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Chapter 12

Topless in La Habana: Space, pleasure, and visibility in ethically representing gender-based violence

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This chapter positions the song, 'Sinca Misa', by queer feminist hip hop collective, Krudxs Cubensi, as an ethical way of responding to gender-based violence (GBV) by using performance to involve people who congregate on the street in the cultivation of safer and more inclusive public spaces. With this chapter, I aim to complicate hegemonic narratives of GBV by considering how trans individuals are situated within this discourse.[1] I employ a methodologically diverse approach, through close textual analysis of the song lyrics, visual analysis of the music video, the artists' movements, and the emotions evoked. My work is informed by a decolonial feminist stance, and by the reflexive process of writers such as Argentinian philosopher María Lugones (2003; 2007) and Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa (1987). As such, I acknowledge my own positionality as a researcher and the subjectivity that I bring to the work. As feminist writer and scholar Sara Ahmed (2014: 18) states: 'I write… with partial hands'.

Lxs Krudxs' 'fierce feminist hip hop and Afro-Cuban flavours' trouble dominant narratives around race, gender, and sexuality (Krudas Cubensi, 2013). Formed in La Habana/Havana in 1999, members Cuesta and Prendes migrated to Texas, US, in 2006, to continue writing and performing their music internationally, facilitating feminist rap and performance workshops, and creating music videos. In their own words, they represent 'black and latin feminist queers, gender not conforming, woman, immigrants and intersectional beings' (Krudas Cubensi, 2013). Lxs Krudxs were assigned as female at birth (AFAB) and are non-binary. They began their career as 'Las Krudas' and have since amended their name to reflect their gender identity.[2] Lxs Krudxs share their experiences to combat transnational injustices, incorporating their knowledge of oppression across the Americas. They began making music as a way of articulating their bodily experiences: 'Empezamos a poner en canción las experiencias corpóreas por las que íbamos pasando' [We began to create songs

[1] My use of the term 'trans' includes all those who are not cisgender, i.e. whose gender identity differs from the one they were assigned at birth.

[2] 'Lxs Krudxs' is a grammatically neutral form of 'Las Krudas'. See Krudes Cubensi, 2018.

about the corporeal experiences that we were going through] (Krudes Cubensi, 2018).[3] 'Sinca Misa', released in 2019, is the fifth track on Lxs Krudxs' fourth album, titled *LNL*, meaning 'la negrísima liberación' [the blackest liberation]. It is about erotic, queer desire, and pleasure. The music video shows Lxs Krudxs loitering on the streets of La Habana while topless (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019).[4]

Loitering is a disruptive practice which rejects the capitalist ideology that demands constant productivity. In Cuba, this non-doing is particularly subversive when we consider the importance of tourism, and productivity in general, to the national economy. After the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Cuba's economic relations with the Soviet Union were severed, resulting in the loss of Cuba's main source of imports (CubaPlatform, 2020). The subsequent cultivation of Cuba as a mass tourist destination in the '90s led to an explicit policing of residents' behaviour. This was one part of the exoticization of the Caribbean, which included internal tourism campaigns as missions of social surveillance (Thompson, 2006). Female residents bore the burden of these campaigns more acutely, as they were required to model the 'picturesque tropicality' of Caribbean womanhood (2006, 298). The pressure to perform one's gender in accordance with the social script carries with it the threat of the potentially violent consequences of non-conformity. Refusing to perform a caricature of 'native' femininity could be financially damaging for the country. Sociologist Tanya Saunders (2015: 254) highlights the 'narrow framework for performing acceptable femininity in Cuba and the high social cost of performing inadequately' that most severely impacts lesbians and queer women. Given the legacy of this national project, as well as the fact that La Habana's Old Town is constructed as a 'sanitized space' designed to evoke an 'authentic' Cuba for tourists, transgressing such rules in public places, as in 'Sinca Misa', takes on a new gravity (Armstead, 2008, 130). Lxs Krudxs (2019) ask the question, '¿Si quieres tú canta o tú puede bailar? Depende de quién tú sea' [If you want to sing or dance, can you? It depends on who you are]. This is contingent on the space you are in, and your positionality and identity within that space. This discourse exposes the persistence of social and gender inequalities on the island, in contrast with the national narrative, which claims that such issues were resolved following the Revolution (Saunders, 2015).

[3] All translations are my own. I have chosen to transcribe phonetically (omitting letters that have been dropped in speech) to stay as close as possible to the original text.
[4] Cuesta and Prendes are still covering their breasts, presumably just enough so that the video is not removed from YouTube.

Lxs Krudxs' work has influenced discourse in areas including hip hop, gender inequality, migration, art activism (Armstead, 2007; Rivera-Velàzquez, 2008; Fernandes, 2006; Joffe, 2005; West-Durán, 2004). Saunders (2009; 2011; 2015; 2016) has analysed their impact on Cuban hip-hop. Artistic practices that critique the state rhetoric of equality, such as hip hop and rap, contribute to the making of 'new revolutionary cultures' in Cuba (Fernandes, 2006). My interpretation of 'Sinca Misa' expands these conversations by considering the implications of their work for GBV scholarship, as well as the specificity of their positionality as non-binary lesbians.

Several key texts have informed this chapter, including sociologist Mimi Sheller's (2012) *Citizenship from Below,* which explores music and dance as grassroots strategies for resistance in the Caribbean. Sheller (2012: 24) outlines the tension between legitimized and subaltern political spaces which she calls 'citizenship from below'. Her concept of 'erotic agency' exposes the power of performance to liberate and disrupt (Sheller, 2012: 239-280). Sheller (2012: 260) asserts that while erotic agency does not in itself dismantle systems of oppression, it 'may enable some forms of manoeuvre, negotiation, and exchange'. 'Sinca Misa' constitutes a negotiation within and against structures that support and enable GBV.

Kamala Kempadoo's (2004) *Sexing the Caribbean* explores the commodification of sexuality and the mapping of European fantasies onto the region, which contributed to its establishment as a major tourist destination in the 1990's. Propaganda imagery was utilised to craft an international image of an exotic idyll, characterised by beautiful landscapes and sexually available 'natives' (Thompson, 2006). Anne McClintock's (2013) work on conceptualising the 'porno-tropics' furthers this imbrication of colonization with the hypersexualization of Black bodies. This allows us to appreciate the historical backdrop of sexed, raced bodies, and their relationship to consumption and colonialism, against which 'Sinca Misa' takes place.

Broadening our focus to areas outside of the Caribbean, GBV experienced by transgender populations generally needs greater scholarly attention (Wirtz et al., 2020; Jauk, 2013). Feminist sociologist and activist Daniela Jauk (2013: 807) articulates that we need to 'rethink the equation of "gender violence = violence against women"'. Even within trans studies, there is less understanding of trans identities that are not binary female or male subject positions. Trans narratives have much to contribute to discourses of GBV in all genders. As Jauk (2013: 808) asserts, trans as a descriptor 'illuminates the complexity of gender for everybody'. Trans people experience disproportionate rates of GBV, and this prevalence is

underpinned by cultural factors, which have created a 'conducive context' for violence (Kelly, 2016). The inclusion of trans perspectives expands and complicates discussions of GBV.

Gaze theory (Mulvey, 1975), which describes how hegemonic media representations of women are structured to reproduce heteronormative male ways of looking, has been critical in developing my visual analysis of 'Sinca Misa'. Feminist activist bell hooks (1992: 115-131) furthers Mulvey's (1975) theory with the concept of 'oppositional gaze', which articulates the specificities of a Black female spectator. This describes the resistant potential in 'courageously looking', as contextualised by the frequent punishment of enslaved Black people by their white slaveowners for looking (hooks, 1992: 116).

The first section of this chapter focuses on space, place and resistance, arguing that Lxs Krudxs' performance positively affects perceptions of safety for trans and gender non-conforming people. In the second section, I examine the structures that normalize heterosexuality in the Americas. Finally, I use visibility as a conceptual tool to argue that the silencing of anger, the exclusion of trans people from state narratives, and the disavowal of African cultural influence in Cuba are forms of GBV.

Space, place, and resistance

'Sinca Misa' engages with the politics of belonging, ownership, and the erotic, with a playful, loving attitude that is representative of Lxs Krudxs' entire body of work. The street setting lends itself to a particular immediacy, allowing the social changes promoted by their work to manifest instantly. In Spanish, 'topless' is 'sin camisa'. Lxs Krudxs use instead 'sinca misa'. I asked Lxs Kruxs why they chose this formulation during an online workshop. Their answer was that they are artists: they play with words and seek to challenge dominant ways of seeing: 'Cambiamos la realidad' [We change reality] (Prendes, 2021). This reply is characteristic of their approach, which resists quantification, as demonstrated by the lyrics to the track 'Porque, Porque?' [Why, why?]: 'Me presentaré como me guste… No me clasifiques' [I will appear how I like… Do not classify me] (Krudas Cubensi, 2016). My analysis of 'Sinca Misa' exposes how Lxs Krudxs 'change reality' through a performance-based re-appropriation of public space. They assert their right to occupy space: to be there (Kern, 2020).

Lxs Krudxs move freely through the streets of La Habana, claiming space with their bodies, voices, and words. Through the resistant practice of occupation, they create a space of dissent, providing an innovative example of both the dynamic activism that has been speaking

out against sexist abuse, and the resulting mediatic resources. Lxs Krudxs act out their response to repressive gender norms, while simultaneously actively changing them. In La Habana, it is commonplace to see men loitering on the street while topless, engaging in conversation and card games, as in the video: 'Si ellos pueden hacerlo, nosotras también lo podemos' [If they can do it, so can we] (2019). Loitering is historically quintessentially Caribbean, with colonial tropes of idleness and 'doing nothing' targeting Black men in particular (Thompson, 2006: 75). Lxs Krudxs subvert this powerful colonial paradigm by offering a vision of loitering as an agent for change. Feminist theorist Shilpa Phadke (2020; Phadke et al., 2009) uses the concept of loitering to explore the role of embodiment in occupying public space and how this can be an act of defiance that moves towards safer public spaces for marginalised people. I would like to highlight Phadke's assertion that 'hegemonic gender-space' is 'constantly being *brought into being'* (2009: 194, emphasis in original). The nature of public space, to the exclusion of women, queer people, and other marginalised identities, is reinforced daily, with users acting to re-inscribe rules about who *can* use that space. For this reason, subversive performances like 'Sinca Misa' have the power to be transformative of the character of spaces, of who is 'allowed' to do what in a given space.

In filming this music video, Lxs Krudxs (2019) involve people on the street in spreading their message by having them look into the camera and sing: '¿Y la camisa, te puedes quitar? Depende de quién tú sea' [Can you take your shirt off? It depends on who you are]. The connection between representation and repercussions is shown on the microscale in this video, as we observe social change occurring in real time during its creation. Lxs Krudxs are doing activism in real time, through their production of this video, which is then a representation of their practice and is also a tool in its own right. This change occurs as a result of the cultivation of an awareness of privilege. At 00:32, we see a young man with his shirt off, who had been congregating on the street, repeating the refrain 'Depende de quién tú sea' [It depends on who you are] while looking into the camera. The man is smiling, and appears to be enjoying his participation in the video. Performance sparks conversations and new ideas in many ways. Engaging with people, in a way that can be light and playful, can serve to introduce other ways of thinking. Karen Boyle (2019) recommends a widening of our understanding of GBV. She suggests that we can consider violence to be gender-based not only due to the gender of the victim, but also as a result of the socialization of the perpetrator. Instead of only thinking that female victims of GBV are targeted *because they are women*, we must also consider the ways in which male perpetrators are violent *because they are men* (29). An interrogation of

hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and the associated privilege appears to be among the aims of Cuesta and Prendes in this video. They encourage participants to engage by questioning their own privilege.

Cuesta, Prendes, and all those who join them by speaking/singing lyrics, moving their bodies to the music, or removing their clothing, can be said to be engaging in 'fun'. Fun is both 'a verbal shorthand for pleasure… [which] involves activity as much as simply doing nothing' (Phadke et al., 2009: 112) and a 'loving attitude' that involves an 'openness to surprise' (Lugones, 2003: 15-17). When GBV occurs in public spaces, the response is often that the victims, particularly women, need to be protected (Phadke, 2020). Victims are often framed as being in public space for employment or education reasons, such as being on their way to or from work or school. While the right to work is generally accepted, being out for fun is considered 'frivolous' and less likely to be at the centre of struggles for greater access (Phadke, 2020). The performance in 'Sinca Misa' constitutes one way of responding to the GBV that occurs in the public sphere, by showing how we can move beyond advocating only for protection and instead fight for the right to have fun, or to exist playfully.

Given the context that loitering is allowed and men are often *sin camisa* [topless], this practice can be a way of 'possessing' public space. Transphobia can be considered a type of possession that 'limits spatial mobility' (Doan, 2007). Lxs Krudxs walking in La Habana, presenting in a way that is non-conforming, is disruptive of this kind of restriction. The effects of transphobia and its associated threat of violence are limitations on movements. 'Sinca Misa' responds to this using performance as a strategy to diversify ways of occupying public space. According to Petra Doan's study of trans people's perceptions of safety, people feel safer in cities with an identifiable queer area, regardless of whether they visit it regularly or not (Doan, 2007). It has also been stated that the creation of queer spaces, whether permanent or ephemeral, improves perceptions of safety for queer people. A possible effect of the kind of street performance that we see in 'Sinca Misa' is the augmenting of queer individuals' sense of personal safety. Doan's (2006: 61) study established that most violence perceived to be homophobic could be more accurately described as transphobic, since gender presentation is often among the observable markers of a non-hetero sexuality, as reflected in the increased rates of violence visited upon masculine women and feminine men. It is worth noting that this is also true for cis men and women. Much of the violence experienced by gender non-conforming individuals is a sort of 'border patrol' that attempts to regulate the legibility of the gender binary (Lynch in Jauk, 2013: 185). Cuesta's presentation in 'Sinca Misa' is ambiguous,

as they have a beard as well as breasts and an otherwise typically 'female' body. In the video, it is this lack of legibility that attracts the most attention from passers-by on the streets, and is perhaps most upsetting to this element of border maintenance. This illegibility is a factor in trans peoples' experiences of GBV, as reflected in the higher rates of violence experienced by individuals who are in the early stages of transition (Jauk, 2013). Non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals experience even less representation and understanding. James Scott (1998: 1) asserts that attempts to render people legible by settling them in one place is a 'perennial state project'. Again, the spatial aspect of gender policing becomes evident. Trans people experience disproportionate levels of GBV, and this is exacerbated when individuals present in a way that is ambiguous.

I have discussed the role of hegemonic masculinity, loitering, pleasure, and tourism in the context of the subversive space that is created in 'Sinca Misa'. Lxs Krudxs' performance betters perceptions of safety for trans and gender non-conforming people through their creation of a more inclusive pubic space, as subaltern political spaces can have the potential to promote positive change, by using a 'bottoms-up' approach (Sheller, 2012). These effects are achieved by the reclaiming of public space through performance.

Pleasure, bodies, joyfulness

When discussing experiences of accessing public space, questions of safety are expanded by considering the role of pleasure. We need to advocate not only the safety of people of marginalised genders in public spaces, but also for the right to pursue fun as a legitimate and politically crucial venture. In this section, I explore the resistant potential of the demonstration of pleasure in 'Sinca Misa'.

The lyrics speak of the desire to go topless: 'Yo soy quien mis sueños realiza y estoy exigiendo el derecho de andar yo también, yo también sin camisa' [I am the one who makes my dreams a reality and I, too, am demanding the right to go topless] (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019). The significance of queer sexuality, and its celebration, must be considered in the context of decoloniality. The reforming of erotic structures was a core facet of colonial subjugation (Saunders: 2015). If oppressors can control what bodies do for pleasure, then they command the most intimate aspects of a person's embodied experience. Saunders' (2015: 11) discussion of the 'coloniality of American culture' affirms that '...reshaping epistemic, affective, and erotic structures was also central to the project of colonial subjugation'.

Colonialism therefore included directing the way bodies move and experience pleasure. 'Sinca Misa' is anti-violent in this way, it constitutes reclaiming one's body and pleasure.

At 02:50, we see a close-up of Cuesta and Prendes (who are in a relationship) alone together (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019). Their faces and bodies are close together and they look at one another, smiling, while they move to the music. It is an intimate and playful moment. The lyric which accompanies this segment is 'Cómo se suda, es la censura, que no me ayuda' [It's so hot, it's censorship that doesn't help me] (2019). Increased artistic censorship in Cuba has been the subject of controversy in recent years. Cuban artist Tania Bruguera was arrested multiple times in 2018 for protesting Decree 349, which would further censor socially critical art. Bruguera asserts that self-censorship is the most advanced form of state violence in Cuba, and aims to 'destruir la autoestima colectiva' [destroy collective self-esteem] (2019). Censorship is indeed a form of state violence, and 'Sinca Misa' responds to this repression in a critical and public way. This attempt to destroy 'collective self-esteem' can be understood to signal that authorities recognise that the solidarity networks established by Lxs Krudxs and other socially critical artists are dangerous. By mandating the erasure of arts-based dissent, they acknowledge the transformative power of the arts. This moment of sensuality between Cuesta and Prendes is representative of a wider rejection of the type of 'self-censorship' that Bruguera speaks of, which can also be thought of as internalised homophobia, transphobia, or any inner mechanism that results in the policing of one's own body and movements. In 'Sinca Misa', we witness a queer sensuality and joy that is a stark contrast to the control and repression espoused by this law, as well as by a wider culture of heterosexism.

Pleasure is represented in 'Sinca Misa' as a reclaiming of the body, with a focus on breasts. Beginning at 02:25, we see Cuesta alone in the street singing and walking towards the camera (2019). A shirtless man comes up behind them on a bicycle and they become aware of his presence when he appears at their side. The man slows as he looks at them, the result being that his bicycle wobbles and comes to a stop, at which point he makes the most of the moment by looking them up and down. Cuesta responds by spreading their arms wide, smiling at him, and reaching out a hand to lightly touch his shoulder. The man continues to gaze at them in what appears to be amused curiosity and puzzlement. What is perhaps attracting this man's attention the most is Cuesta's partially exposed breasts. According to Young (2005: 75), the chest is the 'house of the heart' and in the Western world we point to our chests when asked to signal the self. The objectification of the bodies of AFAB people is centred around breasts

(Young, 2005). By reclaiming this 'least muscular, softest body part' through their joyful performance, Lxs Krudxs trouble not only the system of objectification which results in a wide spectrum of GBV, but also the idealization of the 'porno-tropics' (Young, 2005: 79; McClintock, 2013). The fetishization of the bodies of women of colour can be traced back to travellers' tales that constructed Africa and the Americas as a 'fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears' (McClintock, 2013: 22). In light of this violent history, Lxs Krudxs' performance in 'Sinca Misa' responds to the eroticisation and domination of the tropics by reclaiming the body in an empowered way.

Cuesta and Prendes reference two main axes of control in the Caribbean in the follow lyric: 'La iglesia y la policía controlando nuestras vías' [The church and the police controlling our ways] (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019). Citizenship in the Caribbean is considered by many feminists to be contingent on the performance of a reproductive heterosexuality (Sheller, 2012: 239). In many instances, both church and state engage in a violent 'policing' of same-sex intimate relationships (Alexander, 2005). Grounded in the Caribbean context, Sheller's (2012: 16) 'erotic agency' acts as 'a basis for resisting the forms of sexual violence and erotic domination through which racial, ethnic, and sexual inequalities are sustained and reproduced'. Cuesta and Prendes use their erotic agency in 'Sinca Misa' to disrupt gender inequalities that are violently enforced. When we consider the Caribbean as a region that continues to experience imperial control today, in the form of large-scale tourism, erotic agency emerges as one potential strategy to reclaim space and empower self-determination (Wong, 2015).[5]

'Sinca Misa' responds to this 'policing' of queer intimacy by creating a space of dissent. Heterosexism, or the privileging of heterosexuality as the only acceptable position, is the underlying structure that upholds many occurrences of GBV. GBV cannot be separated from homophobic violence because, although ostensibly fuelled by reasons relating to the sexuality of the target, rather than the gender, it is often gender presentation that serves as a marker of one's sexuality. That is to say, feminine men and masculine women (or anyone perceived to be so) are most likely to be targets (Doan, 2007). In this regard, the display of queer intimacy in 'Sinca Misa' serves to disrupt the system of compulsory heterosexuality that motivates instances of GBV. Compulsory heterosexuality, a term describing the heterosexism of patriarchal Western society (Rich, 1980), is 'enforced by violence; violence is underpinned by constructions of heterosexually appropriate gender roles' (Gavey in Boyle, 2019: 25). Lugones

[5] See Wong, 2015.

(2007) affirms that the gender binary was created by colonial powers as a means of subjugation. Compulsory heterosexuality is therefore bound up with colonial violence: 'How do we understand heterosexuality… as consistently perverse when violently exercised across the colonial modern gender system so as to construct a worldwide system of power?' (Lugones, 2007: 187). The systems troubled in 'Sinca Misa', through a rejection of gendered norms around behaviour and dress, were created and are maintained by violence. Heterosexism positions queer relationships in a blind spot, which is compounded among queer people of colour, resulting in fewer social resources and supports. This is the 'conducive context' for violence that affects people with multiple marginalised identities (Kelly, 2016). Lxs Krudxs' work disrupts this invisibility by offering a framework for living as a queer person of colour. The historic erasure of people who do not fit the 'somatic norm' (Puwar, 2004) is ruptured by their extravagant presence. Not only do Lxs Krudxs bring new embodied 'others' into popular culture, they do so in a way that is at times so over the top that we cannot *help* but look. There is a carnivalesque sense of spectacle involved in the way in which Lxs Krudxs move through the streets of La Habana, which avoids reproducing objectifying logics as the performance occurs on their own terms, as part of a creative endeavour that will contribute to their livelihood.

In this section, I have explored the resistant dimensions of fun and pleasure, detailing how reclaiming queer pleasure can be a decolonial practice. The development of tourism in the Caribbean depended on heteronormative, gendered, racialised structures (McClintock, 2013; Thompson, 2006). Erotic agency has emerged as a strategy for 'manoeuvre' within oppressive structures such as compulsory heterosexuality. I have shown that structures that normalise heterosexuality either constitute or perpetuate forms of violence.

Visibility: looking and being seen

The naturalisation of heterosexuality constrains queer people by imposing their invisibility and exclusion from both public and private spaces (Young, 2005). The concepts of (in)visibility and looking allow us to further our discussion of how Lxs Krudxs respond to GBV in 'Sinca Misa'. GBV in Cuba is doubly invisible as, according to the national credo, there is no gender hierarchy and no form of gendered violence is officially recognised.[6] Any critiques of this

[6] In Cuba, no statistics are released on rates of violence against women and media reports do not use terms such as femicide (Padrón Cueto, 2019).

rhetoric are seen as a 'serious threat to the nation' (Saunders, 2015: 251). Lxs Krudxs use their art to voice their refusal to accept persisting social inequalities. By highlighting inequality, in this instance, the social acceptability of men's exposed chests, Lxs Krudxs open conversations about the gender inequalities experienced in Cuba. The failure of the state narrative to include people who are trans or gender-non-conforming is in itself a form of violence. For people like Prendes and Cuesta, the binary imposed by colonialism fails to reflect their identity. By denying the existence of these individuals, the state narrative functions as a systemic form of GBV.

Cuesta sings: 'Tú sabe no es la monalisa' [You know it's not the Mona Lisa] (2019).[7] At 0:52, Cuesta features alone in a head and shoulders shot and sings this line straight into the camera. The mention of Mona Lisa here is quite ironic. The Mona Lisa conjures ideas of European 'ideal' beauty standards, but what is perhaps more interesting for this discussion is the question of affect. The original Italian title is *La Gioconda,* meaning carefree and lively, and the painting has been described as a 'visual representation of the idea of happiness' (Scailliérez, 2020). Lxs Krudxs offer a representation of queer joy that ruptures cultural structures that aim to coerce and control. It is not the Mona Lisa, but it *is* a manifestation of playfulness and fun that attempts to make visible the violent injustices experienced by people who are excluded and marginalised. Mona Lisa could have meant the joker-lady or even the tease (Sassoon, 2001). What does Cuesta mean when they say that they are not the Mona Lisa? It has a sense of teasing about it, as the idea of a queer, Black Mona Lisa plays with something that is already familiar to us. This is the phenomenon of disidentification, as conceived by José Esteban Muñoz (1999). It 'rescrambles' a universally recognisable code (Muñoz, 1999, 31). 'Disidentification uses the majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world' (196). If we consider the Mona Lisa a symbol of 'high' art, then queering this pillar of the art world becomes a transgressive act, destabilising the power held by those who determine what constitutes art. Hip hop has long been discredited as a 'low form' of artistic expression (Saunders, 2015), and so, by saying that it is clear that Cuesta's performance is not 'high art', it is way of poking fun at these exclusionary distinctions. This queering of legitimized hierarchies of artistic production troubles a violently regulated framework that valorises certain knowledge flows, and is bound up with Aníbal Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power.

Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality lays out not only the specificity of residing at the junction of several marginalised identities, but also the inherent danger in this

[7] This lyric is from the video description on YouTube (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019).

position, likening it to a busy traffic intersection. This image allows us to conceptualise the disproportionate risk of violence experienced by people who, like Lxs Krudxs, identify as migrants, people of colour, and members of queer community. The disruptions that Cuesta and Prendes create through their music and activism serve to challenge the hegemony of violence against marginalised peoples. People with multiple marginalised identities reside at an intersection, in a 'matrix of domination' (Hill Collins, 2000). The visibility created by Lxs Krudxs upsets the historic erasure of 'intersectional beings' like themselves that has produced the 'void' that has facilitated the disproportionate levels of violence experienced by Black women (or those perceived to be so) (Krudas Cubensi, 2013; Crenshaw, 1282). [8] It is vital to include trans individuals, and to be vigilant in ethically representing those who do not experience a binary trans identity, for whom there is less understanding, because their existence threatens the colonial, dichotomous conceptualization of Western society.

'Sinca Misa' occurs within the context of the hypersexualization of Black female bodies in popular culture (hooks, 1992). The way in which Lxs Krudxs (2019) show their bodies playfully and joyfully, as well as the lyrics, which suggest a seductive mood—'tu sientes la brisa, pezones eriza' [you feel the breeze, nipples erect] —can be considered a form of subverting this cultural landscape. This may also refer to a common motivator for violence towards trans feminine people: a hidden desire of heterosexual men that so threatens their sense of self and place within masculine peer groups that it inspires violent rage (Lee and Kwan, 2014). Cuesta features alone in many shots in the music video, looking into the camera and speaking directly to the spectator, thus creating a sense of intimacy. They can be interpreted as representing the figure of an outwardly sexual Black woman. This strategy for responding to cultural tropes can be described as a 'subversive form of opposition that attempts to challenge the rules precisely by becoming the very social outlaw that society fears and attempts to proscribe' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1289). In this light, the re-appropriation of pleasure posited by Lxs Krudxs in this video becomes transgressive, challenging the frameworks that uphold violence against Black women as excusable due to their purportedly essential sexuality. Because certain bodies are depicted as inherently aggressive, the violence that is enacted upon them is seen as inevitable. Naturalised representations of violent 'others' compound stereotypes such that 'racialized women's resistance and agency is frequently rendered invisible' in representations of GBV (Holmes et al., 2015: 547). This is not so in 'Sinca Misa', as we see both Cuesta and Prendes depicted as agential actors. In Cuba, different words for

[8] While Lxs Krudxs are not women, they may still be read as such by others.

racial ‘categories’ expose a bias in favour of European features (Moore, 1997). However, the Black female body has been a symbol of sexuality and desire since the 1830s, and national identity is often expressed through pride in the fusion of African and Hispanic traditions (Moore, 1997). ‘Sinca Misa’ is situated within this paradox of selective disavowal of elements of Blackness and African cultural forms.

Cuesta’s manner of gazing directly into the camera prompts further discussion of the impact and context of this gaze. Cuesta sings: ‘tu fantasia más profunda materializa’ [your deepest fantasy becomes reality] (2019). Who is the ‘you’ that is constructed here? Mulvey’s (1975) ‘male gaze’ reproduces a heterosexual male spectator. If the spectator constructed here were a straight man, then perhaps the reason that this fantasy is hidden is due to the troubling of hegemonic masculinity associated with an attraction to any person who is not a cisgender female. For racialised bodies, the act of looking is bound up with resistance. hooks (1992: 116) encapsulates the radical potential contained in looking: ‘I want my look to change reality’. The way that Cuesta looks at the camera, and also at the men who loiter, is at times humorous, because they [Cuesta] appear so confident, so sure of their allure, and those that they look at seem equal parts bewildered and mesmerised. They look back at Cuesta, and at times it seems that they cannot resist looking, as is the case of the man with the bicycle at 02:25. They look at Cuesta, and in looking, they render them visible.

Due to the official state narrative of social equality, there is a silence on issues such as race and gender on the island. This erasure of these problems is in itself a kind of violence. Journalist Kirsten West Savali (2017) writes ‘Dismissing the anger and betrayal that some black women are experiencing is violent’. Savali here is referencing dismissal of these affects following her experiences of racism at a women’s march. How might this impact when it is government-sanctioned on a national level? Lxs Krudxs react to this culture of disavowal by exposing the persistence of these inequalities. At 01:12, we see Prendes beside a shirtless man on the street (Odaymar Oliver Krudxs Cubensi, 2019). Their bodies are not much different, when viewed side by side. The main difference is in the gender they were assigned and the way they were socialised. This is a very clear visual of the disparate ways that men and women (or at least, those perceived to be) are expected to behave in Cuba. This silencing, this dismissal of these issue, *is* violent in itself. It further compounds the invisibility suffered by people who are marginalized.

The silencing of trans voices through their exclusion from the Cuban national narrative is complicated by a culture of disavowal of African influences in the Cuban cultural landscape.

These renunciations occur in feminist spaces, where there can be a dismissal of anger, particularly when coming from Black women in spaces dominated by white women. Increased visibility of GBV experienced by trans people is needed within academic scholarship.

Conclusion

Lxs Krudxs' 'Sinca Misa' does much to complicate popular narratives of experiences of GBV. 'Sinca Misa' represents and challenges less visible manifestations of GBV, including state violences such as censorship and false narratives of equality, as well as broader cultural paradigms: compulsory heterosexuality and the colonial imposition of the gender binary. In this video, Lxs Krudxs propose a depiction of sexuality that focuses on queer joy and the disruptive power of pleasure in a body that has been othered. This model has the potential to trouble normative portrayals of Black female sexuality, which also affect trans people who are AFAB. Cuesta and Prendes have been socialized as female and have experienced a reductive and eroticized representation of their identities and their bodies. The impact of hegemonic tropes around Black female sexuality on incidences of GBV should not be underestimated. Crenshaw (1991: 1271) analyzes the impact of narrow stereotypes on experiences of violence: 'If these sexual images [tropes such as madonnas and whores] form even part of the cultural imagery of Black women, then the very representation of a Black female body at least suggests certain narratives that may make Black women's rape either less believable or less important'. When we consider the consequences that representation can have in legal and social contexts, we see the link between the activism and change promoted and created by Lxs Krudxs, and the complicating of cultural understandings of Blackness, female sexuality, and queerness. Gender and race hierarchies are reiterated and reproduced through representation, and upsetting this repetition expands and diversifies these portrayals.

What we perform becomes what is possible, and so, Lxs Krudxs create new possibilities, using street as stage. Ahmed's (2017) metaphor of the path encapsulates the inherent paradox of reinforcing social scripts through their repetition. If we can follow the path because it is there, and it is only there because we follow it, then, *'Can* is here a consequence of doing. If we can because we do, then we *do can* rather than *can do'* (Ahmed, 2017: 46). In this way, Lxs Krudxs change what is possible in this space and place, by acting in the context of performance, which is more expansive and allows a wider variety of ways of being. Performing on the street can change the nature of a place. 'Sound-making is place-making'

according to ethnomusicologists Stephen Feld and Donald Brenneis (2004: 463). 'Sinca Misa' evokes a place that does not yet exist, a queer place which is 'not yet here' (Muñoz, 2009: 185). Lxs Krudxs (2019) sing: 'Quiero vivir, planeta sin miedo' [I want to live, planet without fear]. Perhaps this 'planet without fear' refers to the cultivation of spaces where people who experience GBV and marginalization can not only be safe, but can pursue fun and pleasure. I leave you with the final lyrics of 'Sinca Misa': 'Queer feminist revolution. Topless.'

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