

## LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

# Afro-Cuban Cyberfeminism: Love/Sexual Revolution in Sandra Álvarez Ramírez's Blogging

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This essay focuses on the dynamics of (dis)embodiment between national love and the body of the black woman in Cuba. This very discussion lies at the center of Sandra Álvarez Ramírez's blog *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, where the black woman's body becomes an ideal in itself. Álvarez Ramírez's intellectual interventions impress this body with love and assemble a community whose members share the black feminist goal of a sexual (polyamory) revolution. I propose that *Negra cubana's* revolutionary matrix resides in the blog's networking: a cyberfeminist agenda to connect Cuban black women's voices with other voices around the world. Contrary to the utopian promise of the Cuban Revolution, *Negra cubana's* black feminist promise is that of enactment in the present—in both physical and virtual realms.

Este ensayo se centra en las dinámicas de (des)materialización que ocurren entre el amor nacional y el cuerpo de la mujer negra en Cuba. Esta discusión es la que precisamente guía el blog *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, de Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, en el que el cuerpo de la mujer negra deviene un ideal en sí mismo. Las intervenciones intelectuales de Álvarez Ramírez imprimen amor sobre este cuerpo y, a la vez, conforman una comunidad que comparte una meta afro-feminista: una revolución sexual (de poliamor). Propongo que la matriz revolucionaria de *Negra cubana* reside en la interconectividad del blog, es decir, en una agenda ciberfeminista que conecta voces de mujeres negras de Cuba con otras alrededor del mundo. Contrario a la promesa utópica de la Revolución Cubana, la promesa afro-feminista de *Negra cubana* se ejerce en el presente, tanto en el mundo material como en el virtual.

Love is an often invoked emotion in revolutionary discourses in Cuba. From Fidel Castro's "Palabras a los intelectuales" (1961) to Ernesto "Che" Guevara's "El hombre nuevo" ([1965] 1986), the discourse of love seeks to unite a collectivity around a single ideal, whether *la patria* or *la revolución*. Interestingly, this ideal is imagined as a feminine object, a mother or a lover, surrounded by devoted men. Of course, this prosopopeia is not exclusive to Cuban or Latin American political discourses and can be traced back to nineteenth-century romanticism and nationalism.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Cuba, as Guillermina de Ferrari (2014, 3) has proposed, the narratives of the Cuban Revolution illustrated those devoted men through a series of rhetorical devices portraying male friendship, a fraternity that was supposed to be "masculine and equal, rather than patriarchal." Nevertheless, the fraternity manifested here, convening around a shared love for a female object, also deploys this emotion as a pretext and a justification for violence that renders the present meaningless. Very much like other national and identitarian (homogenizing) discourses, the Cuban Revolution has depended on a "promise of happiness," as Sara Ahmed (2010, 2) has denominated the set of associations (choices and relations) that promise to guarantee a path of success (belonging to a determined nationality, social class, race, sexuality, etc.) and, therefore, of future happiness. In Guevara's and Castro's texts, precisely, love for *la patria* or *la revolución* is disillusioned with the present situation,

<sup>1</sup> For an interpretation of the interplay between fraternity and women's bodies in European national discourses, see the groundbreaking book *Nationalism and Sexuality* by George L. Moose. The same topic in the Latin American context has been studied in pivotal books such as Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992), Francine Masiello's *Between Civilization and Barbarism* (1992), and Licia Fiol-Matta's *A Queer Mother for the Nation* (2002).

and instead, love fights and waits for its fulfillment in the future. And the future will only be secured thanks to the efforts of true revolutionaries that, as these discourses and the Cuban context show, are mostly white males.

In this essay, I want to focus on the dynamics of (dis)embodiment between national love and the love for the Afro-Cuban woman's body, a body that has remained outside of the racist and patriarchal revolutionary structure unless it becomes useful as a commodity and/or an empty signifier. This discussion lies at the center of Sandra Álvarez Ramírez's blog *Negra cubana tenía que ser* (here referred to as *Negracubana*) and propels her writing into an articulation of the black woman's body as an ideal in itself, employing narratives that include a documentation of black women's political actions in both the past and the present. In this sense, if the national promise of happiness determines the flow of bodies in social space and categorizes them as "happy" or "unhappy," according to their adherence to determined norms (Ahmed 2010, 11–12), in Álvarez Ramírez's discourse black women's "unhappy bodies" stick together and seek to form another kind of (more fluid) "we," gathering together around expressions of their bodies' enjoyment. Specifically, Álvarez Ramírez's intellectual interventions impress the black woman's body with love and assemble a community whose members share the cyberfeminist goal of a love/sexual revolution that radicalizes body politics (gender, race, and sexuality) thanks to (dis)embodiment processes in virtual space. Therefore, *Negracubana's* cyberfeminism takes back the representation of the black woman's body and constitutes it as an agent of history. Furthermore, contrary to the Cuban Revolution's promise of utopian love, the black feminist love/sexual proposition is that of enactment in the present, in everyday life—in both the physical and virtual realms.

Most importantly, Álvarez Ramírez's Afro-cyberfeminist stance relies on the fluidity of polyamory, that is, the possibility of being in love with more than one person at the same time. My main argument is that polyamory's fluidity, as conceptualized in *Negracubana*, works against the utopian love promise of the official revolution in several ways. First, because it refuses a sole commitment, polyamory disrupts the notion of the revolution as the ultimate promise. Second, the advocacy for fluidity in this blog puts black women's necessities at the center of social discussions, which operates contrary to what should be the perfect revolutionary's (white male's) ideal, the eternal sacrifice for the love of the revolution. Third, since there is an acknowledgement of intersectionality (of different kinds of oppressions, resistances, and associations) in the philosophy and practice of fluidity, Álvarez Ramírez's understanding of polyamory defies the requirement of a single political affiliation, as requested by the revolution (as well as by the groups that preach antirevolution politics). Finally, the Afro-cyberfeminist discourse on polyamory deconstructs two binaries: love/sex and public/private. In terms of the former, her blogs often fuse love (as an emotion) and sex (as a pleasurable practice) to better understand the complicated necessities of (black women's) bodies. Regarding the latter, she insists on public discussion of love/sex practices that are thought to be private, and, moreover, she conceives of these supposedly private matters as key in order to revolutionize social space. Both binaries find their shortcomings in Castro's and Guevara's texts. As I will discuss, if for them there were two kinds of love (the revolution's transcendental one and the ordinary), *Negracubana* brings the discussion of love back to the black woman's body and refuses to disassociate this emotion from its concrete needs.

I want to examine these ideas by looking into *Negracubana's* revolutionary matrix, which I believe is to be found in the blog's networking: that is, an active agenda to connect Cuban black women's voices with other voices around the world. Starting with its platform, Wordpress, the blog is presented as an effort that relies on collaboration and open sharing. It does not include ads, and its objective is to educate and advocate for black women. Álvarez Ramírez uses social media to promote *Negracubana*, which has 6,344 followers. This is a small community, and most entries have one or two comments, even though there are a few, like some I study here, that have up to fourteen reactions. Many followers are other Cuban and Caribbean bloggers and academics—some of them contribute their pieces to *Negracubana* from time to time—but there is a diversity of women among this group, too, that also take the time to leave their comments, as I will explain in my analysis of one of the blogs.

Thus the format and concept of the blog can be seen as another way in which Álvarez Ramírez exercises her polyamory philosophy. Small and intimate networking is vital to the subsistence of this open project. When talking about networks, however, I am not only referring to the possibilities of previously unimaginable associations that the Internet has created; I also want us to think about how networks have always been fundamental for the production and transmission of intellectual ideas. One of my tasks in this essay, then, will be to establish an intellectual network between Álvarez Ramírez and some of the canonical (patriarchal) voices of the Cuban Revolution in order to identify concrete points of struggle concerning the representation of the black woman's body. Another of my proposed networks presents a dialogue between the dissident

discourse of *Negracubana* and Cuban literary productions referenced therein, such as Virgilio Piñera's *La isla en peso* and Nancy Morejón's "Mujer negra." I will also pursue an intellectual reflection on the experience of black bodies through networking Frantz Fanon's, Audre Lorde's, and Álvarez Ramírez's ideas on the topic. Finally, Álvarez Ramírez's appropriation of cyberfeminist ideas and actions provides us with another context, with respect to what feminist Donna J. Haraway and the Australian cyber collective VNS Matrix have envisioned, for reflecting on the kind of community she has intended to build through her blog. All of these proposed dialogues bring my analysis to consider the importance of *Negracubana* for the Cuban (virtual) context as well as for comparative race and feminist studies. In this sense, even though Álvarez Ramírez does not have the visibility that any of the other mentioned figures have, I see her work as a crisscrossed network that permits us to discuss Cuba within local and global perspectives. Furthermore, as I will discuss at the end of this essay, Álvarez Ramírez is probably one of the best examples to talk about a new kind of intellectual figure that has emerged after 1989 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In post-Soviet Cuba, many authors have ventured into digital networking and have worked with different notions of community that could break through the traditional socialist proposition of a masculine lettered city (De Ferrari 2014, 2–3). In Álvarez Ramírez's case, *Negracubana* has come to occupy a central place in the Cuban blogosphere because of her constant experimentation with diverse media and because of the network the blog has built beyond the island, extending to other contexts in the hemispheric Americas and Europe. Her brief introduction says:

Nací en La Habana en 1973, un día después de los sucesos en el Palacio de la Moneda, Chile... Trabajé por casi 10 años como editora del sitio web *Cubaliteraria*, portal de la literatura cubana; al tiempo que me convertí en periodista y webmaster. Realizo esta bitácora desde junio del 2006... Como ciberfeminista negra participo del Proyecto Arcoiris, y del grupo de mujeres Afrocubanas... Pertenezco a la Articulación Regional Afrodescendiente, organización que tiene un capítulo cubano. Soy colaboradora de Global Voices y recientemente me incorporé a colaborar con el TOQUE. Cada cuarto sábado del mes hago un programa de radio, *Y tenemos sabor*, en la emisora Radio Flora de la ciudad de Hannover, Alemania.<sup>2</sup>

[I was born in Havana in 1973, a day after the events in the Palacio de la Moneda, Chile... I worked as an editor for the website *Cubaliteraria*, the site for Cuban literature for almost ten years; at the same time, I became a journalist and webmaster. I've maintained this blog since June 2006... As a black cyberfeminist I participate in the Proyecto Arcoiris and in the women's group Afrocubanas... I belong to the Articulación Regional Afrodescendiente, an organization that has a Cuban chapter. I am a participant in Global Voices, and I recently joined TOQUE. Every fourth Saturday of the month I do a radio program, *Y tenemos sabor*, on Radio Flora station out of Hanover, Germany.]

Therefore, we can read *Negracubana* as part of a recent intellectual and artistic output in Cuba that, as Odette Casamayor-Cisneros (2010, 131) has pointed out, has "shifted from sketching out an identity to recreating the experience of being black in the Americas." With Álvarez Ramírez, this experience grows even more complex when we consider her educational and professional background (journalist, webmaster, psychologist, and feminist), as well as the time she has spent living in Germany. Throughout her blog, she has explained that studies and love are the most important reasons for immigrating to Germany.<sup>3</sup> As we will see, her relationship with this foreign land is both problematic and invigorating. But most importantly, by having started and sustained her blog in Cuba (2006–2013) and having continued to develop it in Germany (since 2013), Álvarez Ramírez's network operates within and beyond the island, the constraints of Cuban identity, and the limits of political debate regarding the Cuban government. Its operation, creation, and effects become an intellectual contribution to Cuban studies at a time when the island continues to juggle a socialist state and a neoliberal economy.

Álvarez Ramírez shares a leftist perspective, but she is critical of the restrictions that the revolutionary state has imposed on the development of other kinds of associations and affiliations, different and/or dissident from official institutions. She constantly pushes her community to go beyond the binary of pro/against government. Therefore, both her political stance and the focus of her debate distances her work from others

<sup>2</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "¿Quién es Negracubana?," *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, 2006, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/quien-es-negracubana/>.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "Volver a empezar una relación," *Hablemos de sexo y amor*, May 25, 2015, <https://hablemosdesexo.com/historia/volver-empezar-una-relacion>.

that have exhibited an open and belligerent opposition to the Cuban government, such as Yoani Sánchez's *Generación Y* and Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo's *Lunes de Post-Revolución*. Álvarez Ramírez's intellectual enactment of her body politics has kept her blog more open to a diverse range of debates and has made her interventions even more radical than those exclusively devoted to dissenting from anything and everything with origins in the Cuban government.

### The Promise of Revolutionary Love and the Black Woman's Body

After the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), as Ada Ferrer (1999, 1–12) documents, Cuba became immersed in a debate on race that was intrinsically related to the one on colonialism. The three decades of the Liberation Army's long War of Independence defied "the fear and division that formed the [racialized] society from which [the Army] emerged," as many of the 60 percent black soldiers that integrated the force were able to ascend through the military hierarchy (Ferrer 1999, 3). The military experience went hand in hand with an intellectual movement that was not only anticolonialist but also antiracist, professing "the equality of all races" (Ferrer 1999, 4). If the 1898 US invasion of Cuba cut short the potentiality of such military and intellectual projects, for Ferrer, the 1959 Cuban Revolution left the nineteenth-century movement as an "abstract" origin of the twentieth-century quest (1999, 6–7). In the teleology of the nationalist narrative that the government has constructed, the 1959 revolution becomes the completion of national independence. For the foundational discourses of the Cuban Revolution, however, the promise of happiness has not arrived yet, and the debate on race, one of the two key issues moving forward from the nineteenth-century war, needs to wait for when the promise is completed.

What, then, is the sacrifice that is needed for happiness to arrive? Who are the subjects that will lead the path to the fulfillment of the promise? That is, who is the revolutionary subject, as imagined by the foundational discourses of the 1959 revolution? What is the specific role of the black woman's body in the revolutionary narrative? I will read some key passages from Guevara's "El hombre nuevo" and Castro's "Palabras a los intelectuales" and go over some other critical moments in Cuban history in order to better understand how the excluded black woman's body becomes the embodiment of the revolutionary promise of happiness that, up until these days, has mostly benefited white men, whose bodies represent true revolutionaries.

Revolutionary love must go beyond everyday love and even reject any possibility of dwelling in it, as Guevara reminds us: "Nuestros revolucionarios de vanguardia ... [n]o pueden descender con su pequeña dosis de cariño cotidiano hacia los lugares donde el hombre común lo ejercita" (Our avant-garde revolutionaries cannot descend to the places where common men practice small ordinary affections) ([1965] 1986, 325). The division between low and high forms of love leads us to a conceptualization of knowledge that distinguishes between experience (everyday life) and ideology. In this sense, ordinary affection is not true love, true knowledge, or truly revolutionary. The *revolucionarios de vanguardia*, as Guevara calls them, are the figures who possess a clear vision of the project; they know how to fulfill the promise of happiness. While Guevara sees no possible materiality that could embody the high ideal of revolutionary love, Castro uses rhetorical resources that involve the disembodiment of the black woman's body—which is to say, this body is stripped of her history and other possible associations—to convey that ideal. Toward the end of "Palabras a los intelectuales," Castro tells the audience an anecdote in which he and other revolutionaries met an old black woman a few days before the event at the Biblioteca Nacional:

... una anciana de 106 años que había acabado de aprender a leer y a escribir, y ... [h]abía sido esclava, y nosotros queríamos saber cómo un esclavo vio el mundo cuando era esclavo.... Creo que puede escribir una cosa tan interesante que ninguno de nosotros la podemos escribir. Y es posible que en un año se alfabetice y además escriba un libro a los 106 años—¡esas son las cosas de las revoluciones!—y se vuelva escritora y tengamos que traerla aquí a la próxima reunión ... admitirla como uno de los valores de la nacionalidad del siglo XIX.... ¿Quién puede escribir mejor que ella lo que vivió el esclavo? ¿Y quién puede escribir mejor que ustedes el presente?

[A 106-year-old woman who had just learned to read and write ... [s]he had been a slave, and we wanted to know how a slave saw the world when he was a slave.... I think she can write something so interesting that none of us can write. And it's possible that she'll learn to read in a year, and, to top it off, write a book at 106 years old—This is the stuff of revolutions!—and become a writer, and we'll have to bring her here to the next meeting ... admit her as one of the values of nineteenth-century nationality.... Who better than she can write about what slaves experienced? And who better than all of you can write the present?] (Castro 1961)

In the stenographic version, applause and laughter are indicated whenever they were heard, and both were recorded right after “es posible que ... se vuelva escritora y tengamos que traerla aquí a la próxima reunión.” Even if her old age (106 years) is the evident reason for the surprise and laughter, her gender, race, and slave history make Castro's assertion miraculous, too: to include an ex-slave black woman among the group of Cuban intellectuals and artists. Furthermore, this black woman's body is only valuable for having been once an illiterate slave. Through his reductive anecdote about this body, Castro constructs a narrative that establishes the 1959 revolution as the culmination of the struggles for the nineteenth-century Emancipation and Independence Wars. In this way, the black woman's name, her many experiences, her stories, and her relationship to and practice of ordinary affection must be sacrificed for this national (revolutionary) narrative, which demands a higher kind of love.

It is very interesting to note that Castro's anecdote can be linked to the nationalist discourse that dominated Cuba between 1898 and 1959, a period that has been conveniently erased from the narrative of the Cuban Revolution. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Cuban intellectual elite imagined and promoted a *mulato* nation: the perfect fusion, and therefore reconciliation, between Hispanic and African heritages (Rivera Pérez 2011, 226–227). Nevertheless, even if the nationalization of African heritage in Cuba contrasted with developments in other Hispanic Caribbean islands where Hispanism was almost the sole source of nationalism during these same decades, the valorization of black culture did not translate into social equality between whites and blacks. Rather, this kind of nationalism became, at some points, a process by which an active disembodiment of black and *mulata* women also sought to fetishize them and sell them as pleasurable commodities associated with the island.<sup>4</sup>

The difference between the early twentieth-century nationalistic rhetoric and the narrative that emerged after 1959 is that the revolution's official discourse affirmed the end of racial and all other forms of socioeconomic inequality in Cuba (De la Fuente 2001; Sawyer 2006; Casamayor-Cisneros 2010), insisting on erasing all kinds of difference in furtherance of only one dominant category: revolutionaries. Even though Castro eventually addressed the subject of racism in Cuba in interviews and speeches focused on other topics, none of his texts exclusively engaged with this problem and its consequences (Martínez 2007). Moreover, official revolutionary rhetoric still considers it an act of treason to the revolution to talk in an international forum about prejudices such as racism in Cuba.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, Casamayor-Cisneros's analysis of black subjectivities and the Cuban Revolution could be extended to consider the place assigned to black intellectuals within a wider network of thought: “the black subject will be integrated only when he is capable of ... leaving behind the ‘atavisms’ attributed to his race and culture, and devoting himself completely to nationalist, revolutionary, and finally Marxist ideologies” (2010, 106). It seems that the black intellectual can speak only if she refrains from underlining, analyzing, and speaking about/through the politics that have marked her body.

The revolutionary discourse also contended that the new order ended gender inequality. In 1960, the official Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC) was born; since then, membership has been mandatory for all women over the age of fourteen. As Mabel Cuesta (2012, 13–14) has analyzed, the FMC's main purpose

<sup>4</sup> Of course, the fetishization (product of a disembodiment/embodiment process) of black and *mulata* women did not emerge in twentieth-century Cuba. This racist phenomenon dates back at least to the fifteenth century and has long since been tied to the imperial gaze of “discovering” supposedly new (exotic) lands. Since the very first accounts by European travelers, these “new” lands were gendered as female and became “porno-tropics”—“a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (McClintock 1995, 22). As many scholars have concluded, this colonial gaze has been culturally engraved across geographies and has persisted in the sexualized representation of black women's bodies throughout history and until today (hooks 1992, Kuhn 1994, Fleetwood 2011, and Cobb 2015). Even as the end of the nineteenth century brought emancipation (1888) and independence (1902) to Cuba, the tourist industry was probably the most tangible demonstration of how the fetishization of tropical land and women of color was essential to maintaining colonial relationships, controlling economic development, and perpetuating a national hierarchy based on class, race, and gender oppression. As the Caribbean was becoming the perfect “male heterosexual Garden of Eden, crammed with sensuous delights ready for consumption” (Pritchard and Morgan 2000, 895), thousands of tourists had already shown a preference for Cuba as early as 1925, thanks to the promotion of “romance, adventure, and revelry” (Schwartz 1997, 42).

<sup>5</sup> In a case that has some parallels with the Padilla affair (1971), the publication of Roberto Zurbano's “For Blacks in Cuba the Revolution Hasn't Begun” (2013) in the *New York Times* generated a backlash on the island that led up to Zurbano's firing from his position as editor in chief at Casa de las Américas, the government's biggest publishing house. Even if Zurbano did not end up in prison like Heberto Padilla, he was ostracized by the official intellectual community, and his article was subjected to extensive criticism in intellectual publications. In addition, while Padilla received worldwide support from the international intellectual community, Zurbano's odyssey was mainly covered by Cuban intellectuals and the network of black intellectuals in the Americas who publish in *AfroCubaWeb*. *Negracubana* is among the blogs that has covered the Zurbano affair, publishing many of Zurbano's writings. The *Afro-Hispanic Review* published a dossier, “El caso Zurbano” (vol. 33, no. 1, spring 2014), encompassing the most relevant articles to cover different perspectives of this debate.

was to build the perfect “compañera” for the “hombre nuevo”: that is, a Cuban woman who would no longer be associated with the figures of the prostitute, the housewife, or the illiterate. Until 2007, the FMC logo reinforced this association, depicting a “guerrillera” with a baby in arms. What is more, as Cuesta (2012, 13–14) also points out, the creation of the FMC and the compulsory participation of women in its ranks eliminated all previously existing women’s organizations in Cuba—as well as the chance to create new ones that would be independent from the state. Thus, it effectively erased an entire history of women’s struggles and their work to combat the patriarchy. Once again, women had to be stripped of their stories in order to embody the nation’s revolutionary ideal.

Within the Cuban sociocultural hierarchy, therefore, black women confront everyday life battles because of their race and gender. More than five decades after the revolution, as Cuban sociologist Mayra Espina points out, socioeconomic success and failure in contemporary Cuba are gendered and colored: the profile of the winner, or the true revolutionary, is “un hombre más bien joven, con calificación media y alta, blanco y preferentemente de origen social colocado en grupos de técnicos, intelectuales, directivos” (a younger man, middle to upper class, white, and preferably from a technical, intellectual, or managerial background) (Espina et al. 2011, 63). The delayed promise of happiness of the revolution never came; but constant reward has been granted to white male bodies, while black female bodies are the ones enduring the sacrifice.

This racial and socioeconomic reality is also reflected in Internet access and use across the island. By 2015, only 25 percent of the Cuban people had access to the Internet, and most of that 25 percent gained access through their workplaces or the cybercafés overseen by ETECSA (Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba), where they have to pay two CUC (Cuban Convertible Pesos), or 10 percent of a salary in Cuba, for just one hour of Internet access (“Estrategia nacional para el desarrollo de la infraestructura de conectividad de banda ancha en Cuba,” 4). Within this panorama, a few technology specialists enjoy the high-status privileges of global connectivity and free information access, and “they are young, skilled, and ‘on the inside’ of strategic awareness” (Venegas 2010, 4), a profile that coincides with that of the Cuban winner in Espina’s description. Therefore, black women are the most likely to be excluded from web navigation, participation, and networking.

While the situation is improving, as more Wi-Fi spots are opening in public spaces across the island (Pérez 2015), a heated debate continues on the status of the Internet in Cuba—a debate centered on how information access will be controlled and channeled, as well as on how democracy and expression will be enacted outside hierarchical bounds. In Claudio Peláez Sordo’s documentary film *BlogBang Cuba* (2014), which examines the achievements and shortcomings of the Cuban blogosphere, Milena Recio, a social communication scholar at the Universidad de La Habana, states that blogging in Cuba responds to “un atragantamiento que había que sacar” (a blockage that needed to be removed). Regardless of each blog’s political stance (pro- or antigovernment), people wanted to speak and be heard. Furthermore, Recio argues that these new possibilities for and implementations of global democracy have not exclusively centered on the exhausted pro/antigovernment debate. I coincide with Recio in that one of the most interesting forms of online activism at work in Cuba is the one questioning structural racism on the island and in the Americas. For blogger Francisco Rodríguez, featured in the documentary and author of *Paquito, el de Cuba*, another important form, placing Cuba at the center of the global blogosphere, focuses on advocacy for LGBTQ rights. Álvarez Ramírez’s *Negracubana* resides precisely at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality politics, and her cyberfeminism has been formulating another kind of revolutionary love that works against the revolution’s delayed promise of happiness for black women.

## The Black Woman’s Body and the Inhabitation of the Intersection in Cuba and Abroad

To read Álvarez Ramírez’s blogging requires that we read her intellectual discourse in connection to the authors she refers us to as well as to the ones who are silently built into her critique. Very much like Fanon and Lorde, her everyday life experiences as a black woman in Cuba and Germany become the focal point of her analysis and her propositions. At other times, her expressed intertextuality with Cuban figures, such as Piñera and Morejón, serves to advance ideas that already inhabit poem lines and that may be elusive otherwise. The analysis of both writing strategies reveals the complex operation of systemic racism and sexism and how these systems shift according to specific contextual characteristics. This kind of reading also reveals the varying tactics used to live in the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality.

For example, some of Álvarez Ramírez’s blog entries discuss her seventeen-month experience in Germany, and, much like Fanon in Paris in the 1950s, she says that she has become conscious of her body as she meets the European white gaze. For Fanon, under the white gaze, the black body becomes a negation of the

white body and therefore blackness is a handicap. Under the white gaze, then, the black bodies gradually change their relationship with space and time, because they become conscious of their skin's inadequacy (Fanon [1952] 2008, 91). Riding the Parisian Metro, Fanon realizes that nobody wants to sit beside him. The white gaze's fear turns into disgust for the black body: "Instead of one seat, they left me two or three. ... I approached the Other ... and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea" ([1952] 2008, 92). Disgust and fear are alerts that warn against possible contagion; there should be no proximity to the black body. The physical imprint of disgust intensifies the sensation of alienation of the self from his/her own body.

When reflecting on her time in Germany, Álvarez Ramírez seems to echo Fanon's particular sense of alienation. While riding the Hanover Stadtbahn, she needs to remind herself constantly that she cannot dance to the music she is listening to, because it is "cívicamente incorrecto" (civically incorrect) to move her body as she did in Cuba, where "[comenzaba] moviendo la cabeza, hasta que mis caderas y mis pies respond[ía]n" (I began by moving my head, until my hips and feet caught on).<sup>6</sup> Even when she contains herself and simply nods her head to the rhythm of the music, "la gente me mira como si estuviera en el medio de un ataque de epilepsia" (people look at me as if I were having an epileptic seizure). In their interaction, music and the body create an intimate knowledge based on emotions and memories—but in the context of the German train, the manifestation of this knowledge through the black female body is read as a disease or a handicap. The perception of the black female body as a handicap is also extended to the geography of the Caribbean, a region that seems to belong to "el planeta Marte" (Mars), because it cannot be part of the America they have imagined; that is, the United States. Her body, geography, and language become a point of discussion on board the train: "En una oportunidad, una señora alemana me preguntó ... que por qué yo hablaba castellano si en España no había negros" (Once, a German woman asked me ... why I spoke Spanish if there were no blacks in Spain). This confusion, as Álvarez Ramírez identifies it, ultimately leaves the text open-ended: she declines to comment any further, concluding "Huelgan los comentarios" (No comments are necessary). Even if, like Fanon, Álvarez Ramírez understands that the white gaze is framing her body through racist structures, she also recognizes—unlike him—that she has experienced this structuring before, in the Caribbean context. After all, as we saw in Castro's anecdote, the only way the black woman's body can become part of the revolution is through a process of disembodiment/embodiment that will seek to inspire true revolutionaries, that is, white males. This is why additional comments are unnecessary: the racist framing of her black woman's body is all too familiar.

In other entries, she further reflects on this familiar feeling and on how the Cuban Revolution failed to address the systematic racism and sexism she has experienced since girlhood. By talking about the intersectionality of race and gender, she complicates Fanon's analysis, too, which is centered on the black man's body and loses perspective when talking about gender and the process of *mulataje* in the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> Álvarez Ramírez, who has acknowledged the FMC as a fundamental experience in her feminist formation, has been critical of the government's continued emphasis on traditional gender roles. In one of the anecdotes that open many of her blog entries, she remembers a FMC conference in which Castro distributed pressure cookers to the women in attendance—a gesture that denoted the sinuous relationship between patriarchy and the revolution. Yet she is even more critical of the silence and paralysis that this relationship has imposed on the FMC: "Ninguna de nosotras se paró a explicarle [a Castro] que ... [n]o necesitábamos cazuelas, necesitábamos menos patriarcado y más tiempo para nosotras mismas." (None of us paused to explain to Castro that ... we didn't need pots, we needed less patriarchy and more time for ourselves).<sup>8</sup> For Álvarez Ramírez, then, this relationship is what keeps the FMC from actively including other women and their experiences, which in turn has produced a predominantly conservative manifestation of feminism, one still engaged in a binary debate on gender roles (without acknowledging the complex intersectionality between gender, race, sexuality, and other body politics).

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "Pequeños detalles que me recuerdan que vivo en Alemania y no en Cuba." *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, August 14, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2015/03/15/pequenos-detalles-que-me-recuerdan-que-vivo-en-alemania-y-no-en-cuba-2/>.

<sup>7</sup> I am referring here to *Black Skin, White Masks*'s second chapter, "The Woman of Color and the White Man," where Fanon develops a critical reading of Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis martiniquaise*. For Fanon, true love will never be possible between a woman of color and a white man. Rather, such a relationship denotes the woman's self-hatred toward her blackness, and so, an inferiority complex ([1952] 2008, 24–44).

<sup>8</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "Disidencias: El socialismo no es suficiente," *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, March 8, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/03/08/disidencias-el-socialismo-no-es-suficiente/>.

It is in this complication of the revolution's vision of what true revolutionaries must do for Cuba and in her navigating an intersectionality that Fanon missed that I see a dialogue between Álvarez Ramírez's and Lorde's ideas. While Fanon explored a first encounter with the white gaze as an adult, Lorde's anecdotes showed what it means to be shaped by racism since girlhood and as a black woman. As an adult, Fanon was able to put the painful moment on the Paris Metro into words, even if it meant acknowledging a loss of the self in being configured by racism. What happens, then, when the self cannot make sense of the experience, when she is only left with a sensation of having done something wrong? Lorde (1984, 171–172) establishes that, when we are not able to name or recognize pain, it becomes suffering, which in turn becomes anger, an emotion that has kept black women alive but that also pits them against each other. While Fanon's text ended in a scene where suffering and anger engulfed the subject—"Not responsible for my acts, at the crossroads between Nothingness and Infinity, I began to weep" (Fanon [1952] 2008, 119)—Lorde proposes that black women need to see "eye to eye" with and within themselves in order to break through these emotions. For Lorde (1984, 173), mothering is the way to see eye to eye, and this mothering must be an act of love both for the self and for the others we see in the mirror of suffering: "I affirm my own worth by committing myself to my own survival, in my own self and in the self of other Black women ... being able to recognize my successes, and to be tender with myself, even when I fail." It is by seeing eye to eye that black women can "establish authority over our own definition" and grow a new (renewed) self.

Álvarez Ramírez's blogging also dwells in this sense of love as a collective political force proposed by Lorde and elaborates on ideas that address the specificity of the black woman in Cuba. Her life in Germany and online networking, which has been key for her enhanced knowledge of black women's experiences in other geographies, help her to establish a comparison between what is left to do in Cuba and what is happening in the rest of the world. In particular, however, her readings of Cuban literature and, and as we have seen, her sociohistorical analyses, which always start with a personal anecdote, inform her political position regarding the revolution's achievements and failures in terms of body politics. I believe that her intertextuality with Piñera and Morejón, for example, positions her blogging as a skilled intellectual discourse that knows how to enter and exit the labyrinth of the pro-/antirevolution debate.

In a blog entry, Álvarez Ramírez questions how traditional feminism in Cuba has alienated lesbian feminists. In a beautiful moment of intertextuality with Piñera's poem *La isla en peso* ([1943] 2000), she declares:

En nuestra isla, que además de estar rodeada de agua, vive la maldita circunstancia del machismo y el sexismo por todas partes, existen ideas en el imaginario popular que cuestionan la condición de mujer de las lesbianas ... convirtiéndolas en un ser raro, negativamente masculinizado, estéril.<sup>9</sup>

[On our island, which, besides being surrounded by water, is afflicted by the damned circumstances of *machismo* and sexism everywhere, ideas exist in the popular imaginary that question whether lesbians are even women ... turning them into strange beings, negatively masculinized, sterile.]

Álvarez Ramírez's appropriation of probably the most memorable lines in *La isla en peso* should not come as a surprise: "La maldita circunstancia del agua por todas partes/me obliga a sentarme en la mesa del café" (The damned circumstance of water on all sides/forces me to sit on the coffee table) (Piñera [1943] 2000, 37). Piñera, an author whose poetry was systematically chastised and silenced by critics and institutions in Cuba (Anderson 2005, 35–36), wrote a poem that denounced colonialism, imperialism, racism, capitalist productivity, and cultural stasis. In the poem, subjects on the island feel the entrapment of a daily routine that has a history of slavery and forced labor while they also need to keep remembering/tracing/cutting the edges of "la isla más bella del mundo" (the most beautiful island in the world), as it has been taught to them to repeat *ad nauseam* (Piñera [1943] 2000, 43). Resorting to a language full of "grotesque images ... and copious vulgarisms" for its time (Anderson 2005, 34), *La isla en peso* explores the paradoxes of an imperfect culture (Jambrina 2009). As the poem advances through the hours of the day, the night becomes a rebellious time, where bodies copulate as they please, eroticism becomes a political force (Rojas 2002, 258), and, instead of science, sex becomes the site that promises freedom (Vitier 1970, 407).<sup>10</sup> The eternal cycle between the four moments of the day—which alternate between dawn, noon, dusk, and night—locates the poetic voice in a present time that remembers, lives, and foresees. If at times the poem "exposes

<sup>9</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "¿Y las lesbianas feministas cubanas dónde están?" *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, July 4, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/07/04/y-las-lesbianas-feministas-cubanas-donde-estan/>.

<sup>10</sup> Vitier's statement intends to be critical of Piñera's poem; but I find it to be a compliment.



a bloody past of conquest and a cursed future that will arise from the present circumstance" (Quiroga 1990, 279), it also does not let us reside in the possibility of damnation or salvation. After all, the cycle goes on and so do the paradoxes of an impure and imperfect island.

Furthermore, by resorting to Piñera's poem, Álvarez Ramírez is grounding her writing within a tradition of queer literature and, most importantly, of queer intellectuals who have been ostracized in Cuba due to their sexualities and their writings' topics. It is in this vein that we should interpret the fact that both Piñera's poem and Álvarez Ramírez's blog entry contain the line that says "la eterna miseria que es el acto de recordar" (Piñera [1943] 2000, 37). At dawn, in *La isla en peso*, remembering in the present means misery, because it evokes past pleasurable moments for which laborious (queer) bodies will have to wait yet another day. Álvarez Ramírez, however, situates that misery in the opposite experience: a pleasurable (queer) present in Germany brings back past frustrations and anger. This chiasmus between the two authors' texts points toward their emotional overlap: a profound knowledge of the Cuban paradox, that within the "maldita circunstancia" of entrapment (by cultural homogenization, patriarchy, racism, homophobia, etc.) lies the potentiality of unforeseen emergencies, anchored on intersectionality, like the beast of pleasure described in Piñera's poem.

Álvarez Ramírez's blog entries describe pleasant memories of Cuba, too, and these are related to everyday life experiences with family and friends. One of these memories comes to her through Morejón's "Mujer negra," a poem that moves the blogger to tears, because "no habla de nosotras como víctimas, sino como guerreras, cimarronas, rebeldes" (it doesn't speak of us as victims, but as warriors, runaway slaves, rebels).<sup>11</sup> Morejón has been called by some the "New Woman" (Jackson 1999, 104), in reference to (and to complement) Guevara's *hombre nuevo*. This vision of Morejón as an Afro-Cuban woman who is also a true revolutionary does not take into consideration, however, the twelve-year period during which she could not publish a single poem because her poetry was targeted as *non grata* (Cordones-Cook 2009, 50).<sup>12</sup>

"Mujer negra," probably Morejón's best-known poem, comes through the poetic voice of a black woman who becomes the leading figure of Cuban history in three key moments: the kidnapping in Africa and the Atlantic passage into slavery in the Americas, the nationalist movement and War of Independence, and the revolution. Even though the poem seems to be a repetition of the official history as taught by the government, the literary discourse proposes a kind of narrative that focuses on what has been left out of the official one: the black woman experience (Sanmartín 2011, 444). In this sense, if the old black woman in Castro's anecdote is nameless and without stories, Morejón's poem ignites a new kind of revolution, one centered on the body and its history. It is then not surprising that feminist Álvarez Ramírez relates Morejón's historical account to her intimate love for herself, her mother, her grandmother, and a whole genealogy of black women:

Me reconozco en él [in the poem]; también a mi madre que se partió el lomo educando a cuatro hijas y un hijo y a mi abuela, quien al ser la única hembra de ocho hermanos no pudo llevar el apellido de su padre. Todas y cada una de las mujeres de mi familia hemos sido como la mujer negra del poema de Nancy.

[I recognize myself in it [the poem]; I also recognize my mother, who broke her back raising 4 daughters and a son, and my grandmother, who, as the only girl among 8 siblings, couldn't carry on her father's name. Each and every woman in my family has been like the black woman of Nancy's poem.]

Here, in the combination between a national history (re)inscribed through/in black women's bodies and the intimacy of an "I" who establishes an affective "we" with black women (even with "Nancy"), we witness what Lorde called "mothering," seeing "eye to eye" with and within themselves. Compassion and empowerment emerge from the intertextuality that Álvarez Ramírez establishes with Morejón, as does a genealogy of stories that provides a tradition of self-knowledge. Names, stories, and relationships point to a network that feels, works, and produces beyond a historical hiatus like the Cuban Revolution. And black women's bodies only embody themselves.

<sup>11</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "Ese poema de Nancy me puede hacer llorar," *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, February 11, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/02/11/ese-poema-de-nancy-me-puede-hacer-llorar/>.

<sup>12</sup> That period coincided with a time when there was a tense relationship between the revolution's white hierarchy and national and international black intellectuals, who were frustrated with the empty wording of antiracist pronouncements from the government (Cordones-Cook 2009, 44–60).

## From Mothering to Polyamory: A Cyberfeminist Proposition for/from the Black Woman's Body

While the founding discourses of the Cuban Revolution establish love for *la patria* or *la revolución* as a high ideal, Álvarez Ramírez views love as a revolution in itself. More specifically, she proposes polyamory as the philosophy and practice that will renew the fight against the patriarchy. Polyamory, which offers no promises of happiness, invests instead in enjoying the present and in what Álvarez Ramírez ventures to define as “amar multitudinariamente” (loving multitudinously).<sup>13</sup> Love is a revolution unto itself in that it constantly changes as everyday life generates new experiences. Love, then, is a present and communal emotion. It can also be virtual, which is why Álvarez Ramírez’s blog is titled “más allá de los límites de tu cuerpo” (beyond the limits of your body): because love is “la posibilidad de amar sin límites, sin condiciones y aun sin la presencia de la persona amada ... el vínculo trasciende al deseo sexual” (the possibility of loving without limits, without conditions, and even without the beloved’s presence ... the bond transcends sexual desire). Thus, we can also see this stance as a cyberfeminist proposition; it, too, concerns this virtual community gathered around *Negracubana*, grounded in an intimacy that does not require physical bodies—even if at its very center resides the empowered black woman’s body.

Nevertheless, how can such a love revolution—centered on the black woman’s body—be effected through digital networking? What are the implications of this digital disembodiment? Although the phenomena of disembodiments are always at play in any kind of representation (as we can see in Castro’s anecdote), virtual reality has complicated and multiplied the instances of effects like phantasmagoria, simulation, and prosopopoeia. Precisely, Álvarez Ramírez has embraced cyberfeminism as the philosophy and politics that inform her blogging, because this kind of feminism focuses on the challenges and possibilities posed by the conjunction between the body and the Internet, a connection that radicalizes the performance of body politics (race, gender, and sexuality, for example). In “¿Ciberfeminismo en Cuba?,” a presentation at the LASA Congress, she directed her audience to Haraway’s ideas and the Australian collective VNS Matrix’s practice.<sup>14</sup>

In *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway proposed the image of the cyborg in order to contemplate a kind of futuristic context that by 1991 was almost a tangible present. A cyborg is defined as a “hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction [that] has no origin story ... [and] is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity” (Haraway 1991, 149–151). In her text, Haraway draws from women-of-color feminisms, such as Lorde’s, to better articulate the functionality and effects of the cyborg. By resignifying Lorde’s powerful title *Sister Outsider*, Haraway thinks the politics of the cyborg as indebted to the notion of an “outsider identity,” whose writing “is about the power to survive” (1991, 175). Therefore, *A Cyborg Manifesto* is not proposing a disembodied utopia; on the contrary, the image of the cyborg radicalizes the effects of gender embodiment as a fixed male/female binary. The cyborg also reminds us of the multiple body politics that crisscross women’s bodies.

Haraway’s ideas have been fundamental for feminist activists working and networking on the Internet. VNS Matrix, for example, has rethought her theoretical concept of the cyborg and deployed it through digital art. Written in a collective voice, their “Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century” (1991) stresses the centrality of the vagina, which will mediate their art and politics and transform them into a source of “jouissance, madness, poetry” that will operate as a virus. In the manifesto, words like “rupturing,” “sabotaging,” “infiltrating,” “disrupting,” “disseminating,” and “corrupting” evoke the ambition of a hacker who seeks to alter a structure or a system, but who also follows a political conviction; in this case, feminism (VNS Matrix 1991). The communal, artistic, and political nature of VNS Matrix also best describes Álvarez Ramírez’s own practice of cyberfeminism.

In her presentation at LASA, Álvarez Ramírez deployed her critique of structural racism to impart an Afro-Cuban perspective to the premises of cyberfeminism. According to this blogger, concrete cyberfeminist efforts are those destined to create safe online networks where women can openly discuss any issue without being threatened. In examining the specificities of Cuban cyberfeminism, Álvarez Ramírez explained that Cuban websites have displayed ideas and practices that, whether consciously or not, have shared cyberfeminist goals: discussions on women’s professional advancement in the workplace, debates about sexual health and reproductive rights, exchanges and analyses of women’s everyday experiences, and reflections on feminist philosophies. For Álvarez Ramírez, all of these online interventions have increased the number of “voces con

<sup>13</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “Amar más allá de los límites de tu cuerpo,” *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, January 28, 2015, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2015/01/28/amar-mas-alla-de-los-limites-de-tu-cuerpo/>.

<sup>14</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “¿Ciberfeminismo en Cuba?,” *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, May 13, 2013, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2013/05/13/ciberfeminismo-en-cuba-mi-ponencia-para-lasa-2013/>.

criterios alternativos que han dinamitado los paradigmas tradicionales del poder, en una isla donde cada día es un reto conectarse al Internet” (voices with alternative criteria that have dynamited the traditional paradigms of power, on an island where every passing day presents a challenge to connect to the Internet).<sup>15</sup> For Álvarez Ramírez, queer black feminists have been the most eager contributors to the construction of such networks as well as the effort’s primary beneficiaries.

In this sense, *Negracubana’s* main contribution to cyberfeminism is to form a black feminist community—and, especially, to network with all those who share “la vivencia de ser mujeres que ‘gustan de papayas,’ la libertad física y de pensamiento, el amor [y] la emigración” (the experience of being women who “like papaya,” physical and intellectual liberty, love, and emigration).<sup>16</sup> Álvarez Ramírez uses this communal “vivencia” as a starting point that can bring her readers and listeners into contact with the Afro-cyberfeminist critique. Similar to Lorde, her revolutionary proposition will center on loving the black woman’s body, and, yet, this cyberfeminist will rely on digital networking to provide an additional layer of complexity to Lorde’s notion of mothering. For Álvarez Ramírez, the fluidity of polyamory will place black women in charge of their sexual pleasure and their own representations, something that will also function against the revolution’s discourse on love and sacrifice.

In *Negracubana*, this empowered embodiment and its love revolution are achieved through self-knowledge and the enjoyment of “our” sexualities. In a blog entry addressing masturbation, she describes herself as a “happy feminist”: an accomplished and independent woman who enjoys life. She credits this empowerment to the capacity of pleasuring “ourselves”: “no necesit[a]mos ni de un Dios ni un macho que nos indique ... cómo alcanzar nuestros orgasmos, esos que solo nosotras sabemos de qué van” (we don’t need a God or a man to tell us ... how to reach our orgasms, the ones only we know how to give ourselves).<sup>17</sup> In Álvarez Ramírez’s blogging, activism against structural racism starts by mothering “ourselves,” and self-knowledge must include self-pleasure in order to create a solidarity-driven network capable of envisioning new projects.

It is within this focus on new projects that we can understand *Negracubana’s* constant call for revamping prostitution, especially in Cuba. While the neoliberal logic of tourism disembodies black and *mulata* women to represent them as sexual products, Álvarez Ramírez devotes multiple blog entries to examining pornography and prostitution as industries that can be retaken by feminist thought and practices. She starts by redefining the words “puta” (slut) and “jinetera” (prostitute), which “hablan de mujeres que hacen de sus cuerpos lo que ellas quieren” (speak of women who make what they want of their bodies).<sup>18</sup> She insists that the Cuban state should protect sex workers, instead of judging them with a moral hypocrisy that condemns them and their work while still promoting Cuba as a sex tourism destination.

Intimacy once again plays a key role in Álvarez Ramírez’s interest in this topic. In “Jinetera,” an interview with an unidentified Cuban sex worker, she dedicates the blog to her dear friend “Nanny,” who was a psychiatrist and sex worker during the Special Period on the island.<sup>19</sup> With this dedication, Álvarez Ramírez reinforces her friendship, signals her feminist stance on the topic, and practices a mothering of black women’s sexualities. I would like to focus not on the interview per se but on the comments section, where a debate arises between those who consider prostitution a sign of social injustice and those who see it fundamentally as a matter of women’s power over their own bodies and sexualities. Among the commenters, two sex workers offer their testimonies, stressing that they chose this profession for multiple reasons—reasons that encompass both economic necessity and personal empowerment. One of them distinguishes between sex workers who answer to a man (or have a pimp) and those who oversee their own business. She declares: “muchas putas lo somos porque nos gusta. Independientemente de la solvencia, educación e instrucción que tengamos, abrazamos la profesión ... porque llena nuestras expectativas, nos gusta esa vida conociendo personas y lugares” (many of us are prostitutes because we like it. Besides whatever financial security, education, or instruction we might have, we embrace the profession ... because it meets our expectations, we like this life of getting to know people and places).<sup>20</sup> Álvarez Ramírez selects this comment and publishes it as another

<sup>15</sup> “¿Ciberfeminismo en Cuba?”

<sup>16</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “Krudas Cubensi: Rap desde las trompas de falopio,” *Pikara Magazine*, May 24, 2013, <http://www.pikaramagazine.com/2013/05/krudas-cubensi-rap-desde-las-trompas-de-falopio/>.

<sup>17</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “Tengo orgasmos, soy feminista y vivo happy,” *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, September 6, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/09/06/tengo-orgasmos-soy-feminista-y-vivo-happy-video/>.

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “Carita de pasaporte,” *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, October 29, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/10/29/carita-de-pasaporte-video/>.

<sup>19</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, “Jinetera,” *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, April 6, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/04/06/jinetera/>.

<sup>20</sup> Álvarez Ramírez, “Jinetera.”

blog entry, "Testimonio: 'Muchas putas lo somos porque nos gusta,'" where the discussion continues.<sup>21</sup> This publication shows an instance of how Álvarez Ramírez networks among women from different backgrounds and constitutes her community of readers and interlocutors. Sharing intimate memories, testimonies, and debates, she encourages this burgeoning community to discuss some of the thorniest topics in the Cuban society, such as prostitution. Furthermore, Álvarez Ramírez successfully alters the most predictable discourses on prostitution (as a moral or social disease) by offering texts that talk about black and *mulata* women's empowerment through taking control of their own sexualities.

All of these instances in Álvarez Ramírez's blogging show that, while the polyamory philosophy operates against patriarchy and any promise of happiness, cyberfeminism radicalizes its reach and effect by putting intersectionality at the center of the discussion of sex and love. Maybe *Negracubana's* most significant contribution to the Cuban context is broadening online networking in such a way that debates regarding the revolution and its unfulfilled promises for once, at a global scale, come to be centered on the Afro-Cuban woman's body. At the same time, she brings another layer of complexity to cyberfeminism as she uses it to open up the "maldita circunstancia" of the Cuban context by highlighting the empowered *guerreras* that, like in Morejón's poem, become agents in the processes of embodiment/disembodiment.

### Negracubana and the Post-1989 Intellectual: A Final Reflection

As I mentioned in the introduction to this essay, Álvarez Ramírez is an example to study when we talk about contemporary intellectuals in Latin America and the Caribbean. Post-1989 intellectuals, like her, have reinvented themselves, emerging from very specific communities that inhabit intersectionality and that share an interest to become active in topics that concern the materiality of everyday life and their bodies. Their productions have defied Ángel Rama's argument (2002): that the lettered city is responsible for producing catastrophic conditions for the real city's inhabitants (indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, peasants, workers, migrants, women, and queers). I believe that some contemporary intellectuals, like Álvarez Ramírez, inhabit a porosity of *vivencias* and emotions that lies between Rama's two imagined cities.

At the same time, online networking has become one of the most-used tools for organizing political resistance in the neoliberal context. What Álvarez Ramírez has in common with others networking around the commonality of body and everyday life politics is a profound understanding of the present. This understanding is what in turn gives her writings an in-depth insight into the crisis of a model (the 1959 Cuban Revolution) that never understood the potential of ordinary love. Since polyamory is the philosophy sustaining her writing, love cannot be disassociated from a sexual revolution. And at the center of *Negracubana* cyberfeminist work, the black woman's body operates her (dis)embodiments and enacts a fluid kind of love/sex for a "we" that finally can recognize itself in this "other" revolution.

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<sup>21</sup> Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, "Testimonio: 'Muchas putas lo somos porque nos gusta,'" *Negra cubana tenía que ser*, April 7, 2014, <https://negracubanateniaqueser.com/2014/04/25/testimonio-muchas-putas-lo-somos-porque-nos-gusta/>.

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