The object has a powerful performative nature. The objects are performative insofar as they can perform, for example, such as a speech act according to J. L. Austin. Two dolls tied together for example can function in the same way as the linguistic speech act, "I now pronounce you man and wife," insofar as it contractually joins two entities. Not all *nkisi nkonde* objects are anthropomorphic, at times they may simply appear to be a pouch. The contents of the pouch may spell out a subject's name or some other aspect of her or his identity. The object in Bruguera's case does represent a human form. The object's performative nature has been transformed in the diaspora and it is not uncommon to hear stories of people investing certain desires and wishes in the object, for example someone who may wish to win the lottery could very well sew money into the doll's lining. The object thus becomes a receptacle and symbol for projected desires. When Bruguera wears her *nkisi nkonde* outfit, a massive uniform made of wooden and metal nails and a mud-covered lycra material, she represents an aspect of Cuban syncretic culture. Each nail represents a desire hammered into the object's form. In this massive costume Bruguera tours public spaces as part of the

Destierro performance. She confronts Cubans and tourists as she tours old Havana's most historic sections. In the dilapidated beauty of rustic town squares, the figure of Cuba's syncretic nature confronts its populace. Those inside the object's epistemology recognize it and quickly form an identification to it that is calibrated by their own relationship to the belief network, while for others outside that loop it appears to be some ancient musty relic come to life, perhaps a Caribbean mummy emerged from a hidden tropical crypt. When confronting the *nkisi nkonde* those in the know can perhaps understand each *clavo* or nail as a desire that has been literally introjected into the object. While introjected into the object it is still visible, a desire that is literally worn on the sleeve. Perhaps the desire that is made visible on the figure is one of flight, or maybe a wish for the island, a desire to stay. It is significant that this performance was first staged on Castro's birthday, a holiday that calls the nation to embrace its leader and his status as a literal representative of the nation. For those who believe in the revolution's infallible glory, Castro almost functions as a *nkisi nkonde*, a symbolic figure in which the populace invests its hopes and desires. For those who denounce the leader, he is the fetish, the *juju*, the ultimate Other, also potentially represented in the performance. Again, Bruguera's performance explicates the ways in which the Cuban people, arguably inside and out of the island, participate in an economy of projection, investing desire and guilt in outside objects rather than understanding the potential transformation available through a politics of introjection.

What would the contours of this politics of introjection be? What possibilities could it suggest? What potentialities avail themselves? To this end it is important to pick up the psychoanalytic thread that this paper produces. It is equally important to be explicit about this thread, its nature, and exactly what it is not. The psychoanalytic inquiry I am attempting to compose here is decidedly non-Lacanian, or rather it represents a turn away from a particular North American reception and utilization of Jacques Lacan's project. In Lacan's paradigm, there is overarching and indeed terrible otherness to the other. Lacan develops the thematic of projective identification, a motif first located in British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's work, and uses it to describe the rage that develops when the infant realizes she can not break through the mirror and that instead her own image is merely refracted upon her. In Klein's theory of introjection, the ego consumes the lost object or ideal through a process of introjection. Once introjected the ego cannibalizes the lost object and it is lost anew. The story of introjection that Klein tells is called into question by French psychoanalytic theorists Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok,



4. In *Destierro*, Bruguera wears a nkisi nkonde outfit, a massive uniform made of wooden and metal nails and a mud-covered lycra material. Photo courtesy of Tania Bruguera.

who take issue with Klein's assignment of introjection as a primary process. They take issue, for example, with the fashion in which Klein positions fantasy: "We are astonished Melanie Klein sees fantasy—a product of the ego—as predating the process, which is the product of the entire psyche" (125).

Abraham and Torok are also attracted to a notion of introjection. They note that introjection was first invented by Freud's collaborator, Sandor Ferenczi, who described it as a process of broadening the ego. The psychoanalytic duo explain that the process of introjection first manifests itself when the child discovers the emptiness of its mouth in relation to the presence and then absence of the breast. The oral void, once discovered, is filled with language and words. Eventually words replace cries and the pleasure and satisfaction of the breast give way to the satisfaction of possessing language. They explain that the transition from a mouth filled with the breast to a mouth filled with words occurs by virtue of the intervening experiences of the empty mouth. Language would not exist without the satisfaction of the breast. Abraham and Torok then take a rather poetic turn when they discuss language itself as the communion of empty mouths. Thus a politics of introjection would be something like the communion described above. If we introjected feelings like guilt, things that we too easily project, they will not reductively fill a void but the process will make us cognizant of our shared affective nature, the empty mouths of cubanía. When we acknowledge that our mouths are empty, that neither ideal—here or there—can permanently replace our loss, we can only begin the absolutely necessary process of communion. To do so it seems important to visit other spots in the firmament of psychology and psychoanalysis that are not the reified dialectics of negation that dominate Lacanian paradigms.³ Abraham and Torok tell us a story of a collective negation that we can, following the work of LaPlanche, describe as allogenic as opposed to what he has described as auto-centric(ally) eschewed theories of relationality for circumscribed theories of the self. According to LaPlanche, the latter have imposed their hegemony on all of meta-psychology, both clinical and theoretical. He calls for the revision of our approaches to the question of the psychic when he proposes giving a full place in metapsychology to a process that is irreducible to an auto-centricism: those whose subject is quite simply the other (136). This allogenic assertion certainly speaks to the communion of empty mouths that Abraham and Torok describe. It is also relevant in a recent turn to the psychic in critical race theory that Hortense Spillers has called for ("All the Things You Could Be"). Spillers justifies her own escalating interest in psychological approaches to the social by describing them as potential

intramural protocols. Intramural insofar as they may shed light on our relationship to each other within communities of color. Again, not some little other out of Lacan, but instead each other. Bruguera's performances are also intramural exercises, allogenic acts that let us see beyond the self resisting to project. I have explicated the ways in which Bruguera's performance eschews auto-centric cubanía for a Greater Cubanía. Which returns me to the scene at the bar, and my friends, sharing our shame and guilt about Elian, finding ourselves speechless (an infrequent phenomenon for Cubans in general) and perhaps finding ourselves in our speechlessness. Which is to say we were taking comfort in the communal nature of empty mouths, wishing and desiring a moment when Greater Cuba discovers its own communion of empty mouths.

Notes

1. This ambivalence is not a passive ambivalence. It is more nearly a passionate investment in Cuba that sees the promise of the revolution, its potential, and its various failures and shortcomings. The ambivalence of the Cuban American left is perhaps as passionate as the obsessive rejection continually performed by a Miami-based Cuban American right wing.

2. The phrase "memorias de la postguerra" was originally used by Bruguera as the title of a journal/newspaper/artwork that was initially censored by the Cuban cultural authorities. Later, it was used to describe the publication and a series of performances.

3. By psychology here I mean quite a bit more than the Lacanian paradigms that dominate psychological approaches to cultural critique in the United States and Britain. I am in fact more interested in the still underexplored work of psychologists like Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott.

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