

Hyper-Eroticism as a Source of Spiritual and Material Agency in «Trilogía sucia de La Habana»

El hipererotismo como fuente de agentividad espiritual y material en Trilogía sucia de La Habana

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ABSTRACT: In *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez has defied traditional representations of the sexual body in Latin American literature by depicting eroticism as an agent of meditation and multiplication within an environment of deprivation. The author explores the diverse ways in which eroticism is a means by which to deconstruct subjectivity and provide a political critique against social oppression. The narrative is situated within a socialist Cuban context of surveillance during the Special Period and depicts the many acts of survival its citizens engage in on a daily basis amidst an economic crisis where basic products are scarce. With the absence of material goods, as well as certain political freedoms, the characters in the novel manifest their continuous desires by engaging in a hyper-production of eroticism as a source of power. While recounting personal stories of love and sex, the characters meditate on their social condition in addition to their own private desires. Ultimately, in accord with eroticism as a weapon of social change and critique, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez acknowledges the body traditionally dismissed in dominant Western thought and inscribes new representations where it can be beautiful while being impoverished, artistically tormented and imperfect. Subsequently, this paper analyzes hyper-eroticism as a source of reflection and material agency, leading to new inscriptions of erotic potential as a source for social change.

Keywords: Erotic empowerment, material consumption, hyper-eroticism, political subversion and subjectivity.

RESUMEN: En *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez ha desafiado representaciones tradicionales del cuerpo sexualizado en la literatura de América Latina al representar el erotismo como un agente de mediación y multiplicación dentro de un ambiente de privacidad. El escritor explora las diversas formas en las

cuales el erotismo es un medio por el cual se deconstruye la subjetividad y provee una crítica política contra la opresión social. La narrativa se sitúa dentro de un contexto socialista cubano de vigilancia durante el Periodo Especial y describe los diversos actos de supervivencia que sus ciudadanos llevan a cabo diariamente al estar dentro de una crisis económica en la que los productos básicos son escasos. Con la ausencia de bienes materiales, al igual que de ciertas libertades políticas, los personajes de la novela manifiestan su continuo deseo al participar en una hiperproducción del erotismo como fuente de poder. Al contar historias personales de amor y sexo, los personajes meditan en su condición social, al igual que en sus propios deseos. De acuerdo con el erotismo como arma de crítica y cambio social, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez reconoce el cuerpo, que tradicionalmente ha sido ignorado en el pensamiento occidental dominante, y le inscribe nuevas representaciones donde puede ser bello al mismo tiempo que empobrecido, artísticamente atormentado e imperfecto. Subsecuentemente, este ensayo analiza el hipererotismo como fuente de reflexión y agencia material, que conlleva a nuevas inscripciones del potencial erótico tal como cambio social.

Palabras clave: Empoderamiento erótico, consumo material, hipererotismo, subversión política y subjetividad.

1. INTRODUCTION

In *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, Pedro Juan Gutiérrez has defied traditional representations of the sexual body in Latin American literature by depicting eroticism as an agent of meditation and multiplication within an environment of deprivation. Addressing the power and social potential of eroticism, Alyce Mahon argues that «eroticism, because it is linked to the emotions (from sexual arousal to fear and anger), has the power to agitate the mind, the soul, and to disrupt order» (2005: 12). This paper is part of a larger conversation that seeks to investigate the diverse ways in which eroticism contests definitions solely linked to pleasure, and instead promotes eroticism's intent to achieve political empowerment. In practice, eroticism does not exist by itself, but is part of the politics of gender and sexuality, and history shows that gender, sexuality and eroticism have all been highly politicized by the state.

The backdrop of *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* is socialist Cuba in the early 1990s during the Special Period. This period of economic and political upheaval in Cuba brought about by the dissolution of the Soviet Union is characterized by Esther Whitfield as a chain of events where the sudden scarcity of material

goods led to the legalization of the US dollar on the island, the promotion of foreign tourism, and policy changes that challenged the Revolution's ideologies (2011: 27). To exemplify the extent of devastation brought to the island during the Special Period, Guillermina De Ferrari points to a 75 % loss of Cuba's trading partners, a 100 % loss of all Soviet funding, and the dissolution of CAME (Consejo de Ayuda Mutua Económica) (2003: 26). Whitfield notes that the Special Period coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, an event that also «heralded economic, social and cultural upheaval» (2011: 27). The economic cataclysm brought about by political changes in the late eighties brings to the island typical forms of human exploitation, and as the local literature and scholarly studies show, traditional capitalist relationships in the sex market are transformed in Cuba. The neologism given by Fidel Castro as «the special period in times of peace» opens the door for scholars to analyze this period (particularly the 1990s) when Cuban fiction brought to the forefront the volatile economic state of affairs that was plaguing the Caribbean island (Whitfield 2011: 27). The national and economic frailty of this period influenced literary representations of characters, described by De Ferrari as revolving around hunger as a marker that defined the overall identity of the characters as well as governed their interactions (2003: 27).

Written in 1998, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* is part of a literary aesthetic known as Latin American dirty realism, a style described by Anke Birkenmaier as one that goes against the magic realism of the region, and one that insists «on a counter-aesthetic that incorporates a vision of history that is unofficial or unheard of, 'dirty' in its focus on the illicit and on underground cultures» (2006: 491). De Ferrari explains that the term «dirty realism» was coined by the British journal *Granta* in 1983, when the editor described its writings as unadorned and focusing on the «belly-side of contemporary life» (2003: 33). The Latin American version of dirty realism is different in that its origins, themes and characters are unique to the socio-economic context of the region. Christian León and Julie Amiot discuss the aesthetic within a large social framework:

En el realismo sucio se advierte una mirada, desencantada que cifra en clave de tragedia el mundo distópico de la calle. Sus historias de orfandad, frustración, miseria, corrupción, dolor y muerte muestran la bancarrota de la ciudadanía moderna y de la razón. (2007: 138)

Important elements relevant to the work under analysis includes the narrator's tone of disappointment in the state and a sense of failure, followed by many instances of misery. William Foster adds that dirty realism engages with daily experiences and is committed to «examine the facts of life as unflinchingly as possible,» a characteristic shared by American dirty realism (1997: 77). The production of literature within dirty realism in Latin America is classified overall

by scholars like León, Amiot, De Ferrari, and Whitfield as one of urgency within a register of testimonial writing.

Birkenmaier characterizes Pedro Juan Gutiérrez and his work in relation to North American writers and their treatment of various topics:

Este tipo de opresión norteamericano por el consumerismo no tiene, por supuesto, nada que ver con el mundo cubano, como tampoco la concentración en el detalle cotidiano. Lo que Gutiérrez realmente tiene de este tipo de escritura parece ser más bien su estilo directo, sin retórica, en la representación de situaciones muy concretas y locales. Pero en última instancia en su perspectiva narrativa, el hecho de que cuente desde el punto de vista de los fracasos de una sociedad, lo que más lo relaciona con este grupo de norteamericanos. (2001: 39)

Although Gutiérrez does focus on quotidian details in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, I would concur with Birkenmaier that Gutiérrez also highlights the failures in society in his novel and, as Foster has pointed out, does so in an unflinching way that transgresses codes of morality and desire.

Within the literary aesthetic of dirty realism and a socio-economic context of crisis and deprivation, *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* depicts the many acts of subversion and spiritual survival that its citizens engage in on a daily basis. The sexual encounters in particular are a direct critique of the tiresome political environment of ideological oppression and the absence of basic goods. The novel, then, combats the absence of materiality with the hyper-production of eroticism. This paper analyzes hyper-eroticism as a source of spiritual and material agency through the display of sex, space and tourism.

2. THE INTERSECTIONS OF EROTICISM, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE BODY

In practice, eroticism does not exist by itself, but is intertwined with the politics of gender and sexuality. Eroticism, sexuality and gender influence one another, their boundaries overlapping. Consequently, eroticism is deeply tied to society's prescriptions onto the body and its sex. Based on sex, individuals are taught gendered ways to socialize, behave, think and desire. Arguments for maintaining eroticism as a private matter are uprooted when recognizing the historical treatment of the erotic in relation to gender and sexuality. History shows that gender, sexuality and eroticism have all been highly politicized by the state. As history reveals, eroticism is always political.

Between the desired ideals of Feminist and Queer Studies and what Western societies prescribe and tolerate, there is an evident need to have a more inclusive

model when drawing the limits around gender and sexuality. Elizabeth V. Spelman agrees that in the past, the body was treated as independent of thought and intellect, and, as a consequence of this outlook, the subject was disembodied and rubrics that advocate binaries that separate the body from the mind were institutionalized (1999: 39). Within a literary discussion, it is critical to promote a dialogue on the erotic potential and its ability to challenge normative gender practices. Fundamental to such approach is Audre Lorde's view on eroticism. For Lorde, eroticism is defined as a source of knowledge and social empowerment, as a potential site of defying political oppression and restructuring an individual's very subjectivity (1984). The relevance of and degree to which individuals interact with eroticism is masterfully expressed by Alyce Mahon, who writes, «Irrespective of how we choose to express or repress erotic desire, and irrespective even of our differences of opinion over what forms of eroticism are permissible, representations of the erotic inevitably speak to us all» (2005: 11). As Mahon registers, erotic representations in art have the potential to arouse strong emotions within each one of us, as we experience eroticism in different ways based on our beliefs and limits. In our Western philosophical tradition, this has predominantly been an area of great concern and in need of supervision because of its power over beauty and reason. The reference used here of eroticism as political relates to the wider sense of the term, where it goes beyond history and space, similar to the ways in which power does. Eroticism is sublime, pleasure, ecstasy, all that transcends the body and, by extension, social limits.

Therefore, eroticism holds a potential political threat to normative prescriptions of it, which are dependent on time and space and, as Judith Butler proposes, the definitions must not be singular or restrained (1988).

With the influence of postmodernism on feminism, the interpretation of the body as a fluid construct leaves all possibilities open. Poststructuralism questions all definitions and advances the idea of leaving things undetermined. In fact, the very notion of the body in constant movement leads to the impossibility of being able to permanently define and mark the body, thereby also acting as a counterhegemonic move. By assigning fluidity to the body, feminism achieves a disruption of the material body and establishes the possibility of constructing alternative meanings. Butler's objective, as stated in the preface of *Gender Trouble*, as well as that of many feminists, is to open up gender to many different interpretations, without dictating which ones should be realized and which ones should not (1999, viii). Gender and sexuality habitually control the distribution of political, social and economic resources, thereby also dictating who has access to their own erotic desires and bodies.

Butler's account is criticized by Alex Hughes and Ann Witz for «losing its hold on the lived fleshy, experienced matter of (womanly) bodies» (1997: 59). As a consequence, eroticism is affected due to its closeness to the body: eroticism

continues to be placed in the periphery. My objective is to find a middle ground between the «fleshy» quotidian experience of humans, and that of the non-physical, which seeks alternatives for erotic discourses and their potential to be a factor in the discussions between the political, gender and sexuality. In *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, the overt production of eroticism can be analyzed as a source of individual empowerment within a political environment whose central focus is the group. Beyond the feeling of individual agency, erotic encounters produce a reflection of and a means by which to have some sort of purchasing power, be it of products needed for survival or those for luxury.

3. COUNTER-NORMATIVE DISCOURSES AND HYPER-EROTICISM

Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's narrative in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* depicts free love in the Cuban context due to the revolutionary trajectory and explores to what degree the desire for consumption of goods are usurped. The consumption of needs and desires alike remains strong, a pair which is hard to separate within the narrative. The narrator, Pedro Juan, is a former journalist who finds himself tired of and disappointed with life, induced somewhat by the un-satisfaction of needs within the island and his partners' decisions to move to other countries seeking professional success and economic stability. Often in a state of numbness due to hunger and indifference, he recounts his daily interactions with his neighbors, friends, lovers, strangers and relatives –all of which have two persistent themes: never feeling satiated by food and constantly engaging in sexual encounters as a means of entertainment as well as a source of spiritual strength.

The novel, which is a compilation of short chapters, takes place during the Cuban Special Period and describes the scarcity of goods available on the island. In the case of soap, it may not be necessary, but it is highly desired in a humid location. The text is persistent in describing a great number of characters who are filthy and putrid due to the lack of access to soap, among other products. To take it a step further, he recounts how, in the building where he lives, all of the occupants must share one bathroom, causing unfortunate accidents when the toilet is in use. The reality of the city is the constant degradation of the buildings, which receive little to no maintenance by the government. It is a place where little can be accumulated, and with each day, the struggle to survive begins anew. De Ferrari depicts the private space as becoming more rural, where farm animals like chickens and pigs are brought to the city and raised in bathrooms and common terraces in order to help combat the scarcity of food brought upon by the Special Period (2003, 28). Catherine Moses describes the iconic city as a wilting flower:

Havana, an elegant, graceful city, has been brought to its knees. The city suffers from more than a lack of paint. The architectural wealth is dissolving [...] The nation is educated but starving for information, proud but prostituting its daughters, revolutionary but suffocating. (2000, 2-3)

In addition to sanitation and infrastructure problems, the masses suffer further physical degradation as they calm their daily hunger with rum and cigarettes. Images related to filth, decay and absence are strong metaphors for the feelings the state is projecting onto its citizens.

As a repercussion of the absence of commodities, there is an excess of all that is bodily, in liquids, smells, orgasms and imagery. Early in the book, Pedro Juan takes a clear stance on the issue of sexual morality, a preface to what the reader will later encounter, asserting that sex is not for scrupulous individuals. Sex is not only a tender and spiritual exchange, but also «un intercambio de líquidos, de fluidos, saliva, aliento y olores fuertes, orina, semen, mierda, sudor, microbios, bacterias. O no es» (1998: 11). Furthermore, his sexual encounters reveal a super sex. Jacqueline, a sculptor and painter dear to Pedro Juan, once had twelve orgasms with him, one after another. She would have had «veinte o algo así» if Pedro Juan had not climaxed (1998: 14). Men, for their part, are complimented for having big, gorgeous and irresistible penises. Pedro Juan's female friends narrate their sex lives as a source of news and entertainment, providing descriptions of various male genitals. Regarding his own genitalia, Pedro Juan is more than willing to show off what Carmita perceives as perfection: «qué pinga más linda. ¡Está hecha a mano!» (1998: 170). The representation of a super sex and the exaltation of the body is due to the narrator's position as a man with no job and no money, but always in the company of friends, knowledge, literary creativity and a worthy sexual organ that pleases his partners. To compensate for an absence of agricultural wealth, an unstable supply of products, and a lack of emotional stability due to migration, Pedro Juan celebrates his sex and his mind as fertile sources of happiness, wealth and abundance. If a man does not possess worldly wealth, the novel suggests, he still holds the power to provide something of value.

With a hyper-eroticism and a super sex, Pedro Juan, along with many other male characters in the novel, depends on his penis for emotional and material sustenance. The novel exalts *la leche* (the milk), as exemplified by the extreme case of the Superman character. It is said that at twenty-five, Superman «lanzaba unos chorros de leche tan potentes que llegaban al público de la primera fila» (1998, 61). Each night, Superman acted out his sexual performance in front of a crowd, masturbating to a blonde-haired woman next to him. The personal repercussion of his line of work, however, was the inability to have sex with his wife afterwards, which resulted in no children. In their case, the couple chose

economic stability over sexual pleasure and biological offspring.

It is important to note that the representations of eroticism in the novel are at times problematic, particularly because the narrator and the character Pedro Juan constantly sexualize black women and men while glorifying them. In addition, all women in the novel seem to be addicted to the male organ, while the men are sexually well- endowed. Although the narrative mixes reality with fantasy, as a sort of erotic magical realism, eroticism in the novel predominantly works as a constructive critique and a source of recreating the decaying environment and castrated self.

Against normative standards of beauty, desire and the body, Pedro Juan turns away what has caused him pain (women with social capital) for poor women of color. Based on evidence in the novel, however, it is highly unlikely that Pedro Juan would refuse a woman based on her ethnic background alone. Nonetheless, one of the principle objectives of the novel is to glorify Afro-Cuban women. The novel depicts many Cubans who are of African descent and places Afro-Cuban women as focal points of desire, beauty and vitality. In addition to the counter-normative argument presented on the aesthetic, he enjoys stupefying his readers by adding that he is looking for women who are sweaty and have hair everywhere (1998: 223). Not only does he celebrate what has traditionally been degraded and erased when referring to sex, such as bacteria, sweat, hair, liquids and smells, but he also connects it all to art and life:

No me interesa lo decorativo, no lo hermoso, no lo dulce, ni lo delicioso. Por eso siempre he dudado de una escultora que fue mi mujer algún tiempo. Había demasiada paz en sus esculturas para ser buenas. El arte solo sirve para algo si es irreverente, atormentado, lleno de pesadillas y desespero. Solo un arte irritado, indecente, violento, grosero, puede mostrarnos la otra cara del mundo, la que nunca vemos o nunca queremos ver para evitarle molestias a nuestra conciencia. Así. Nada de paz y tranquilidad. Quien logra el reposo en equilibrio está demasiado cerca de Dios para ser artista. (1998: 105)

As defined by Pedro Juan, eroticism has the potential to be counter-normative and to make a political critique of the social factors in need of change through the literary effects of shock and a new consciousness. Chela Sandoval identifies the need for a differential oppositional social movement and consciousness, which leads to de- individualization (2000: 178). In this case, the process of de- individualization through scandalous erotic narratives makes visible a consciousness of oppression and history, and the knowledge to rewrite the discourses of self, of subjectivity. Eroticism is predominantly portrayed as having a final objective, such as the pleasure of possession and consumption; however, Pedro Juan provides an alternative definition, one where it can be impoverished, filthy, hairy, artistically tormented and imperfect and used as a weapon of social

change and critique. In other words, there is erotic potential within us all, no matter the socio-economic struggles, political oppression or personal conflicts. In the end, one always has the agency of transformation –and eroticism can be a means to obtain that end.

4. THE POLITICS OF THE BODY AND SEX TOURISM

Trilogía sucia de La Habana brings to the surface traditional conflicts of sex work, as well as the potential to inscribe new meanings and limits. In order to better understand the consequences of sex work on the body, we must return to issues related to the economy. As a result of the economic crisis during the Special Period, which heralded the introduction of the dollar into Cuba, the simultaneous circulation of the *peso* with the dollar, as Whitfield writes,

[...] made for a dual economy whose very duality came to define relations between individuals with economic power—tourists, but also Cubans who received remittances from abroad or worked, legally or otherwise, with foreigners—and those without. (2011: 28)

With the dual circulation of the *peso* and the dollar, the dollar became very desirable for its purchasing power. Furthermore, and most importantly in relation to the state's treatment of its own citizens, Carlos J. Alonso posits that a main concern for the Cuban government during the Special Period was to insert the country into the world economy:

para enfrentarse a la situación económica de la isla consistió en la proyección de Cuba al mercado mundial como valor de uso: como un cuerpo ávido de penetración por el capital extranjero y como ámbito privilegiado para la consecución del deleite intensamente material y corporal por una clientela turística foránea. Cuba fue transformada de este modo en un engendro: en un valor de uso aparentemente capaz de suspender continua e indefinidamente su conversión en valor de cambio. (2009: 96)

Perceiving the body as a traditional site that can be reused, the state desires foreign capital and secures it by resuscitating traditional exchanges of power, desire and consumption. Amalia L. Cabezas details the need for a mixed-market system which leads to the integration of international tourism, or «the four S's»: «sun, sea, sand and sex» (2007: 990).

As a result of economic pressures, Havana has become a transnational hub of sex tourism. As a guiding reference, Denise Brennan's work on sex tourism is relevant to what is taking place in the Caribbean. With the invention of the word

«sexcape,» Brennan bases herself in the work of Arjun Appadurai to describe the landscape as a foundation for imagined worlds that are composed of historical imaginations situated between people around the world (2004: 15-16).

According to the characteristics outlined by Brennan, Havana has reinvented itself into a «sexcape,» where international flights connect developed countries to those in the process of development, where vast socio-economic inequalities exist in the developing countries, and, lastly, where the consummation of sex is for sale. The differences in power between the buyers/tourists and the sellers/sex workers are based on nationality, class, sex and ethnic background. Brennan concludes that these differences are converted to erotic and economic inequalities, where the exotic is transformed into the erotic (2004: 16). Looking at the rubric presented by Brennan, one can conclude that Havana is a «sexcape» fostering a hypersexual context. What is of particular interest to this study is that although power relations are not equal, works such as *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* report the diverse ways in which sex tourism is also being revolutionized. Cabezas reminds readers that the Cuban entrée into the world market is new, but the use of bodies by those in power is not, especially when considering the region's colonial history, which involved diverse forms of slavery and classism (2007: 987-988). However, it is critical to highlight, as Cabezas argues, that contemporary exchanges of the erotic are not clearly defined or do not work under traditional structures of power, as liaisons with tourists can «procure opportunities for recreation, consumption, travel, migration, and marriage» (2007: 992-993). The sex workers in Cuba are referred to as *jineteros*:

In Cuba, *jineterismo* is a colloquial term that refers to the broad range of activities and behaviors associated with hustling, including, but not limited to, sex for cash. *Jineteros* trade in the margins of the tourist economy; they are often seen in the streets of Havana, peddling everything from cigars and rum to sexual services. They act as tourists' guides, escorts, brokers of sexual services, and romantic companions. (Cabezas 2007: 993)

Within the realities of an economic imbalance between the interaction of Cuban nationals and foreigners, Cabezas believes that the existing sexual commerce on the island is «opportunistic, fluid, and ambiguous,» thus creating prospects for redefining and re-examining traditional interpretations of the exchanges, desires and outcomes of sex workers in relation to their customers, or, as described by Cabezas, their friends, boyfriends, financial patrons, and sometimes, future husbands and wives (2007: 997). Esther Whitfield reaffirms that the international interest in Cuba is not one based on equality, but on participating in the global trade of consumption, where Cuba creates and supplies demand, adding that «the compounding interest is financial: it is the tease of

trade, the promise of profit in a capitalist Cuba, for sexual arousal and money are protagonists of this moment» (2006: 337).

Vividly imagined as defiant and revolutionary by nations around the world, it is not surprising that Havana is a city with constant touristic movement; in return, its citizens experiment with their own modern bodies as they speculate about what occurs in the capitalist market. Alexis Candía Cáceres writes that with the inclusion of tourism and sex for sale, Havana is transformed from a highly-controlled space to that which is defined by disorder (2004: 51). As evidenced by the works of Cabezas and Gutiérrez, state control continues to exist. Not only is the market mixed, but so are the spaces between national interests and those of the individual. Because of the economic stagnation of their country, Cubans take advantage of the international markets in order to consume their own pleasures, reinventing the traditional framework of victim versus oppressor. Without the possibility of mobilization in the political and social sectors, that which can be produced in great quantity is sex. With their own bodies, *jineteras* create the possibility of constant sexual consumption while manifesting their own erotic desires towards a capitalist system that will bring them the commodities they so strongly desire. Money, particularly the dollar or euro, is a fetish that has the power to make certain luxuries possible, such as perfume, new clothing and social status within their communities. As Pedro Juan once states, even talking about proteins is political in Cuba, and since he wanted no problems with the government, he stopped writing (1998: 142). Because informal freelance entrepreneurship gives more money than a steady job, he and others tangle with the sex tourism industry (1998: 117). Differentiating between what it was before versus now, Pedro Juan describes an elaborate system of *jineteras* who are in their twenties, with police and taxi connections (1998: 25). Many people profit from the labor of sex workers, including a *guantanamero* who rents his classic car to foreigners who want to take a memento back home, such as a video of their sexual encounter with a sex worker (1998: 213).

Although it is often imagined that women are the only sex workers, Cuban men also offer sexual services. Moreover, the differences between sex work and being an escort become blurred in the novel, as clients want it all: company, sex and repeated encounters in future trips to the island. In two clearly narrated examples, Pedro Juan willingly engages in sex work. The first client, Rita Cassia, is a Brazilian woman around his age who pays for everything while he provides his company and sex. Her goal is to write television scripts, and make a lot of money in the process; his goal is to have a good time while it lasts. At three in the morning, at the end of their encounter described by Pedro Juan as paradise, filled with cinema, sex, rum and good food, she departs –as he picks various items from her trash bin: some used soaps, note pads, shampoo and sandals (1998: 34). For Pedro Juan, sex for sale is a means by which to obtain commodities. Apart

from luxury items and actual vacations, being an escort or a sex worker also provides the momentary illusion of escape within the «sexcape». Sex with Rita gives Pedro Juan a taste of how others around the world live and, in turn, adds to his feelings of dissatisfaction with his country.

5. CONCLUSION

Eroticism is, at its core, controversial, and, more often than not, this is precisely why it is not dealt with; it cannot be neatly packaged.

However, eroticism needs to be further studied in relation to its potential to destabilize and expand normative views on gender and sexuality, and to be accounted for in ways outside of having to oppress it. Not only does eroticism speak to us all and engage us in one way or another, but its implications for gender and sexuality involve pivotal markers for the allocation of political, social and economic resources. By expanding the embodied gender limits, myths about an individual's social role, identity, body, sexuality and desires are deconstructed, and the individual, in turn, is allowed to achieve emotional, sexual and intellectual self-realization. This paper does not attempt to homogenize eroticism, but rather focus on how the physical and transcending bodily experiences of eroticism serves as a dynamic method to interpret representations of sexuality and analyze eroticism as a productive human motivator for the adaptation of rigid and normative bodily prescriptions.

Eroticism in texts is not simply a means by which to attain beauty and pleasure; it is in and of itself a source of power and knowledge that can result in the transformation of values and interpretations of gender and sexuality. *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* is part of a body of works that redefine eroticism as having ideological and political consequences. In the economy of Havana, contained bodies transform the limitations of space into a source of erotic opportunity. Furthermore, hyper-eroticism in the novel is the means by which socialist subjects regain their ability to engage in counter- revolutionary acts by creating an individualistic profile where their desires reproduce pleasure and are outside of the control of the state. In conclusion, eroticism provides a space for reflection, which leads to an emancipatory state of being, encoded by the individual itself.

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