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## **From Tourist to Person: The Value of Intimacy in Touristic Cuba**

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**Abstract:** Building on tourism scholarship on existential authenticity, touristic intimacy, and the limitations of the tourist role, the article provides an empirically grounded analysis of how the value of intimacy was expressed and negotiated in the course of encounters between foreign tourists and members of the visited population in Cuba. Tourism related identifications in this Caribbean country are shaped by local notions of tourism hustling, and pose a challenge to the development of mutually gratifying relationships between tourists and Cubans. The exploration of Cubans' concerns and informal ways of approaching tourists, and of the ways in which friendships, partying, and sexual engagements between them were enacted, highlights the efforts of the protagonists of these encounters to achieve relationships that could help them move beyond negative identifications and lead to the recognition of their individuality and shared humanity as persons. Intimacy appears as a fundamental regime of value informing these processes. The reflections that the article develops on the concrete manifestations of intimacy in touristic encounters and the kind of alliances it prompted opens the way for further research on the role played by international tourism in the diffusion and actualization of this regime of value.

**Keywords:** Intimacy, Tourist, Individuality, Value, Cuba

### **Introduction**

‘For me you are not a tourist. You are a person, a human being!’<sup>i</sup> In the course of my fieldwork in Cuba, I repeatedly heard this statement from Cubans who were interacting with foreign tourists. Such a claim raises a series of questions that I would like to use as a point of departure for this article. What did such contrast between a tourist and a person entail? Why would anyone refer to it? And what were its effects on tourist-Cuban encounters? My aim here is to provide some answers to these questions, and address their implications for our understanding of tourism and the forms of subjectivity and regimes of value that can emerge from it. To do so, the article considers how the value of intimacy was expressed and intersubjectively negotiated in the course of encounters between foreign tourists and members of the visited population in Cuba<sup>ii</sup>. My argumentation will proceed inductively, and be grounded in the discussion of a range of empirical examples that bring us from the initial moments of such encounters to the establishment of friendships, festive, and sexual relationships.

To contrast a tourist with a person may seem rather striking to the reader. After all, aren't all tourists also persons? As other scholars of tourism have shown, it is rather common for the term 'tourist' to be 'imbued in contemporary understandings with a culturally derogative and negative connotation' (McCabe 2005: 85), and to be 'used as a derisive label' (Brown 1996:38). At least since MacCannell's groundbreaking publication of *The Tourist* (1976), there has been much recognition of the ambivalence and paradoxes inherent in the possibility of being someone – a tourist – that seeks authenticity in travel but is simultaneously aware that 'authenticity is only achievable outside the realm of the tourist role' (Olsen 2002: 160). Hom Cary's reflection on the 'tourist moment' addresses a similar tension in the 'interpellation' and 'collective subjectivity of the tourist' (2004:62). Her focus is on the serendipity of 'tourist moments' in which the tourists' search for authenticity is temporarily fulfilled (2004:66). The tourist moment is an instance of simultaneous interpellation and dissolution of 'the tourist as subject' (69); 'a liminal moment in which the "tourist has ceased to be a tourist" (Ryan 1991:35)' (64). In touristic encounters in Cuba, the enactment of intimacy enabled a similar dissolution of the tourist role, bringing to the fore other forms of subjectivity.

In theorizing the tourist moment, Hom Cary builds on Wang's conceptualization of 'existential authenticity' (1999), 'a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counterdose to the loss of "true self" in public roles and public spheres in modern Western society (Berger 1973)' (1999: 358). Proposing an alternative take to this notion, Olsen (2002) encourages us 'to pay attention to the actual contexts where' the creation of 'a feeling of authenticity in individuals' is at work (160). This author points to the need of moving beyond 'essentialist and existentialist perspectives that merely observe that such experiences are found' (ibid.) and result from the generalized alienation of the modern subject, advocating instead the adoption of a constructivist approach (Bruner 1994, Cohen 1988) that analyses 'these processes in their making' (165), in an empirically grounded manner. We rejoin here McCabe's call to investigate 'what people achieve by deploying concepts like 'tourist' in their constructions of themselves and the activities of others' (2005: 85). According to Olsen, 'the tourist role is one of several accessible roles' in tourism, one 'that individuals enter in distinct contexts and not an all-embracing feature imposed from a structural level' (169). He then goes on to consider experiences in tourism where the tourist role has been altered, dismissed, and altogether overcome. The value of such experiences, their 'authenticity' in Olsen's case, is intimately tied to this ability to go beyond such a role to enact other ones. Sant Cassia reflects on tourists in Malta striving to 'personalize their interaction' with hosts and 'transform their role' so as to become 'more individuals and less "mere tourists"' (1999:253); an assessment that leads him to consider that '[t]ourism aims at the individuation of the self through the authentication of experience' (ibid.).

While in this article I am not directly focusing on the issue of authenticity and its existential version, I find it useful to situate my argumentation in continuity with this scholarship, and in particular with the reflections on the perceived limitations of the tourist role and the ensuing drive to reach beyond it in order to access something of value.

Moving from philosophical reasoning to a more empirically grounded analysis, the article starts by showing the contingent emergence of the tourist role in a specific realm of tourism interactions in Cuba, considering how this role was shaped by local semantic fields and ways of framing, most notably Cuban notions of tourism hustling. Having recognized this relational characterization of the tourist, the core of the article focuses on how the enactment of intimacy in the course of interactions between foreign visitors and members of the Cuban population enabled its demise and the emergence of more valuable forms of subjectivity. Intimacy, in this sense, appears as a key regime of value informing these interactions and the subject formations that resulted from them<sup>iii</sup>.

In her insightful book *Being a Tourist*, Harrison (2003) develops the notion of ‘touristic intimacy’ and shows the importance that the value of intimacy can acquire as a driver of people’s travel. Drawing on her conceptualization, Frohlick (2007) argues that ‘[t]ouristic intimacy is ... part of a larger quest for connection that tourists seek in crossing international borders and is also the moral discourse that serves to justify international travel as a means through which cross-cultural understandings are gained’ (152). Harrison goes as far as suggesting that we reconsider MacCannell’s view of the tourist as seeking the authentic in the places visited by shifting the emphasis from places to ‘the sociability, perchance the intimacy, that one encounters while travelling’ (2003:90). While much of her focus is on the connections tourists make with other fellow travelers, Harrison also reflects on tourists’ expectations of ‘meeting the local people’ (2003: 61-66), their desire to engage, however briefly and incidentally, with residents of the visited destination. The value of such ‘human connection’ (see also Picard 2011) was cherished by Harrison’s research participants, as was the fact that, ‘[i]f only momentarily, each was separated out from the generic category of “stranger”, and seen as a real person’ (2003: 65). It is such desire ‘to connect with others ... to reaffirm a fuller sense of their individual humanity’ (2003:47, see the parallel with Sant Cassia’s remarks on individuation above) that I would like to retain here, given that it resonates strongly with my ethnographic material from Cuba. Whereas Harrison and her tourist interlocutors are left wondering about how the ‘locals’ viewed these same relations, my work in Cuba indicates that the claim of sharing a common humanity, and the related desire of individuation, were also strong among members of the visited population and an extremely valued dimension of such encounters (see Simoni 2013).

However, as far as touristic encounters in Cuba were concerned, achieving intimacy and a sense of human connection was not an easy task. Other framings and categorizations tended to prevail, obstructing tourists’ and Cubans’ recognition of each other as individuated persons. Rather than the generic category of ‘stranger’ referred to by Harrison, the more specific ones of ‘tourist’ on the one hand and of ‘*jinetero/a*’ (tourist-rider) or ‘tourist hustler’ on the other often stood in the way of achieving the kind of intimacies to which both tourists and their Cuban interlocutors could aspire<sup>iv</sup>. From the Spanish *jinete* (jockey, rider), *jineterismo* evoked in post-soviet Cuba the riding of foreigners for instrumental purposes, and was often associated with notions of tourism hustling and prostitution<sup>v</sup>. For Palmié (2004), in much popular discourse *jineterismo*

‘speaks to morally highly ambiguous notions about commoditized exchange, luxury consumption, and the creation of social identities through processes of objectification’ (243). Following this frame of legibility, the ‘victims’ of such objectification became the tourists, cast as preys of deceptive *jineteros* and *jineteras* who rode them for purely instrumental motives. As I have argued elsewhere (Simoni 2014), by the time I undertook my fieldwork in Cuba, the narrative of *jineterismo* had gone global, and informed tourists’ expectations towards the prospect of meeting Cuban people, generating scepticism, doubts, and a climate of suspicion about each other’s agendas.

Given this state of affairs, it is easy to imagine that the establishment of the kind of intimacy and human connection referred to by Harrison (2003) was not straightforward for most tourists in Cuba. The simple impression that Cubans were approaching you just as yet another mere tourist could immediately bring to life the spectre of *jineterismo*, and with it the worry of being treated as a type and instrumentalized as an object. The context in which I worked in Cuba seems to support the notion of the ‘tourist role ... as an asymmetrical counterconcept’ to the ideals of ‘intimacy and closeness in relations’ (Olsen 2002: 168). Therefore there was a need, for tourists and Cubans who cherished such ideals, to bring about other categories of the self (beyond those of tourist and *jinetero/a*) and other ways of engaging with each other - categories and ways that could enable their relationships to move forward without surrendering to paralyzing suspicion and mistrust

### **Addressing tourists as persons**

In his seminal article on Sri Lankan street guides, Crick remarks that ‘[t]ourists wary of being cheated in a foreign country may react gratefully to ‘Hello friend’, a common conversational opening by the street guides’ (1992: 139). In Cuba too, ‘*hola amigo*’ was a common way to address visitors in the streets. However, especially after a few days spent on the island, such immediate expressions of friendliness also contributed to raise doubts about the motives of the diffuse cordiality. Much like in the Turkish context in which Tucker carried out her research, where tourists were often ‘suspicious of the perceived over-friendliness of salesmen and waiters’ (2001: 880), visitors in Cuba too grew tired of Cuban’s over-friendly approaches. Accordingly, the question of how best to address visitors called for inventiveness and subtlety. With certain types of ‘openings’ (*entradas*) becoming more and more common and widespread – ‘hello friend’ and ‘where are you from’ the most frequent ones (see Simoni 2008a) - the impression of serendipity risked to fade away, together with the promise of a genuine and personal encounter with ordinary Cubans. Keeping such promise alive, Cubans deployed other approaches that preserved a sense of something special, of an encounter like no other.

Their ability to decode tourists’ behaviour and detect their potential interests could help such personalization. This is what Fernando, a self-professed *ex-jinetero* in his thirties, explained as he delighted me with a didactic tour of Havana, a tour enlivened by concrete examples of the approaches he would adopt. Passing by a tourist couple who were busy taking pictures on the Malecón, Havana’s famous seaside promenade, for instance,

Fernando told me how he could have opened an interaction. As if on his way somewhere, he would casually stop by and show some interest for the angle the tourists had chosen for their picture, dropping a remark on the practice of photography and his fondness for this art, and eventually adding a couple of tips and suggestions. This was likely to capture the tourists' attention, and enable him to move forward with a conversation. Similarly, tourists who were consulting a guidebook could be suitably approached by asking whether they needed any direction or help, and so on and so forth. More generally, Fernando made it clear through his various examples that understanding one's focus of attention and devising openings dotted with remarks and suggestions that fitted creatively into that focus was a smart and successful way of getting in touch with tourists. Again, what seemed very important was to avoid giving any hint of premeditations, any suggestion of being a full-time *jinetero* intent on deceiving the typical 'tourist dupe'. His openings were precisely designed not to give the impression of the well-scripted and predictable *jinetero*-type of approach. They were to be seen as a genuine expression of interest that treated each tourist as a particular individual, with his own specific personality, interests, and agendas.

For my friend Ernesto, a Cuban man in his twenties with whom I spent much time hanging around in Havana, what mattered most for success in engaging with foreign tourists was 'to be a mind' (*ser una mente*): being smart and intelligent, knowing about people, about relationships, about sentiments – 'working the truth' (*trabajar la verdad*) of these things. As he put it, the 'struggle' (*lucha*) to get tourists in Havana's streets (*en la calle*) – a competitive world full of 'wickedness' (*maldad*) – was a struggle in which the sharpest mind would prevail, in which the experience and knowledge gained *en la calle* became paramount. The source of many of his colleague's mistakes in dealing with tourists, according to Ernesto, was that they thought of themselves as superior, being vain (*vanos*) and looking down at tourists as if they were *bobos* (stupid, naïve). This was a major error of judgment, he maintained, and one that went on to colour Cubans' ways of relating with visitors, framing them in typifications and objectifications that the latter were deemed to sense and resent. Instead, advocated Ernesto, one had to remain open and respect the fully fledged humanity and individuality of every tourist. Such personalization was also a call, for tourists, to reciprocate by treating him in the same way, not as an alleged *jinetero* and 'hustler', but as a human being with comparable moral and emotional qualities, desires, and aspirations.

### **Friendship and mutuality among human beings**

As mentioned above, appeals to friendship were among the most common openings deployed by Cubans to catch the tourists' attention. Far from being straightforwardly endorsed by visitors, (over-)friendly openings could generate increased scepticism and suspicion, especially when deployed too loosely and without any apparent effort to substantiate them. Particularly among those tourists that spent several weeks travelling around Cuba, many were those who were led to conclude that Cubans met in the streets,

particularly in tourism areas, were generally interested in their money – ‘when they look at us they see the dollar sign!’ – and that this interest was often ‘hidden’ behind an exaggerated and contrived friendliness. The approach adopted thus seemed to rely on a ‘front-back’ opposition akin to that theorized by Goffman (1959), and further elaborated in MacCannell’s notion of ‘staged authenticity’ in relation to tourist settings (1973; 1976), the rationale being that behind Cubans’ ‘front’, behind their superficial ‘show’ of friendliness, lay the more ‘real’ ‘back’ of instrumental agendas.

The visitors’ reactions to such immediate professions of friendliness ranged from complete disregard for the Cuban at stake (it could be less embarrassing to pretend not to have heard a friendly call than to openly deny its significance) to more positive responses that granted them at least the benefit of doubt. In the latter case, even sceptical tourists could playfully get along with the relationships while remaining high on guard, keeping under check their engagements so as not to risk too much and incur too big a disappointment. On their side, Cubans could struggle to make sense of tourists’ engagements and to evaluate the intensity of their commitment. For them, the visitors’ scepticism, their inability to let go, ‘open up’ (*abrirse*), and trust them, could be rather disappointing, as it hampered the possibility of developing more gratifying and beneficial relationships.

In spite of widespread scepticism, many tourists I met also valued the idea of meeting the locals, of getting to know ordinary people, people with whom they could talk for instance about the realities of everyday life in Cuba, and develop relations that could help them move ‘backstage’, beyond the tautological connotations of the ‘tourist bubble’. Capitalizing on these expectations, Cubans could quickly remind tourists that they had come to Cuba to discover their country and its people, and therefore ‘had to’ meet and make friends with the locals. The right attitude prescribed here was to open up and trust, if one wished to gain access to the real Cuba and move beyond the glossy images of tourism brochures. Typical tourism narratives of cross-cultural communication and understanding were thus activated to build closer connections with tourists. These ‘friendliness-/trust-arousing’ discourses were constructing tourism, tourists and processes of touristification in their wake, affirming hierarchies between different tourist practices, and touching the sensitive issue of tourists’ agency and freedom.

Bringing the visitors’ attention to the limitations of the ‘typical-tourist’ role and its normative dimensions – in terms, for instance, of being channelled into the routes and circuits provided and suggested by the industry – these narratives tended to strike a right note, triggering sympathetic and consensual reactions. A common follow up to these encouragements to trust and make friends with ordinary Cubans were suggestions that opened up new fields of possibility, foreshowing for instance unforgettable and unique experiences off the beaten track. This was also when Cubans could try and take the lead in their relationship with visitors, at least in terms of decision making. Enacting the quintessential ‘local’ and banking on their insider knowledge, they would encourage their foreign companions to follow them not as tourists but as friends, to listen to their intimate stories of everyday Cuba and make the most of experiences out of the tourists’ reach.

Several foreigners I spoke to were seduced by such narratives and positively surprised by the immediate friendliness and helpfulness of their Cuban friends. Was this a Cuban typicality? As two French women told me, on their first approach Cubans seemed indeed to be extremely kind and welcoming, and it was impressive how one could get very quickly very deep in incredibly intense and intimate relationships (*ça va très vite très profond!*). Advising tourists on where to shop, eat and drink if they wished to save money, sharing confidences about the hardship of everyday life on the island, inviting visitors to have food in their homes or some ‘hidden’ restaurant that wasn’t in any official tourist map – by doing all that Cubans gained the amity, complicity and trust of their foreign partners, and were able to bring about other types of identifications that went beyond the typical ‘tourist’-‘*jinetero/a*’ dyad.

Generosity could easily be cast as an important indication of a genuine friendship. Among the people whom I noticed were particularly keen to invite and share with tourists what they had, were the members of the Rasta<sup>vi</sup> community that hung around Havana’s tourism areas. They were used to the company of young travellers and backpackers, which tended to have open-ended travel plans and looked forward to the possibility of engaging with locals and getting closer to their everyday lives. Converging with these tourists’ aspirations was the Rasta’s professed aversion for ‘touristy places’, and their praise of a simple lifestyle. Common were the critiques of the commercialism of tourism installations, as epitomized by those establishments that made business out of ‘prostitution’ and the selling of expensive and price inflated *mojitos*, the cocktail on which *jineteros/as* were allegedly gaining the highest commissions. As an alternative to this, the Rasta could suggest to gather collectively some money and purchase a bottle of rum for everyone to share, including the foreign friends. Something to ‘*compartir, a lo cubano*’ (‘share, the Cuban way’) sitting on the wall of the Malecón. When accompanying tourists, the emphasis would then be on going ‘to the places of the Cubans’, so that visitors could save money, avoiding expensive ‘tourist-only’ locations. ‘No one is a tourist with us; we are all the same, human beings’, was among the sentences supporting these endeavours. Such moments of friendship could be contrasted with the behaviour of other ill-intentioned Cubans, who treated tourists as dupes (i.e. as tourists) and brought them to expensive tourist bars and restaurants in return for commissions. Partaking in these moments of sociability with their Rasta companions, the visitors could easily give in the professed friendship.

This valorisation of an intimacy that strived to go beyond the tourist and *jinetero/a* typifications resonated strongly with Julien, a Canadian teenager with whom I spent a few days towards the end of his one month stay in Cuba. Julien had mismanaged his holiday budget and after a couple of weeks of excessive spending had had to rely, to get by, on the understanding and generosity of those Cuban people and friends who were able to recognise his predicament – his ‘being like them’, ‘having nothing’, as he put it when reflecting on his lack of economic resources. Among the many Cubans he had known, it was those who had been generous to him (occasionally offering a drink, some food) and had not treated him as a privileged tourist, which had become his friends. Such acts of



generosity had ‘warmed his heart’ (*chauffé le cœur*), and made him want to give back and reciprocate. After several disappointing encounters with ‘cheaters’ earlier in his journey, people who had treated him as a mere tourist, Julien had managed to discover ‘more authentic relationships’ and what he called ‘intimacy’: the state of ‘feeling good with somebody’ (*être bien avec une personne*).

In the sentence with which I opened this article – ‘for me you are not a tourist. You are a person, a human being!’ – the accent was once again on grounding relationships in the fundamental commonality of the people involved. Rather than being catalogued, discriminated, and targeted in dichotomous ways on the base of their assumed (privileged) status and the asymmetry of resources – so the reasoning went – tourists deserved to be recognized, understood, and treated for what they were as persons, with all their peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, and unique circumstances and ways of being (we can hear echoes here of Ernesto’s warning not to treat tourists as stupid rich *bobos*). This, of course, was also a call for tourists to reciprocate and do the same with their Cuban friends, as opposed to confining them to a world of *jineterismo* and *jinetero/a* identifications. The moral demand at stake here was for tourists to step out of a world governed by structural inequalities, of interpretations of each other’s behaviour in terms of inescapable instrumentality, and to commit oneself to a fully-fledged friendship; one that would respect the integrity of the other, its sheer complexity, and not reduce him or her to a type, a summative account, a partial representation and example of a more general pattern (see Throop 2014). We can read this as a call for openness, for partaking in a world yet unwritten and unscripted, full of generative potential in terms of ways of being and doing things together.

As I have elaborated elsewhere (Simoni forthcoming), by insisting on their commitment, or at least their human potential and aspiration to engage in a disinterested, sentiment based friendship, Cubans engaging informally with foreign visitors were striving to align their moral selves to those of their tourist friends, and thus lay claim to the possibility of being together in a shared social world. But this common world was not only a sought after ideal at a moral level; it was a more concrete aspiration too, and one that such friendships could also help bring a little closer. For one, in their attempts to cement intimate bonds with visitors, Cubans were also entangling them into the moral imperatives that came with fully-fledged friendship. Itself an ‘ethical demand’ (Zigon 2013), friendship, much like love (*ibid.*), called for a certain commitment and continuity in the relationships. The responsibilities tourists felt towards their Cuban friends could ultimately help the latter realize other socio-economic aspirations too: never again having to worry about being left in need with no one to turn to, or even being able to travel abroad thanks to a foreign friend. Tourists could help Cubans in this, and thus lead to a more tangible narrowing of inequalities too. All in all, such formulations of friendship strived to escape the reductive tourist-*jinetero/-a* dyad and its relational dead ends, to open up new realms of possibilities and unlock other horizons of becoming, imagining common trajectories for the future.

## **Festive communitas and serendipitous seduction**

An examination of the sociabilities that took shape in festive moments sheds light on the potential of these types of engagement to move beyond typified roles and towards more egalitarian subject formations. We enter here a realm of interaction that fits more closely those scholarly readings of tourism that emphasize its potential to engender states of ‘liminality’, ‘communitas’, and ‘existential authenticity’ (see Graburn 1983, 1989, Daniel 1996, Wang 1999, Hom Cary 2004, Kim and Jamal 2007). For my Cuban research participants, invitations to take part in parties and festivals were a common way to get in touch and initiate interactions with tourists. For Fernando, *irse de fiesta* (‘go party’) signalled a key turn in his interactions with foreigners, and was a top priority. Once partying was on the way ‘that’s it!’ he told me, implying that relationships were likely to get increasingly smooth and gratifying: tourists would leave worries behind, and become more affable and easy to deal with. A range of opportunities could open up, enabling people like Fernando to have fun and develop rewarding relationships. When Cubans noticed the tourists’ reluctance to ‘go with the flow’, prescriptive suggestions could easily emerge, encouraging visitors to enjoy and indulge in pleasure. The assumption here was that tourists were in Cuba to enjoy themselves: ‘*hay que disfrutar!*’ (‘one should enjoy!’), was the widespread encouragement. It was the trope of ‘tourism as the pursuit of pleasure’ that was called forth. ‘*La vida es un carnaval!*’ (‘Life is a carnival!’) as the refrain of a song that was often played for tourists put it.

It was common for Cubans who took it as their task to get tourists into a party mood to suggest a venue where people would be able to enjoy and indulge. Once there, they would willingly take on the role of hosts (or ‘second-order hosts’) mediating between tourists and bar tenders, waiters, cashiers, and other gatekeepers of goods and services. Their mediation could help keep the tourists ‘high’ (Graburn 1989, 2001), and minimize potential disruptions to their good time and euphoria, such as having to consult a map to know where to go, finding out how to get a drink, queuing to place orders, checking menus, prices and bills, and so on – a whole range of situations that could remind tourists of their being a tourist, of their difference, their potential ignorance of local customs, and the ensuing possibility of being cheated. Once festive happenings were in full swing and tourists-sponsored drinks and food flowed, this could also attract people from the immediate surroundings, particularly in open-air settings, who could take their chance and try to join in. The newly arrived would cheerfully stretch out glasses to be filled, toast with those already involved, hugging and shaking hands and blending into the intimate atmosphere of fun, hedonism and playfulness. But this is when tensions could also arise and boundaries materialize, leading doubtful participants – most notably the paying tourists – to wander about the relational idiom at stake: who is in this party? Who belongs to the group? Is this a genuine festive happening or are there other motives involved? Is someone profiting from the generous sponsoring of the tourist? Such questions could emerge and crack the party atmosphere, raising doubts about people’s intentionality and the values guiding their engagements, about the status of participants and their degree of

intimacy, threatening to bring the partners involved back to irreconcilable differences as tourists and Cubans.

The suspicion that someone could just pretend to be cheerful while actually having other agendas in mind could be particularly destabilizing for tourists. A daunting scenario was that Cubans could be working to intoxicate visitors with drinks or other drugs to profit from them – gaining commissions on the things purchased, inviting other Cuban friends at the tourists' expenses, and ultimately trying to get hold of their money and valuables. The emergence of these preoccupations could lead tourists from euphoria to anxiety, to the fear of losing control in the face of mischievous and calculating hustlers: from the feeling of festive *communitas* among equals, to one of unequal instrumental relationships and exploitation, there was a sense of a possible radical bifurcation in the regimes of value and modes of engagement at stake.

Partying and dancing in Cuba were also key arenas for seduction (Simoni 2012). In this respect, my explorations of sexual relationships between tourist men and Cuban women show that a favoured way of avoiding negatively connoted categorizations of 'sex tourism' and 'prostitution' was precisely to draw continuities between festivity and seduction, and sexual engagements. Recounting to me their sexual relations with Cuban women, several tourist men placed enormous value in all that happened before intercourse actually took place, namely the process of establishing a pleasant relationship, of having fun together, getting excited and creating a sense of intimacy. From that, and under the aegis of the same regime of value, the prospect of a genuine, spontaneous sexual relation could materialize. Many tourist men regretted the commoditization of relationships, and more particularly sexual relationships, in present day touristic Cuba. Ruggiero for instance, a young Italian I briefly met in a disco, nostalgically recalled how six-seven years earlier he had found Cuban people to be much more innocent and naïve, whereas now, excluding some areas outside Havana, they were becoming more and more 'like us', 'money oriented', and in the process of 'capitalistizing' [sic] (*capitalizzare*) themselves. It was a sense of ingenuousness, spontaneity, serendipity, and uncalculated relationships growing out of genuine desire to party, enjoy, and be seduced that people like Ruggiero seemed to value. Evoked here was also the notion of tourism, and of being like a tourist, as something antithetical to ideals of genuine intimacy (see Olsen 2002), an intimacy that found its authenticity in serendipity (Hom Cary 2004).

Smooth continuities and overlaps between a carefree and happy-go-lucky festivity, seduction processes, and sexual relationships were highlighted in the narratives of many tourists I spoke to. Ruggiero's view opposed a positively valued (albeit almost vanished) local culture of fun-loving, sexually permissive and 'hot' Cubans, to the negative transformations for which tourism was held responsible, more particularly its role in the commoditization of sexual relationships and booming prostitution. The solution was to get off the beaten track and seek the still hot Cuba (Simoni 2014a). We are confronted here with one of the longstanding tropes of tourism, characterized by MacCannell (1976) as the quest for authenticity, which in this case took the shape of a pursuit of 'authentic social relations and sociability' (Selwyn 1996: 8), an authenticity to be found in intimacy

(Harrison 2003:90), and more particularly in intimate relations with the authentic hot Cuban (Simoni 2013).

Besides these endeavours to move beyond tourism and the tourist role to access much valued forms of intimacy, I have also shown elsewhere (Simoni 2014a) that on some occasions the tourist position and the privileges that could ensue could also be embraced by visitors. Such was the stance of the self-professed 'sex tourist', who revelled in the pleasures that his tourist status granted, 'happy to be just a tourist' (McCabe 2005: 99, see also Brown 1996 and Selwyn 1996), and who scorned the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of other travellers. Mutual forms of intimacy did not seem to matter much, and intimacy, overall, ceased to be a big source of concern and value. What these last considerations point to is the importance, for researchers of tourism, to assess the extent of convergence and intersubjectivity in terms of the regimes of value that inform the establishment of encounters between tourists and the members of the visited population that engage with them. In Cuba, the existence or not of such a confluence was likely to inform the more or less mutual or exploitative character of touristic encounters.

## Conclusion

In the realm of tourism in Cuba, the spectre of *jineterismo* threatened to cast the partners involved in touristic encounters as a 'tourist dupe' on the one hand and as a 'deceptive hustler' on the other. The ethnographic material discussed above shows that rather than surrendering to these typifications and the limited scope for intimacy they granted, both tourists and Cubans strived to achieve other relational forms of subjectification and engagement. Intimacy was an ideal that the protagonists of touristic encounters often shared; a regime of value that informed the way their interactions took shape and developed. Their notions of intimacy often stood in direct opposition to those of 'tourism hustling', 'prostitution', and *jineterismo*, and brought to the fore a sense of common humanity, of being individuals that deserved to be recognized in all their particularity, unicity, and idiosyncratic qualities rather than as exemplifications of a type. In their ways of approaching tourists, many among my Cuban research participants recognized the importance of this, and called for tourists to treat them the same way, so as to open up possibilities for mutually gratifying relationships.

What can be identified here is tourism's tension and drive to surpass itself, or what has been considered, for more than half a century now, as a central paradox and dialectic informing the development of modern tourism. This is what Enzensberger (1996 [1958]) phrased as 'the yearning for freedom from society' being 'harnessed by the very society it seeks to escape' (129). The ethnographic material discussed above suggests that within touristic encounters lay the potential to break Enzensberger's 'vicious circle of [tourism's] ... inner logic and its confinement' (1996: 132), and that human relationships could not be reduced to any deterministic and ineluctable scenario. In the course of their interactions, tourists and Cubans I referred to in this article negotiated a common regime of value to inform their engagements. They generated alliances that went beyond any

reductive reading of touristic encounters (see Simoni 2014), and that emerged and gained force in relational opposition to tourism-related typifications. Such alliances took shape in a context of unregulated, informal encounters that were haunted by narratives of deception, cheating, and potential exploitation; a context in which the touristic connotation could easily act as a reverse Midas touch, spoiling and tarnishing everything it touched, and projecting a negative light on relations and the subjects involved in them – no longer persons nor humans, as the opening quote suggested.

The notions of friendship, festivity, and seduction that came about in the tourist-Cuban interactions tended to downplay inequalities, and all strived to infuse a sense of mutuality and reciprocity between the protagonists involved. Intimacy appeared as the key value that all these different types of relationalities held in common, on which both tourists and Cubans seemed to converge. However vague and ‘thin’, and perhaps also because of it, their ideals of intimacy acted as a sort of ‘lingua franca in a cultural borderland’ (Mattingly 2006), a minimal common view that enabled them, at the very least, to overcome the limitations of the ‘tourist’ and ‘hustler’ typifications that threatened them. The role played by international tourism, and more particularly by the kind of encounters considered here, in the diffusion, actualization, and negotiation of these ideals of intimacy certainly deserves closer scrutiny.

Such intimacy, as a regime of value on which tourists and Cubans seemed to converge, also carried implications that recent anthropological literature on love may help us elucidate. The ability to engage in ‘romantic’ ‘selfless’ ‘pure’ love has been considered a key marker of modernization, and of being an autonomous and self-determined subject<sup>vii</sup>. According to Povinelli (2006) it is precisely in love – and in the notions of intimacy considered in this article, we may add – that one may ‘locate the hegemonic home of liberal logics and aspirations’ (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 intimacy considered in this article and the related forms of subjectification they afforded seem all the more clear. If the protagonists of touristic encounters wished to overcome tourism related identifications and to engage with each other on the grounds of their individuality and common humanity, there could be hardly any better path to do so than through a common infatuation with the value of intimacy.

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<sup>i</sup> All the empirical quotes appearing in this article have been translated into English by the author, and are based on the twelve months ethnographic fieldwork, mainly participant observation, on which the research is grounded, took place between 2005 and 2013 mainly in the capital Havana and in the rural town of Viñales (approximately 200 km West of the capital) and the beach resort of Playas del Este (about half an hour by car from Havana). on recollections after the events took place.

<sup>ii</sup> The twelve months' ethnographic fieldwork (mainly participant observation) on which the research is grounded took place between 2005 and 2013 in Havana, the rural town of Viñales (approximately 200 km West of the capital) and the beach resort of Playas del Este (about half an hour by car from Havana).

<sup>iii</sup> Other regimes of value, most notably an economic one, also played an important role in touristic encounters in Cuba (see Simoni 2014). Notwithstanding the importance of understanding the articulations of these different regimes, and of the competing modes of engagement they informed (see Simoni 2013), in this article I will predominantly focus on the value of intimacy.

<sup>iv</sup> I have discussed elsewhere (Simoni and McCabe 2008) how, as a foreigner that frequented tourism locations in Cuba, I was also caught in these framings and categorizations, and how this shaped the nature of my fieldwork and of my relationships with Cuban research participants. The anthropologists' longstanding reluctance to be identified with tourists (see Crick 1995) is another theme that would deserve consideration here, and to which the reflections on intimacy developed in this article could also contribute.

<sup>v</sup> At the end of the 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Union prompted a terrible economic crisis in Cuba. From then onwards, the phenomenon of *jineterismo* acquired increased visibility, as more and more members of the Cuban population, especially among the younger generations, saw in informal engagements with tourists a way to satisfy their needs, desires, and aspirations. Scholars have pertinently emphasized how the designation of *jineterismo* remains largely contested and tends to operate along discriminatory lines of race, class, gender, and nation (Berg 2004; Cabezas 2009; Fernandez 1999; Simoni 2008).

<sup>vi</sup> The 'Rasta' I got to know in tourism milieus in Havana were mainly Afro-Cuban men adopting a subculture style that may be summarily characterized as valorising blackness and Afro-related cultural expressions, sporting dreadlocks and Rastafari-inspired accessories and clothing, and privileging a laid-back approach to tourists. These people generally self-identified, and were seen by others, as Rasta.

<sup>vii</sup> 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).