ETHNOGRAPHY, MUTUALITY, AND THE UTOPIA OF
LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN TOURISTIC CUBA

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Introduction

> …seeking among the things of life, I found something more beautiful and valuable than all the most precious jewels in the world, I found that which fills all my void, which satisfies all my mind, I found love, I spoke to it and it convinced me, I feel happy for this, but I also feel a bit sad because as I live in an imperfect world, everything that comes in this world is imperfect, and trying to improve things is a waste of time … perhaps happiness does not exist and I am a bit selfish because I demand a bit more than what I have.[2]

This excerpt from an email I received from my Cuban friend Ernesto[3] is a good entry point to the topic I would like to explore in this article on ethnography, mutuality and the utopia of love and friendship in touristic Cuba. In the quote, Ernesto reflects on his love story with Jessica, a Canadian woman he met a couple of years earlier in the streets of Havana who visited him repeatedly in Cuba after that first encounter. In the spaces of dialogue we have created since we first met about four years ago, Ernesto has often shared his aspiration to find true love and friendship in his relationships with foreign tourists, contrasting the widespread trope that portrayed Cubans as cunning tricksters intent on ripping tourists off by establishing deceptive relationships. It is not the first time that he complains to me about the light-hearted and downright suspicious ways in which tourists tend to view his expressions of love and friendship. He is highly aware that the striking inequalities that traverse these relationships constitute a permanent challenge to being taken seriously when making such claims, and that tourists must inevitably think that there must be some kind of interest behind his eagerness that they establish intimate bonds with him: an interest in profiting from the tourists' comparative wealth or, as part of a longer term strategy, in migrating from Cuba by means of an invitation from a foreign friend or partner. Such is the predicament of Ernesto and many other Cuban men and women I met

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[1] The Graduate Institute, Geneva.
[2] Like all other quotes from research participants in this article, this is my translation from the original Spanish.

[3] All personal names and some details in the examples presented in this paper have been changed to protect the anonymity of research participants.

in the course of my fieldwork on this Caribbean island, fourteen months of ethnographic research on what I have called 'informal touristic encounters' (Simoni 2016a). Such is the 'imperfect world' to which Ernesto refers, a world in which wealthy tourists visit an impoverished island like Cuba, in people like him find themselves stuck while foreigners come and go at will, a world in which structural conditions of inequality threaten to tarnish the genuine character of any relational claim that is made.

This is what Ernesto had told me a couple of years earlier, as we discussed Cubans' friendships with tourists:

> It would be great if things here could be like over there, with higher salaries, and one could just go out simply to get to know people, to enjoy oneself, to make some friends just for fun and not for money, out of necessity. If one did not need to go and look for friendship (*que uno no tuviera que ir a buscar una amistad*), if it would be just like over there, normal.

However, while deploring Cuba's exceptional circumstances, Ernesto maintained that the aspiration to 'normal' relationships guided his very personal way of dealing with foreigners, which he contrasted with that of other Cubans. This kind of 'aspirational normativity', as Berlant puts it (2011: 164) – the 'feeling of aspirational normalcy, the desire to feel normal, and to feel normalcy as a ground of dependable life' (ibid.: 170) – is part of what interests me in this article, notably in its connection to people's claims of love and friendship. In the encounters I studied and engaged with in Cuba, we could argue that such aspirational normalcy acquired a utopian character, delineating a utopia that was linked not so much to the quest for a radically different and unfamiliar reality, but rather to the desire to belong to something one knew all too well – a way of living and relating that was 'just normal' 'out there'. The 'out there' (*allá*) was exemplified by the countries tourists come from, places where one could simply live a 'normal' life, one that was not dominated by scarcity, necessities (*necesidades*) and economic preoccupations, the latter being the conditions that many of my Cuban interlocutors associated with life in Cuba. This was a utopia, and this is the other point I wish to explore in this article, whose emergence the ethnographic/touristic encounter could facilitate and potentiate. Taking stock of scholarship that has examined the parallels between tourism and anthropology, between being and relating as a tourist and/or an ethnographer in certain field sites (see in particular Bruner 1995; Crick 1995; Frohlick and Harrison 2008; Salazar 2013; Simoni and McCabe 2008), I prefer not to set out by implying a clear cut divide between these two modalities of engaging with alterity. Rather, I aim to reflect more broadly on the

sensibilities and ways of knowing that encounters between foreigner visitors and Cuban residents could entice and propitiate, as well as the difference, if any, that ethnography could and/or should make.

Anthropological research on tourism has uncovered the utopian dimensions of touristic encounters: from the seminal work of Graburn on tourism's potential for re-creation and self-creation (Graburn 1983), to Bruner's conceptualization of the 'touristic borderzone' – 'a zone of interaction between natives, tourists, and ethnographers' (1996:177) – as 'a creative space, a site for the invention of culture on a massive scale' (ibid.), up to the remarks of Causey on 'utopic space' as space tourism offers people the opportunity to 'explore possible ways of being … between reality and unrealizable desires' (2003: 167). Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia' (Foucault 1986) has similarly been used to theorize the qualities of certain tourist spaces (Edensor 1998) and their potential to act as 'places for exploration and self-expression' that 'subvert dominant practices and meanings' (ibid.: 43). Scholars have also focused on the utopic qualities of love and intimacy in their connection with travel. For Illouz (1997), the idea of romantic love can be productively approached as a utopia of transgression, an imaginary that defies 'the normal arrangements and divisions by gender, class, or national loyalties' (ibid.: 8) and which finds a perfect ally in those ritual dimensions of travel that evoke a 'suspension of ordinary constraints and a shift to a purely gratuitous, noninstrumental mode of relationships' (ibid.: 142). 'Travels', Illouz tells us, 'take people to the frontier of liminality', embodying 'our ideal-typical definition of romance' (ibid.).

While similar entanglements between travel and fantasies of love and intimacy could be discerned in touristic Cuba, my work (Simoni 2016a) also chronicles how the utopic dimension of touristic encounters on the island was increasingly threatened by suspicious and cynical assessments of what such encounters were 'really about'. In such scenarios, subterfuge, deception and double-dealings emerged as key interpretative frames for both tourists and Cuban people to unmask their allegedly 'real' motivations and intentions respectively. In the most extreme cases, this 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Sedgwick 2003) led foreign tourists to avoid dealings with Cuban people altogether (aside perhaps from employees in tourism installations) for fear of being cheated and deceived.

In what follows, I wish to reflect on these narratives of suspicion on the one hand and to contrast them with the claims and aspirations I heard from my Cuban interlocutors on the other hand, which the ethnographic encounter helped bring about. The overall aim in considering this specific case is to contribute to the debate raised by the editors of this

special issue on ethnography as a mutualizing utopia (see Maskens and Blanes, this issue). Where the example of love and friendship in touristic Cuba can be particularly helpful is in the reflection on utopia as a model of relationality, given that forms of relationality were themselves at the core of my interlocutors' preoccupations.

Cunning and suspicion

When I first went to Cuba in February 2005 to start fieldwork on encounters and relationships between foreign tourists and members of the Cuban population, I was aware of the likelihood that Cuban men and women I met on the streets of Havana would perceive me as a tourist like many others. As I have considered more extensively elsewhere (Simoni and McCabe 2008, Simoni 2016a) in writing about positioning issues in ethnographic research on tourism, it was indeed as a tourist that I was initially approached by Cubans eager to make my acquaintance, be it to offer some Cuban cigars, suggest a place to eat or, more commonly, to hang around together and establish some sort of relationship. As in the case of most of the tourists I spoke to, one of the questions that started preoccupying me on such occasions related to the intentions and agendas of the Cuban interlocutors involved: what did they want from me? The ascription of instrumentality implicit in such a question comes as less of a surprise when we consider the many stories and anecdotes I had already absorbed prior to my travel through guidebooks, travel sites and world-of-mouth warnings from friends and acquaintances on the risks of getting involved with Cubans in tourist areas of the country, given the likelihood of them having an instrumental agenda. *Jineterismo* was the frame of legibility coming to the fore: a Cuban neologism from the Spanish '*jinete*' (rider), which, in the context of tourism in Cuba, evoked the 'riding' of tourists for instrumental purposes, thus conjuring up notions of tourism-hustling.[4]

The Cubans I met on my first days in the island were also responsible for raising the suspicion of *jineterismo*. When engaging with me and other foreigners, they tended to refer to the prevalence of *jineteros* and 'fake friends' in tourism areas, only to cast themselves, by way of contrast, as the exception, as the real friend one could trust and rely on. 'As a foreigner in this place, you would not know where to go! As long as you hang

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[4] Scholars have also shown how ascriptions of *jineterismo* often remain very ambiguous and operate along several lines of discrimination that bring issues of morality, nation, race, class and gender into play (see in particular the work of Alcázar 2009, Babb 2011, Berg 2004, Cabezas 2009, Daigle 2013, Fernandez 1999, Roland 2011, Simoni 2008).

around with me, you are safe … You were so lucky to find me, and not some *jinetero*: a real friend, a sincere friendship.' These are some of the sentences I recalled Pepe, one of the first Cubans I met in Havana, uttering as he tried to reassure me of the genuineness of his friendship. I soon realized that this kind of discourse was very widespread, so much so that it could quickly lose all its appeal to more experienced visitors. 'Be careful; not all Cubans are the same!' was the typical refrain of this 'idiom of exception' (Torresan 2011).[5] Weary of the widespread warning not to trust 'other Cubans', and increasingly suspicious of the 'how lucky you are to have found me' kind of narrative, Gilberto and Dario, two young independent travellers from Italy, came to the conclusion that it was actually these self-proclaimed exceptions who were most likely to cheat you.

Conforming to this prevailing idiom of exception, it was rare to see Cubans explicitly refer to themselves as *jineteros* in the presence of foreigners with whom they hoped to establish longer term relationships. But while in these moments of tourist–Cuban interaction the *jinetero/a* was generally the 'Other' Cuban tourists should refrain from engaging with, more positive identifications with the practice of *jineterismo* emerged in moments of peer sociability, when Cuban men and women chatted among themselves about their relationships with tourists. In such moments, which I only managed to share with some of my Cuban companions with time, people could easily refer to their engagements with tourists as *jinetear* – e.g. *estaba jineteando*, I was engaging in *jineterismo* (more seldom assuming the overarching identification of *jinetero/a*). In these conversations, it was frequent for people to objectify tourists and to talk about relations with them in instrumental terms. The widespread expectation was to avoid dwelling on any emotions one could feel for a foreign 'friend' and 'partner', an attitude that could give the impression of being too naïve, and thus be frowned upon by the audience. More often, people would instead align their talk with the semantic registers and moral discourse of *jineterismo*, for instance, telling funny anecdotes about relationships with tourists that could give them the allure of insubstantial and superficial affairs, and widely conforming to the image of 'tourist riders' guided by the instrumental purposes of securing their socio-economic needs and desires, as well as those of their families. Brennan's (2004) remarks on normative expectations among female sex workers in the Dominican Republic,

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[5] In her article on Brazilian immigrants negotiating friendship in Lisbon (Portugal), Torresan suggests that 'friendship between Brazilians and Portuguese created a bridge that crossed over cultural patterns which were then subsequently strengthened by the idea that friendship was only possible because someone in the relationship was an exception to the rule' (2011: 245).

specifically regarding ways of talking about love with foreign partners, provide an interesting parallel to reflect on these instances and the kinds of peer pressures they could respond to. As Brennan puts it: 'Positing love could make Sosúan sex workers appear foolish. No matter what they feel for their foreign boyfriends, these women have an incentive to portray themselves as not naïve enough to actually fall in love' (ibid.: 96). A similar moral expectation not to portray oneself as too vulnerable also seemed to predominate among Cuban men and women as they discussed with peers their relationships with foreign tourists. Elsewhere (Simoni 2016b), I elaborate further on how the adoption of these moral stances can be understood in relation to claims and expectations of belonging, in the sense that casting tourists as an instrument for achieving economic goals and aspirations and interpreting relationships with them as clearly economic in nature could help clarify where one's allegiance lay, positing We Cubans as the primary site of belonging.

Interestingly, similar pressures not to appear foolish or naïve also prevailed among visitors when talking to fellow travellers about their encounters and relationships with Cuban people. Avoiding being cast as gullible, as the quintessential just-arrived tourist who believes everything they tell him and does not have a clue how things 'really' work, could lead to visitors adopting a precautionary, cynical stance when discussing relationships with Cubans and avoiding getting carried away in emotional speeches that that could be judged totally out of place – proofs that people were living in the utopic world of tourism fantasies and fabrications. The views of experienced travellers, especially people who had come repeatedly to Cuba in the past, could prove particularly authoritative in shaping the opinion of recently arrived tourists and in setting the tone for future encounters with the locals. Regularly, their tips tended to emphasize the instrumental dimensions of Cubans' engagements with tourists, warning novices about their Machiavellian plans and economically oriented agendas. 'They are all looking for ways to get hold of our money!' was the bold statement I repeatedly heard. The reiteration and prescriptive tone of these warnings challenged the emergence of other views and narratives. Emphasis on instrumentality and deception did not favour, for instance, the emergence of narratives of friendship, love and romance. 'You must be crazy to fall in love with a Cuban girl!' was the frequent rejoinder to 'naïve' admissions of love for a Cuban partner. In this context, tourists who openly declared themselves to be in love with their Cuban partners could quickly become objects of scorn and derision (see Simoni 2016a).

Cuban men and women I met during fieldwork recalled with nostalgia the 'good old days' of the 1990s, when tourists were less sceptical and easier to deal with. According to these narratives, tourists are now getting tougher and more suspicious. 'Now it's getting harder, they know it all; of the ways we try to get on with them, to court the girls!' – complained, for instance, Luis, who, in his early thirties, saw his hopes of marrying a tourist woman slowly fade away. For Luis, as for many of the Cuban men and women I met during fieldwork, encounters with tourists held promises that went well beyond the prospect of making some easy money with commissions in bars and restaurants or some informal cigar deal. What many hoped for was to establish longer term relations within the idioms of friendship and love, relations that were judged more gratifying at an emotional and moral level and that could also ensure higher degrees of commitment from the tourists, including the possibility that one might visit them abroad one day, as friends or, more permanently, as a spouse. In order to establish any such long-term relationships, the suspicions tourists nourished towards their Cuban partners' motives and intentions had to be overcome.

The suspicion of possible deception, contrived emotions, interested friendship, false professions of love and other instrumental machinations at the tourist's expense was, however, a tough one to overcome. Such lines of reasoning tended to reify a divide between Cubans' self-presentations to outsiders and their actual motivations and agendas, which were deemed ineluctably strategic. As I have elaborated more extensively elsewhere (Simoni 2013, 2014a), this interpretive logic is extremely widespread in an increasingly globalizing field of tourism discourse and critique. It needs to be understood in the context of the tourists' drive to reach into the most intimate realms of the places they visit and with their preoccupation with being deceived by 'fake' touristic displays, aspects that have been at the centre of social-science theorizations of tourism since the early 1970s (MacCannell 1973, 1976).[6] The tourists I met during fieldwork tended to despise the idea of being cheated and puzzled over the 'real' intentions and motivations of the Cubans who interacted with them. Here is where narratives of *jineterismo* could act as a key interpretative resource to 'unmask' the allegedly covert motivations of the locals.

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[6] MacCannell (1973, 1976) famously made the quest for the 'real' and 'authentic' Other the key tenet of his theorization of tourism. Drawing on Goffman's front versus back distinction (1959), this author maintained that modern tourists were longing to 'enter the back regions of the places they visited', regions 'associated with intimacy of relations and authenticity of experiences' (1973: 589). For MacCannell, this quest was ultimately doomed to failure, given that 'tourist settings are arranged to produce the impression that a back region has been entered even when this is not the case' (ibid.).

In terms of social scientists' approaches, similar frames of legibility still retain much analytical purchase when assessing touristic encounters from a critical(-cum-cynical) perspective (Simoni 2014a). Such interpretive grids may appear all the more compelling when combined with a strong focus on structural inequalities, an emphasis on local resistance to global forces and a conceptualization of the (liberal) individual that foregrounds economic agency. The risk I see in such analytical endeavours is to adopt such a framework a priori (Fassin 2008), to 'romanticize resistance' (Abu-Lughod 1990; also Piot 2010) and with it the image of cunning locals, who, despite their subaltern position, are able to trick and deceive the structurally advantaged tourists, a category of people for whom academics have traditionally displayed little sympathy (see Crick 1995). Going a step further, I would argue that we may easily be tempted to suppose that the disadvantaged inhabitants of tourism destinations in the South are not only able to take advantage of tourists but should legitimately do so, and that we – as critical researchers sensitive to domination and ways of resisting it, and eager to highlight the economic agencies and rationalities of the 'weak' – expect them to and like to see it.[7]

To prolong this reflection, we may fruitfully draw on Kelly's (2012) recent remarks on the process of 'imagined identification' and its implications in terms of picturing other people's agency and ability to dissimulate. What happens in the case of the assessment of claims about torture in the British asylum process, on which Kelly grounds his reflections, is that, 'rather than turning people into passive objects, the process of trying to identify with those who have suffered can also lead to a sense of all too active agency among those who claim to have suffered' (ibid.: 763). '[T]he fiction of the "rational man"', continues Kelly, includes the recognition of 'a capacity for dissimulation' and brings to the fore '[t]he spectre of *Homo economicus*', which 'always hangs behind that of *Homo victimus*' (ibid.). In the case discussed here, the hypothesis of 'duplicity and dissimulation' as the

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[7.] This interpretation may become even more appealing and self-evident – therefore making its moral underpinnings less likely to be reflexively acknowledged – in a Caribbean context where cunning responses to colonial domination have captured much anthropological attention (Browne 2004; Freeman 2007). The image of disadvantaged people who deploy subtle tactics and 'economic guile' to get by in unfavourable circumstances is indeed long-standing in anthropologies of the Caribbean region, an image that has been held 'to embody the most authentic in Caribbean culture' (Wilson 1964, cited in Freeman 2007: 5). A useful parallel may also be drawn here with Cole's (2009: 111) assessment of recent scholarship on African intimacies, which tends to foreground 'the instrumental, as opposed to the emotional, nature of intimate male-female relations…either to highlight African agency despite difficult social and economic conditions or to illuminate the underlying logic behind seemingly promiscuous behaviour'. But putting too much emphasis on 'the strategic nature of relationships' (ibid.), argues Cole, risks reproducing stereotypes of Africans – and particularly African women – as 'purely instrumental' (ibid.), a danger I could also detect in the case examined here.

quintessential 'arms' 'of the dominated' (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2004: 20) seemed to have gained much interpretative purchase among foreigners visiting Cuba, hampering the emergence of alternative narratives and possibilities in their relationship with Cuban people.

The hybridity move

Besides the emphasis on Cubans' sense of cunning, which oriented the evaluation of relationships along true/false, front/back and appearance/real dichotomies, an alternative grid of legibility deployed what I would refer to as a hybrid take on relationships, one that saw Cuban's relationships with tourists as potentially motivated by a mix of 'interest' and 'emotional attachment'. After several disappointing encounters with alleged 'cheaters'/*jineteros* earlier in his journey, Julien, a Canadian teenager with whom I spent a few days towards the end of his one-month stay in Cuba, had managed to discover 'more authentic relationships' and what he called 'intimacy': the fact of 'feeling good with somebody' *(être bien avec une personne)*. This, he argued, is what created friendship. However good and gratifying these friendships with Cubans had been, Julien also recognised that they were not like the ones he had back home, which were of a more 'intimate intimate' kind. Instead, the Cuban ones were slightly special friendships (*une amitié un peu spéciale*), friendships that could hardly be completely disinterested, given that even when people did appreciate you – as opposed to just being interested in your cash – they still 'had nothing' (*ils n'ont rien*), and so you were expected to pay. Drawing on Povinelli, we may argue that the friendships Julien had managed to develop with Cubans exemplified a 'necessary compromise in an imperfect world' (2006: 198) of striking inequalities, one that left unscathed his normative ideals of purer friendships, which were simply relocated 'back home'.

Working over his experiences and notions of friendship and being encouraged to reflect on them in the course of our conversation, Julien progressively managed to soften the overarching tension between 'interest' and 'affection' – what Zelizer (2005) conceptualizes as the 'hostile worlds' perspective – that is, between 'instrumental economic relationships' and 'friendship' that traversed so many of the relationships tourists had with Cuban people. Julien's nuanced take resonates with recent anthropological writings on friendship, which urge us to move beyond purified and idealized approaches to uncover its variegated expressions in different ethnographic

locations.[8] In touristic Cuba, one may thus argue that what was emerging was a kind of hybrid version of the allegedly western, purified model of friendship as a voluntary and disinterested affective engagement between autonomous individuals (Carrier 1999), a version in which economic interest, intimacy and emotional attachment could easily intermingle. What is important to note here, however, was that these 'impure' (Coleman 2010) approaches to friendship could easily be resisted by the Cuban friends in question, who were unwilling to subscribe to any sort of hybrid 'compromise' (Nachi 2004a, 2004b; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006 [1991]).

A clear illustration of resistance to an 'impure' view of friendship – the view of the ethnographer, in this case – is evident in the offended reaction of Pablo (a self-professed friend with whom I spent a couple of afternoons in Havana) to my provocative allusion to the commission he was likely to gain on the drinks I had just bought for us. On this occasion, he and his friend Augusto had insisted on drinking *mojitos*, the cocktail on which, I had been told, the gain was highest. Aware of the sensitivity of this issue and of the awkwardness of discussing tricks that foreigners were not supposed to know about with Pablo, I quickly added that I did not really care if making some money was part of his agenda and that this would not jeopardize our friendship, trying to show understanding and even admiration of his tactics for gaining hard currency from foreigners like me. In a quite outraged and emotional denial, Pablo retorted that he valued friendship and *el corazón* (the heart) well above money, that by so doing he now had friends all around the world, and that he would not risk ruining our friendship just for a commission of one or two pesos.

Why was Pablo's reaction so adamant? Why did he judge my intimation to be so offensive? These questions kept puzzling me as I tried to make sense of this awkward moment. Part of the explanation may lie in the inextricable relationship between forms of intimacy and sense of self, in which the former can easily become the measure of the latter so that, as Povinelli (2002: 231) eloquently puts it, 'challenges to intimacy seriously threaten the modes of attachment the subject has to herself and others, and thus challenge the basis of social coherence'. Following Povinelli (2006: 208), we may argue that my move to frame our relationship as a hybrid – a mixture of interest and affect informed by structural inequalities – relegated Pablo to a 'genealogical society' made of socially

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[8] See, for instance, most of the chapters in Bell and Coleman (eds.) (1999) and Desai and Killick (eds.) (2010), the articles of Dyson (2010), Mains (2013), Nisbett (2007), Santos Granero (2007), and Torresan (2011), and the discussion of this literature in Simoni and Throop (2014).

determined subjects, the 'mirror image' and 'contrasting evil' (ibid.: 199) of another, more valued way of being in the world, namely, that of the modern autological subject freed from societal constraints.[9] Demanding that he occupy such a position could therefore imply marking a 'geographical and civilizational difference' (ibid.: 200) between us. By frustrating his claim to a pure friendship, I was, in a sense, depicting his social status in comparison to mine as inescapably constrained by his social context, as 'a form of bondage' (ibid.: 191) that determined his actions, his motivations and the subject position available to him.

Calls for understanding, aspirations of true love and friendship

'You don't understand Cuban people!' (*¡Tú no entiendes a los cubanos!*) was a recurrent reply to tourists' insinuations of hidden instrumental behaviours and multipurpose friendships. Visitors could see this complaint as yet another deceptive, *jinetero*-style self-victimizing manoeuvre to elicit foreigners' guilt, compassion and help. However, these dejected claims of a lack of empathy also call for a more empathetic understanding of their emotional and moral foundations (Hollan 2008; Hollan and Throop 2008). Reflecting that 'empathy is never an all or nothing affair', Throop (2010: 772) has recently argued that 'it is possible to see that, in some cases, it is precisely experiences of misunderstanding that potentiate possibilities for new horizons of mutual understanding to arise, even if fleetingly so'. Foreigners in Cuba, including myself, were encouraged to explore precisely these possibilities for new understanding, following the Cubans' resistance to our interpretations.

During fieldwork, this led me to recognize that to imply an inevitable horizon of self-interestedness in Cubans' declarations of love and friendship, and to force this interpretation on them, was to deny them the possibility, or at least the aspiration, of becoming 'free', 'autonomous' moral subjects of fully fledged 'pure' love and friendship characterized by 'spontaneous and unconstrained sentiment' (Coleman 2010: 200).[10]

[9.] For Povinelli, 'autology' and 'genealogy' 'are two coexisting and intersecting forms of discipline that are constitutive of postcolonial governance' (Venkatesan et al. 2011: 225):

> 'Autology' refers to multiple discourses and practices which invoke the autonomous and self-determining subject, and which are therefore linked to, but not exhausted in, liberalism's emphasis on 'freedom' more narrowly conceived as a political philosophy. 'Genealogy', on the other hand, is taken to refer to discourses that stress social constraint and determination in processes of subject constitution and construe the subject as bound by 'various kinds of inheritances'.

[10.] Building on Carrier's (1999) work, Coleman (2010) locates the roots of this purist stance in 'Aristotle's notion of perfect friendship as justified in and for its own sake' (ibid.: 200).

Several of my Cuban interlocutors assumed that such love and friendship would prevail under the 'normal' conditions of existence to which they aspired, as opposed to the context of exceptional and enduring crisis, scarcity and isolation they associated with Cuba, and which many wished to overcome.[11] This was Ernesto's inference in the passage quoted in the introduction to this article, as he reflected on the difference between friendship in touristic Cuba and friendship 'over there' (*allá*), in the tourists' countries of residence, the type of friendship to which he aspired.

Casting true love and friendship as a universally valued relational idiom and presenting it as something everyone should cherish was also a way of inciting one's tourist companions to live up to this virtuous model and inspiring them to treat each other as this exemplary form of bonding demanded. As such, the world to be shared with foreigners was not only a sought-after ideal at a moral level – for instance in terms of one's values and emotional interiority – it was also a more concrete aspiration that love and friendship could address, eventually helping Cubans get closer to the normality they associated with life abroad, making this common world enter the realm of possibilities. Acting as 'ethical demands' (Zigon 2009, 2010), friendship and love (Zigon 2013) called for mutuality and a certain commitment and continuity in relationships, a commitment that could ultimately help Cubans realize other socio-economic aspirations too, like never again having to worry about being left in need with no one to turn to, or perhaps even being able to travel abroad thanks to a foreign friend or lover.

Such relational ideals, which my Cuban interlocutors called on me to recognize, carried implications that recent anthropological literature on love may help us elucidate. The ability to engage in 'romantic' 'selfless' or 'pure' love has been considered a key marker of modernization and of being an autonomous and self-determined subject.[12] According to Povinelli (2006) it is precisely in love – and in friendship, we may add – that one may 'locate the hegemonic home of liberal logics and aspirations' (ibid.: 17). In this view, 'the ability to "love" in an "enlightened" way becomes the basis (the "foundational event") for constituting free and self-governing subjects and, thus, "humanity"' (Povinelli 2004, cited in Feier 2007: 153). When seen in this light, the links between the ideals of

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[11] In her research on Cuban *jineteras* and their discourses of love for foreign tourists, de Sousa e Santos (2009: 422) similarly quotes an informant's argument that 'people here want to have what is normal to have, simply what any person in the world can have ['the world' here representing Western countries]'.

[12] See, for instance, the articles in Cole and Thomas eds. (1999), Hirsch and Wardlow eds. (2006), and Padilla and al. eds. (2007), as well as the writings of Povinelli (2006), Patico (2009), Feier (2007), and Hunter (2010).

love and friendship considered here and the forms of mutuality and subjectification they strived to bring about seem all the clearer. To engage with each other on the grounds of an aspiration to individuality and to belonging to a common world and humanity, as well as to move beyond reductive typifications and objectifications, there could be hardly any better path, we may argue, than through a mutual engagement in true love and friendship.

Povinelli's considerations on the hegemonic nature of liberal aspirations for love, coupled with my interlocutors' explicit references to their longing for 'normality' and a 'normal life' abroad – Berlant's (2011) 'aspirational normativity' – raise the question of the kind of utopian visions we are confronting here and their political dimensions (see Maskens and Blanes, this issue). Following Berlant, my interlocutors' aspirations may be read as an aspiration to get as close as possible 'to the fantasy life of normativity' (Berlant 2011: 167), a proximity that 'might be what remains to animate living on, for some on the contemporary economic bottom' (ibid.). Most of the people I worked with did indeed express a feeling of being stuck in something like such a bottom. In other words, the utopic vision at issue here was not driven by a desire to discover an unknown new world out there, and it was a far cry away from any exotic/science fiction/radically different alterity we may more commonly associate with the utopic genre. Instead, it was a reality that my interlocutors knew well and one they were fully prepared to inhabit. Turning on its head the more frequently ascribed attributes of 'everyday reality' vs. 'ideal utopia', it was ordinary life in Cuba that was deemed exceptional here, out of the ordinary, while utopia, in the form of an imaginary elsewhere, was simply equated with normality, with how things ought to be. Politically, this sort of vision may seem to have little potential to unsettle dominant global narratives and hegemonic constructs or to 'kindle political imagination' (Maskens and Blanes, this issue). The aspiration to attain and live the fantasy of a 'normal life', one may argue, did nothing but reinforce that same hegemonic ideal. While this may well be the case, I suggest that other readings are also possible, especially once we start to look for politics elsewhere, from another angle, one that moves us beyond the dyad of domination and resistance.

Inspired by Piot's (2010) theoretical insights on the new cultural imaginaries that are taking shape in contemporary West Africa, we could interpret for such professions of true love and friendship as a way for my Cuban interlocutors to 'embrace the future, through acts of mimetic engagement with that which they desire' (ibid.: 10). In order to account for these mimetic endeavors, Piot urges us 'to fight the impulse to make theory adequate to political desire' (ibid.: 169), to resist 'the romance of resistance' (ibid.) and to be ready

to 'measure "agency" through engagement with rather than rejection of Euro-otherness' (ibid.: 10). Subscribing to the ideals of true love and friendship could thus express the aspiration to overcome the limitations of life in Cuba and claim 'membership' in a 'global society' (Ferguson 2006), from which many of my Cuban research participants felt excluded.

Raising the issue of 'agency' and its 'measurement' beyond the paradigm of 'resistance', Piot's remarks find a useful complement in Laidlaw's (2002) proposals for an anthropology of ethics and freedom. Criticizing the ubiquitous use of the notion of agency and the 'self-evident virtues' (ibid.: 315) that tend to be attributed to this notion, Laidlaw warns anthropologists against 'the temptation to describe the world as we would like it to be, rather than as it is' (ibid.). 'As an index of freedom', continues Laidlaw, 'the concept of agency is pre-emptively selective' in that '[o]nly actions contributing towards what the analyst sees as structurally significant count as instances of agency. Put most crudely, we only mark them down as agency when people's choices seem to us to be the right ones' (ibid.). The assumption that should be overcome here is 'that freedom is only possible in the total absence of constraint or relations of power' (ibid.: 323).

Extending these reflections, I think that Sedgwick's (2003) methodological insights on 'paranoid' versus 'reparative reading' can also be very pertinent when thinking of my own ethnographic encounters. This author criticizes the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that characterizes a widespread 'paranoid critical stance', a 'relational stance' that is anticipatory, retroactive and averse to surprise (ibid.: 146), which disavows other ways of knowing as naïve, and which values 'knowledge in the form of exposure' (ibid.: 138), including for instance the ubiquitous exposure of '"The modern liberal subject"' (ibid.: 139). For Sedgwick, '[t]he paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends…on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings' (ibid.: 141), being nourished by the concern not to be taken for a 'sucker' (ibid.). As shown earlier, this concern was widely shared by Cubans and tourists alike when respectively they interacted with their peers. What must be preserved to counter this hermeneutics of suspicion and its totalizing dimension, and what Sedgwick's proposal for a more 'reparative' relational stance supports, are ever more empathetic readings that do not reduce people's efforts to ameliorate their condition to a merely reformist (ibid.: 144) move or to the exposure of their complicity in the maintenance of 'an oppressive status quo' (ibid.: 149). This call for a less suspicious hermeneutics seems to resonate well with Robbins' (2013) recent proposal for an 'anthropology of the good', which shows the interest in investigating 'the

way people understand the good and define its proper pursuit' (ibid.) and encourages us 'to be attentive to the way people orientate to and act in a world that outstrips the one most concretely present to them, and to avoid dismissing their ideals as unimportant or, worse, as bad-faith alibis for the worlds they actually create' (ibid.).

All in all, what I think we should avoid here, in response to the utopian calls for love and friendship of my Cuban interlocutors, is replacing the interpretative objectifications of *jineterismo* and hybridity with another reading that saw them only as complicit in the reproduction of hegemonic ideals of love and friendship. In other words, refraining from substituting a conceptual grid and interpretative closure with another totalizing understanding that is equally blind to, and not interested in, my interlocutors calls for open-ended relational possibilities, their hopeful invitation to engage together in the construction of something in common, no matter how naïve and utopic this new trajectory may be. The ethnographic/touristic encounter could provide the space for such utopic trajectories, a space in which unconstrained possibilities for being and being with could at least be imagined.

Beyond typification, towards mutualizing utopias

'For me you are not a tourist. You are a person, a human being!' (*Tú para mí no eres un turista. ¡Tú eres una persona, un ser humano!*). On several occasions, I heard this kind of statement addressed to me and other foreign visitors in Cuba. Here the stress fell on grounding relationships in the fundamental commonality of tourists and Cubans as human beings (Simoni 2014b). Rather than being dichotomously catalogued and targeted on the basis of their assumed privileged status and the asymmetry of their resources, tourists deserved to be recognized, understood and treated as persons, with all their peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, unique circumstances and ways of being. The problem and the source of many of his Cuban colleagues' mistakes in dealing with tourists, according to Ernesto, was that they considered themselves superior, that they were vain (*vanos*) and looked down on tourists as if they were *bobos* (stupid, naïve). This major error in judgement, he maintained, went on to colour their ways of relating to visitors, anchoring them in typifications and objectifications that the latter were bound to sense and resent. Instead, Ernesto advocated remaining open and respecting the individuality of every tourist.

This was also a call for tourists to reciprocate by doing the same with their Cuban friends and partners, as opposed to confining them to the realm of *jineterismo* and *jinetero/a* identifications. The moral demand at stake was thus for tourists to step out of a

world governed by structural inequalities, where interpretations of each other's behaviour were based on inescapable instrumentality, and commit themselves to a relationship that would respect the integrity and sheer complexity of the Other and avoid reducing him or her to a type, a 'summative account' and illustration of a more general pattern (Throop 2014: 72, 75). Seen in this light, Cubans' invocations of love and friendship can be read as a call for openness, for partaking in a world as yet unwritten and unscripted, but full of generative potential for ways of being and doing things together.

The kind of openness that Ernesto preconized resonates with Throop's (2014) recent reflections on the moral experience of friendship and its ethical dimensions. Drawing on Aristotle's 'friendship of virtue', Throop draws our attention to '[the] asymmetrical mutuality of beneficence and care that allows individuals to maintain an openness to the complex integrity of the being who is our friend, despite the fleeting and ever-changing realities of feeling, knowledge, desire, and circumstance that may otherwise conspire in disclosing to us a specific aspect of our friend's existence in that given moment (ibid.: 76). '[W]hat is precisely at stake in friendships of virtue', continues Throop, 'are intersubjectively distributed efforts to instil an openness, vulnerability, susceptibility, responsivity, and mutuality that ideally works against reductive, partial, and segmental renderings of those whom we take to be our friends' (ibid.). Ernesto's warning not to treat tourists as types and his call for crediting his aspirations of love and friendship can be read in the light of Throop's remarks in that they encouraged a respectful and sensitive approach to both persons and relationships. Besides the acknowledgment of claims of true friendship and love, what comes into relief here are the pitfalls of imagined identification as described by Kelly (2012), an 'assumption of similarity' that, in the context he studied, ended up reducing the other to the 'an image of the "rational man"' (ibid.: 765), refracting the recognition of alternative motives and drives in people's conduct. For Kelly, '[t]he line between the incomprehension of assumed difference and the illusory understanding of enforced similarity…is faced by all attempts, including the anthropological, to understand the motivations, hopes, and desires of other people' (ibid.: 766).

When dealing with the declarations of true love or friendship I encountered in fieldwork, we may still object that what we essentially have are discourses, ideals and aspirations that do not tell us much of how things actually took place in practice and that could hardly be grounded in any contextualized ethnographic reality.[13] In deploying this

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[13] See Simoni and Throop (2014) for a similar reflection in relation to recent literature in the anthropology of friendship and its plea for 'making friendship impure' (Coleman 2010).

kind of criticism, however, we should not forget 'the enabling and animating aspects' of people's hopes and desires (Moore 2011: 25). According to Moore (2011), it is this 'ethical imagination' – [t]he forms and means…through which individuals imagine relationships to themselves and to others' (ibid.: 16) – that ultimately 'links human agency to the forms of the possible' (ibid.: 18). Heeding this author's call to recognize the importance of 'the aspirational character of our relations to others' (ibid.: 10) and to pay attention to our research participants' interest 'in creating new connections, new meanings, novel forms of relation' (ibid.: 9) is a productive way to shift the focus of our analyses towards the future, its potentialities and the utopic drives that inspire people's actions. It is precisely the generative potential of Cubans' 'fantasized relations with others' (ibid.: 28) and their utopian dimension to which I wish to draw attention here, as well as to the possibilities for self-formation and transformation it could open up. Drawing on Maskens and Blanes (this issue), we may argue that, when seen through the lens of utopia as a model of relationality, declarations of love and friendship played 'with the gap between reality and fiction as a productive process'. They acted as a 'call for action' (ibid.), a call to inhabit such a relational space, to work together in order to bring about such ideal forms of relationality. Acting as a 'refusal of apathy and fatalism' (ibid.), as a demand to leave behind cynicism and its relational dead ends, such utopic endeavors called for a mutual engagement that could potentiate changes and transformations, an invitation to build together a path towards a better future and a world in common.

A similarly productive way to rethink the relationship between the ethical imagination, utopian ideals and actual practices and engagements can be detected in Willerslev's (in Venkatesan et al. 2011) research on love and the significance of ideals of love among Siberian Yukaghir hunters. Drawing on the notions of 'actual' and 'virtual', Willerslev is able to use his ethnographic material to show that '[t]he actual does not exist separately from the virtual' and that 'the two dimensions are given as facets of one and the same expression or reality – that is, our actual existence duplicates itself all along with a virtual existence' (ibid.: 228). Accordingly, the presence of such virtual ideals should be apprehended as an aspect of the real, as having a significant impact on reality. This is what sustains actual engagements and exchanges, which would be impossible to actualize otherwise. Willerslev's reflection inspires Zigon's remarks on love and the remaking of moral subjectivity when he argues that '[a]s a motivating ethical demand (…) love guides moral experience in ways that may not always be contained by the local' (Zigon 2013: 203). To recognize how love can 'figure centrally in moral and subjective transformations'

(ibid.) is also to acknowledge its potential force as a 'decision event' that calls for particular subject formation to emerge (Zigon ibid.; Humphrey 2008), a decision event that, however, 'does not cut off the multiplicities of the individual but rather recomposes them' (Humphrey ibid.: 374).

If love could act as a 'decision event' calling for a specific subjectivity to emerge forcefully, what about the effects of those instances in which love was disrupted? For many of my Cuban research participants, tourist girlfriends kept coming and going, and fantasies of true love remained frequently frustrated. Such ruptures and (heart)breaks could act as equally decisive events prompting further recalibrations of one's morality and subjectivity. In the course of 2013, spending more time with Ernesto one year after our first encounter, he told me that he was becoming more and more *negativo* (negative) in his dealing with tourists. In the last year or so he had received many blows and disappointments, seeing how relationships in which he had invested a lot, emotionally, did not match up to their promises. A year earlier, Ernesto had insisted that his way of relating with tourists was grounded in truth (*la verdad*) and sentiments (*los sentimientos*), but now, even if he himself didn't like it, he was growing more and more cynical and full of *maldad* (wickedness). But true love could still be on its way, he maintained, and so he retained a certain disposition to give it his all when a promising relationship was in sight. Confronted with similar disillusionments and drawbacks in his relationships with tourist women, my Cuban friend Manuel reached the conclusion that the game was too unsettling for him, that continuous investment in intimate relationships with foreigners made for a 'crazy life' (*una vida loca*), offering no guarantee whatsoever that one would ultimately be able to find a true lover, settle down and fulfil the aspirations to a family life he cherished. These contrasting examples draw attention to the unsettling dimensions and risks inherent in pursuing such utopic scenarios, highlighting the impacts that living in a projection of a better future could have on people's every-day, present lives.

The kind of resilient openness advocated by Ernesto and the related refusal to fall back on reductive objectifications of tourists and of the types of relationships one could expect could become a very demanding moral disposition. It implied devoting a lot of energies and emotional commitments to what were sometimes very transient intimate encounters with people one was never sure ever to see again. To evaluate whether a given relationship deserved such intense engagements, Ernesto strived to acquire a sense of how truthfully the tourist in question was ready to 'surrender' (*entregarse*) to love. Thinking in terms of a mutualizing utopia, what was at stake here was the other person's ability and

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readiness to take a leap of faith, to let oneself be enticed by a little known Other and its invitations to love and/or friendship, accepting an offer that may seem unrealistic, unfeasible, unlikely. Ernesto was himself always ready to do this – 'when someone gives you love, you have to give love back' he argued – but tended to back away if he felt there was no mutual predisposition or response from his partner.

Concluding remarks

Anthropological research on tourism has shown how productive the exploration of parallels and linkages between tourism and anthropology can be for our reflections on the discipline and its methods (see, for instance, Bruner 1995; Crick 1995; Frohlick and Harrison 2008; Michel 1998; Salazar 2013; Simoni and McCabe 2008). Reflecting on the parallels between cultural tour guides and anthropologists, Salazar (2013) has recently considered the extent to which '[b]oth involve essentially the same kind of symbolic representations, attempting to fixate the "Other" in a specific way' (ibid.: 675). By looking at my Cuban interlocutor's reactions to attempts to 'fixate' them and their ways of relating to foreign visitors, this article has highlighted their resistance to processes of typification and has called for ethnographic and anthropological stances that eschew the temptation to indulge in definitive classification. The processes of categorization I addressed seemed all the more resilient and limiting when they were informed by an 'epistemology of suspicion' (Sedgwick 2003) that made all other relational stances look naïve or downright stupid. Tourists, as much as ethnographers, may be seduced by readings that, as Sedgwick (ibid.) has pointed out, grant much power of anticipation, can easily be deployed retroactively and, in the context examined here, help pin down elusive realities and secure one's position in a relational terrain fraught with unsettling ambiguities and paradoxes. If we wish for the ethnographic encounter to retain 'the promise of nontrivial understanding' (Fabian 1995: 47, cited in Maskens and Blanes, this issue), its qualities as a privileged 'space of ethical interlocution' (Maskens and Blanes ibid.) and 'mutualizing utopia' (ibid.), we should work to maintain a certain naïveté and constantly (re)awaken our sensitivity to the moral demands and calls to understand our interlocutors.

The most obvious of such demands fought against the reductive identification of Cubans as cunning tricksters whose deployments of friendship and love with tourists were inevitably superficial, deceptive and 'fake'. This deceptiveness could be valued among Cuban peers in a context in which any talk of 'true' love towards tourists could make people look foolishly naïve and question their allegiance to a community of fellow Cubans

(see Simoni 2016a). But it could also become an interpretative straightjacket, a reductive prism and prison leaving no room for other desires, aspirations or possibilities of being with and relating to foreigners. The hybridity move that conflated interest and affect as a legitimate mixture in people's motivations and intentionality did not solve the problem either, as it had the effect of weakening Cubans' declarations of love and friendship, thus tarnishing their alleged genuineness and the transformative power people associated with such utopic ideals. Hybridity can dissolve differences in a 'theoretically limitless' (Strathern 1996) blurring of boundaries, boundaries that could matter in the opening of new utopic scenarios and their calls for action, in taking these possible futures seriously and struggling to realize them.

Rather than having to privilege or chose one among the different and paradoxical deployments of love and friendship that emerged in my field research – which we may schematically address as the cunning, the hybrid and the utopic – the range of ethnographic encounters I experienced encouraged me to keep these various possibilities open and to avoid reducing relationships to a single interpretation. Striving to understand my interlocutors and to heed their calls for understanding, I tried to take seriously, without condescension or facile cynicism, the competing claims of truthfulness of these different ways of relating to others. Reflecting on 'the complexity of our engagement with the world' and 'the crossing of different perspectives in our own persons', Pina-Cabral (2013) considers that '[o]ur simultaneous engagement with different persons and different groups implies a mutualistic plurality of interests' (ibid.: 2). In the case examined here, it is precisely to such plurality that I strived to remain attuned, ready to follow my interlocutors as they articulated their ideal visions of true love and friendship, seeking recognition for them, and thus revealing ethnography's potential as a mutualizing utopia.

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