

Counter-Memorial Aesthetics

Refugee Histories and the
Politics of Contemporary Art

Verónica Tello

BLOOMSBURY

RADICAL AESTHETICS – RADICAL ART

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Jane Tormey: j.tormey@lboro.ac.uk

Gillian Whiteley: g.whiteley@lboro.ac.uk

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VERÓNICA TELLO

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CHAPTER TWO

Arte de Conducta and The Manipulation of Memory

Tania Bruguera's Biopolitical Ambitions in Postwar Cuba

1989: Postwar

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 the repercussions were global. In Germany, and eventually the former Eastern Bloc and Soviet Union, restrictive border policies were relaxed and global capitalist mechanisms were put into place. Foreign companies, mainly from the UK and the US, began to aggressively invest. For many, the advent of free-moving capital and people cast socialism and communism, which had for the most part operated through totalitarian regimes, as relics of the twentieth century. But in Cuba, this historical event, which is so often celebrated as a spectacle of freedom and progress, was experienced through the country's worst-ever economic recession. With the collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991, Cuba lost 87 per cent of its international trade and \$6 billion in aid per year.¹ In an attempt to further weaken the nation's economy and Castro's leadership, the US intensified its embargos by passing the 1992 Torricelli Act (otherwise known as the Cuba Democracy Act), disallowing any



FIGURE 2.1 Willy Castellanos, *La Partida* (from the series *Exodus*), 1994. Willy Castellanos, 1994.

trade between the US and Cuba, including private aid, tourism to the island, and the prohibition of Cuban exiles from transferring funds to their families back home. This propelled Cuba to enter what is known as the Special Period in Time of Peace (or Special Period): a mode of governance that was originally developed by Castro's regime for managing the aftermath of what it perceived to be an imminent US invasion, but was in effect implemented in the aftermath of the Cold War.

For Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, the Special Period was emblematic of the materiality and atmosphere of a post-conflict zone. Or, what she articulates as *postguerra* (postwar). A rapid decline in living standards, including shortages of food and power, characterized Cuban society following 1989 alongside a rise in siege mentality and relentless if not paranoid calls to come together and support the nation.

Such calls were not new. They had been repeatedly made in the name of the Revolution since Castro took power in 1959. The

Revolution had been fought – and the US-sponsored dictator Batista toppled – under the premise of patriotism and the necessity of independence from colonial power. But what constitutes a nation in the aftermath of revolution or war when, as a result of poverty, recession and ideological conflict, so many of its people flee to other lands?

Since the 1959 Cuban Revolution over 1 million Cuban refugees have left, most of them to the US.² Their exodus has taken place via three main waves: tens of thousands escaping in rafts and airlifts immediately following the Revolution (1959–62), the 1980 economic recession (in what is known as the Mariel boatlift) and during the height of the Special Period (1993–4, in what is referred to as the *balseros* crisis, Fig. 2.1). The Cuban Government has allowed its people to flee but not without also ridiculing them and rejecting them from the national body. They have been labelled *gusanos* (worms, c. 1959), 'scum, criminals, lumpen, parasites' (c. 1980) and 'anti-Cuban' (c. 1994).³ The State has systematically erased the legacies of those that decided to abandon the Revolution from the country's history. This is a significant feat considering that a large proportion of the country's intellectuals and authors – those that often write history – left after the Revolution.⁴

Bruguera made it her task to think through the repercussions of *postguerra*, especially mass exile, on conceptions of the national body, including what constitutes collective memory, through the inter-related series *Homenaje a Ana Mendieta* (*Tribute to Ana Mendieta*, 1985–96) and *La Memoria de la Postguerra* (*Postwar Memory*, 1993–97). Using diverse strategies (such as re-enactment and clandestine publishing) her works test the limits of Cuba's heterogeneity: its capacity for allowing the inclusion of exiled bodies and histories. *Postguerra* does so, for example, by circulating clandestine broadsheets with articles and images authored by exiles and radicals on the island, while *Homenaje* does so by transmitting the performances of the exiled artist Ana Mendieta into Cuba via re-enactment. As Gerardo Mosquera and Luis Camnitzer argue, *Postguerra* stands as one of the only documents that witness the devastating conditions of the Special Period outside tightly controlled official media circuits.⁵ Meanwhile *Homenaje* is an attempt at ensuring the sustained place of Mendieta in Cuban cultural memory at a moment when such histories were systematically repressed. It would seem fairly clear, then, how and

why Bruguera's series may be thought as examples of counter-memorial aesthetics. She attempts to play havoc, for example, with the Cuban Government's highly managed historical discourses, animating memories of exile and histories of counter-revolutionaries – charting constellations of disjunctive subjectivities – who together utter the various narratives of postwar life, whether it begins post-1959 or post-1989. But in Bruguera's case, the manifestation of counter-memorial aesthetics depends not only on harnessing disparate narratives (difference and excess) but also on the conditions of transnationalism. That is, conjoining Cuban experiences and narratives from inside and outside the island, the politics and operations of which are less clear.

Critics argue that such works as Bruguera's *Postguerra*, which are defined by their transnational dynamic, are characterized by the economic conditions that arose during the Special Period, in particular the development of globalization within Cuba.⁶ Cuba's capacity to make up the financial downfall it had experienced after 1989 was contingent on the development of a suite of economic and cultural policies that saw the nation forge new connections with Europe, Latin America and Asia and introduce a two-currency system entailing the US dollar and the Cuban *peso*. The new economic paradigm also gave rise to cultural policies that allowed artists special privileges to travel and attract funds through the sale of their work. The Havana Biennial (inaugurated in 1984) played a key role in this endeavour.⁷ Conceived in the mid-1980s as a platform for representing and uniting the 'Third World', especially members and sympathizers of the Soviet Bloc, by 1994 the Biennial had become a key catalyst for introducing artists of Bruguera's generation to the international art market and stage more broadly.⁸ Bruguera presented *Postguerra* at the 1994 edition of the Biennial, and by 1995 she had begun to travel overseas to undertake residencies in New York and London.⁹ In 1998 she was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (based in New York), and the following year she enrolled in an MFA in Performance Art at the Art Institute of Chicago (later joining the Faculty as Assistant Professor in 2004). No doubt Bruguera's artistic trajectory and, perhaps more to the point, career-development, are a product of Cuba's post-1989 economic policies. But to what extent do these policies influence her engagement with Cuban refugees in such works as *Postguerra* and *Homenaje*?

For some critics, Bruguera's practice, which emerged and developed during the Special Period, is a symptom of a broader move toward self-initiated communication with Cuba's exiles as made available through the country's new trade agreements and global economic endeavours.¹⁰ There is evidence that in some ways, Bruguera's attempts to engage Cuba's exiles runs parallel to and mirrors the country's international relations politics. In April 1994, Cuba's Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina invited 220 Cubans living abroad in 25 countries to talks in Cuba over 3 days.¹¹ The talks focused on the necessity to improve relationships between the Cuban Government and Cuban exiles, and resulted in the relaxation of most travel restrictions to the island.¹² Yet Bruguera's clandestine newspapers of 1993 and 1994, which were disseminated and/or produced just a few months before and after the conference, were censored.¹³ This situation highlights the paradox at the centre of the Cuban regime: this is a desire to open up Cuba's borders for economic trade while being reluctant to properly register and engage with histories of refugeedom that manifest without the regime's sanction.

Bruguera's series may have emerged at the moment that Cuba became implicated in advanced processes of globalization following 1989, but they are firmly focused on the complexity of border politics, and the control of what histories of refugeedom are permitted to circulate in the island. As such, it is not so easy to suggest, as some critics do, that Bruguera's work is a symptom of the intensification of globalization and relaxed travel policies after 1989.¹⁴ In fact, her work complicates narratives that tend to suggest that after 1989 Cuba entered into a new phase. As Bruguera argues, Cuba is not 'post socialist'.¹⁵ It is still living through the repercussions of the Revolution and the end of the Soviet Union.¹⁶ This is not a historical moment marked by euphoric liberation, but one of profound poverty and a life of decrepit infrastructure and limited social, cultural and economic resources. It is *postguerra*.

Bruguera's art seeks to work through what it means to live in the aftermath of the Cold War, and the war against the ideology of counter-revolutionaries and exiles. Caught 'in between histories',¹⁷ the undocumented pasts and otherwise repressed traumas of Cuban exiles intersect with and even irritate the Special Period's emerging narratives of globalization (and empty rhetoric of democracy). Tending to the paradox of the opening and closing of

economic, geographical and cultural borders at the end of the Cold War, Bruguera's series represent an attempt to not only rewrite the ghosted past but to generate new cosmopolitan futures that test and expand the limits of the national body's capacity to incorporate exiles. It is this strategy, located at a critical juncture between free and censored bodies – now, then and in the future – that Bruguera's model of counter-memorial aesthetics can be found.

In order to understand Bruguera's attempts to produce counter-memorial aesthetics within Cuba, first a particular concept central to her practice needs to be introduced. Bruguera developed the idea of *arte de conducta* (behaviour art) during the late 1980s and 1990s to try to forge new biopolitical dynamics and power relations in the island nation. This strategy, while central to Bruguera's attempts to reinsert the exile within the Cuban landscape, was itself contingent on remembering a particular group of artist-exiles, *los '80s*.

Los '80s and *arte de conducta*

Los '80s emerged out of the bleakness of the *Quinquenio Gris* (Five Grey Years), a period of intense censorship and restrictive policies designed to align art and the State between 1971 and 1976 (though for many the censorship continued until the end of the 1970s).¹⁸ Heavily influenced by Stalinist policies and Soviet bureaucrats, particularly *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness), this period would end in the early 1980s. In the Cuban context, the concept of *perestroika* was interpreted as the Campaign to Rectify Errors and Correct Negative Tendencies, aiming to cut through bureaucratic corruption and reinvigorate the spirit of the Revolution.¹⁹ Artists were encouraged to participate in the rectification process. And in turn, they took seriously the Revolutionary call for 'critical participation', advancing a model of art that could play a role shaping the State and its institutions.²⁰ This gave way to the rise of a distinct generation of artists, known as *los '80s*. They believed that their art was both a catalyst for freedom of expression and the development of an independent nation in the name of the Revolution.²¹

The first phase of *los '80s*, loosely connected through the exhibition that launched their careers, *Volumen 1* (1981), focused on formalist experiments mainly via abstract art, doing away with the previous decade's dedication to Stalinist aesthetics, and seeking

to produce a Cuban art form reflective of its independent identity.²² While one of the members of this group of artists, Juan Francisco Padilla Elso, was Bruguera's mentor, the first wave of *los '80s* did not bear much of an influence on Bruguera other than instilling ideas about the intimate nexus of art and life.²³ Instead, Bruguera's practice, as I perceive it, shares a deep affinity with a younger group of artists from *los '80s* who started to organize themselves in the mid-1980s mainly through collaborations and collectives. They are known for producing antagonistic and humorous happenings, performances and installations. For example, in 1987, *Arte Calle/ Grupo Provisional* gate-crashed a meeting of the UNEAC (*Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba*, National Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba) wearing gasmasks and holding placards critical of Cuban art; the masks were meant to prevent their contamination within the context of the nation's representative body for culture. The following year another collective, the ABTV team, exhibited a large drawing of Che Guevara in a Havana gallery. The drawing was too large to be hung on any of its walls, and so it was placed on the floor. The show attracted a large crowd that witnessed a man, dressed in a police officer's uniform, walking over the drawing, followed by three dancers in skimpy clothing performing improvised choreography using the portrait of Che as their platform (some of the crowd turned on the performers and began assaulting them). This level of satire was performed and made possible under the guise of relaxed censorship (following *glasnost*) in Cuba, and clearly indicates the desire of *los '80s* to loosen the Government's stranglehold on the collective imagination, as advanced by State propaganda, all the while trying to show that art could act as a catalyst for the formation of civic space.

However, by April 1989 the cultural climate shifted. Mikhail Gorbachev visited Cuba, just months before the end of the Soviet Union, to signal the end of the Soviet Union's special economic relationship with Cuba (the latter was largely dependent on the former's aid and concessions for its survival). By August that year, the Cuban State was in a highly precarious economic and political position (losing billions of dollars in aid). And at this fragile moment, it sought to obtain more control over cultural discourse as a means to maintain a sense of unity and determine the future. In turn, greater powers were given to the Communist Party's director of ideology, Carlos Aldana, who would monitor and censor art

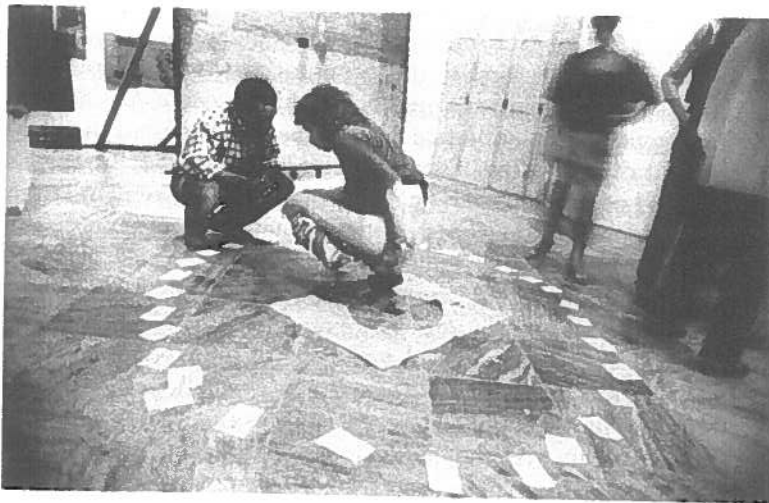


FIGURE 2.2 Ángel Delgado, *La Esperanza es lo Único que se Está Perdiendo* (*Hope Is the Only Thing that We Are Losing*), 1990. Unauthorized performance at the exhibition *El objeto Esculturado* (*The Sculptured Object*), Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana. Photo: Adalberto Roque.

production, signalling the termination of what had up until that point been an unprecedented degree of autonomy in the arts.²⁴ As the State began to fiercely censor *los '80s*, it was simultaneously encouraging this generation of artists to leave Cuba in circumstances under which 'normal' citizens were prevented from doing so.²⁵ By the early 1990s almost all of *los '80s* had left: and the visual arts became almost non-existent on the island. Some believe that the decade of *los '80s* symbolically ends with a performance by Ángel Delgado in 1990 (Fig. 2.2), which saw the artist defecate on a copy of *Granma*, the country's official newspaper and communication channel of the Cuban Communist Party, after which Delgado was imprisoned for a period of six months, charged with 'public scandal'.²⁶

* * *

Bruguera's practice needs to be seen in relation to that of *los '80s*, particularly of those artists that emerged and worked from the mid

to late 1980s such as, for example, Delgado and the ABTV team. As such, her work arises at a historical juncture that witnesses the vanishing points of this generation and the emergence of a new one during the Special Period. As Camnitzer and Mosquera argue, in the shadows of widespread cultural censorship, artists of the 1990s began to turn away from the antagonistic practices that characterized *los '80s* and toward the market. For Mosquera, with almost all of *los '80s* exiled, Bruguera stands as the only artist of her generation who has systematically pursued a political practice – a practice, moreover, that continues the work of *los '80s* in the face of censorship and the hollowing out of any civic space in Cuba.²⁷

Indelibly marked by memories of *los '80s*, Bruguera would go on to create durational performances (which often span numerous years) that addressed the 'politico-timing' specificity of her context (the Special Period). Crucially, she would proceed through a particular concept of performance art that seemed to be based on an analysis of *los '80s*' most effective methods for intervening in the national body (and associated processes of collective memory). She termed this *arte de conducta*. Roughly translating as behaviour art, *arte de conducta* is a method for finding new ways of being together, of generating or relocating bonds and solidarities (with exiles and those on the island, for example), and of 'moving away' from a situation of homogeneity where a sense of disjunction or a capacity for there being disjunctive subjectivities is not possible.

Arte de conducta engages with the abstract forms that shape subjectivity – power, language and memory – and relies for sustenance on collectivist strategies such as rumour (to disseminate information) or remembrance (to recall repressed and traumatic pasts).²⁸ It is usually catalysed by what Bruguera terms a 'structure to live': a newspaper, a school, for example, through which biopolitical dynamics can unfurl and new histories can be forged over a sustained period of time.²⁹

In every way, the development of *arte de conducta* as the core concept of Bruguera's work is contingent on a profound engagement with *los '80s* and their ambitions to reshape civic space and social discourse, and is simultaneously driven by the desire to sustain and expand their legacy in spite of their alienation and exile (including the systematic erasure of their art histories). But if the method of *arte de conducta*, which underpins Bruguera's work, is informed by exiled histories and practices, so is the content of her work. One

particular exiled artist is the subject of *Homenaje*, which requires a return to the Revolution's 'year 0': 1959.³⁰

1959: Mendieta

Tens of thousands of Cubans fled following the inauguration of Castro's regime in 1959. Some were political dissidents, including those that participated in the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961. Many were motivated by economic disaster ensuing from the instalment of the US' Containment Policy in the early 1960s. And they were all welcomed by the US, which held an 'open door' policy for Cuban refugees during the Cold War in an attempt to discredit Castro and drain the nation of its human resources.

Some of these refugees were children. In 1960 the CIA launched Operation Pedro Pan in collaboration with the US State Department and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Miami. The Operation saw over 14,000 children removed from Cuba over a period of two years with the consent of their parents, many of whom were counter-revolutionaries and feared prosecution and/or were concerned about their children's indoctrination via the nation's new education system.³¹ The children of the saccharinely named Operation Pedro Pan were resettled with relatives where possible, but most were placed in refugee camps throughout Miami and then eventually in foster homes and orphanages operated by religious organizations and the Cuban Refugee Program. The latter situation applied to the artist Ana Mendieta who, along with her sister Raquelín, was sent to the US by her father, a political dissident imprisoned by Castro for 18 years, and her mother, who fled to the US in 1966 to join her daughters (the father joined the family upon his release, dying soon after). Like many Cuban refugees, Mendieta and her family left with the idea of repatriating once Castro's Government had been dismantled. Mendieta died in the US in 1985 at the age of thirty-six.³²

Many critics have observed that Mendieta's practice is marked by her relentless 'metaphorical quest for homeland'.³³ Her series *Siluetas* (*Silhouette*, 1973–80), for example, sees the artist adapting her drawings and sculptures to create correlative marks on the landscape using her body. This interdisciplinary practice, culminating in what she refers to as earth-body artworks, traces the artist's persistent dialogue on notions of subjectivity and belonging following her

experience of exile.³⁴ It projects an aesthetic of aftermath and absence, the disappearance of a subject and, simultaneously, the subject's permanent return to the earth via the image of the grave that the silhouettes so emphatically insist upon.

Mendieta eventually returned to Cuba at least twice between 1980 and 1981 before her sudden death four years later.³⁵ Her visits were enabled by the Carter Administration's temporary relaxation of travel bans to Cuba as part of a broader project aimed at improving relations with the Cuban Government and lifting the embargo. Sponsored by New York-based cultural organizations wanting to engage in cultural diplomacy with the island nation, Mendieta visited the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) – where Bruguera would later study and teach – and met with key members of *los '80s* including Bruguera's mentor Elso, introducing them to books on conceptual art and Cuban history that were otherwise unavailable.³⁶

Most significantly, Mendieta produced a series of works entitled *Esculturas Rupestres* (*Rupestrian Sculptures*) (1981, Fig. 2.3) in Las Escaleras de Jaruco, a group of naturally formed limestone caves outside Havana. The sculptures manifest as silhouettes of goddess figures drawn from the Taíno and Ciboney cultures indigenous to Cuba. Mendieta's intervention at Jaruco reflected her longstanding investigation of Cuban ancestral connections and cultural hybridity as a result of migration and colonization on the island.³⁷ The sculptures, signifiers of different modes of biopolitical displacement, were to stand as monuments of the perpetual dialectic of exile and desired repatriation she embodied. They were eventually destroyed as a consequence of the Cuban Government's neglect of exile culture despite the fact that, as Mosquera argues, they should have been a 'national monument'.³⁸ However unfortunate, this result stays true to the conceptual premise of permanent displacement at the core of Mendieta's work.

Mendieta's brief return was remarkable not only for introducing the aesthetics of Cuban exile to the island, but also for opening up an inter-cultural exchange between the US and Cuba in spite of the blockade (and before 1989).³⁹ Critics have remarked that it disrupted the Cuban State's attempts to erase the stories and legacy of exiles from its history through the strict control of information and discourse.⁴⁰ But although Mendieta's work had enabled such a disruption, it could not last very long, given the ephemerality of Mendieta's works – at least, not without some help. By the end of the 1980s most of the artists that had met with Mendieta had left



FIGURE 2.3 Ana Mendieta, *Esculturas Rupestres (Guanaroca & Iyaré)*, 1981. Gelatin Silver Print, 18.4 × 24.4 cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Committee, 1998 98.5238. © Ana Mendieta.

Cuba, prompting the question: could Mendieta's memory endure on the island, and if so, how?⁴¹

* * *

Bruguera began her project *Homenaje a Ana* during the mid-1980s, a few months after Mendieta's death. Given the timing, Bruguera and critics often discuss it as a symbolic gesture through which to bring the deceased artist back to Cuba.⁴² In Mosquera's words, Bruguera's re-enactments become the artist's 'final silhouette, walking the streets of Old Havana'.⁴³ But the effect of Bruguera's work bears deeper implications for experimental Cuban historiographies and the process of writing with ghosts.⁴⁴ In fact, Bruguera's connection to Mendieta was not personal but guided by an interest in seeking the possibilities of intervening in collective memory. As Bruguera relays,

I didn't connect with Ana's art at a formal level, nor was I influenced by any one particular piece of her work . . . I was looking at her from a cultural perspective, not an artistic one, so I was far more interested in the impact she had on Cuban art than [in] the specifics of her poetics . . . I decided to become what I then called a cultural archaeologist.⁴⁵

This desire led Bruguera to stage Mendieta's first 'retrospective' in Havana in 1992 in a show entitled *Ana Mendieta/Tania Bruguera*, which contained no actual works by Mendieta but a series of re-enactments of Mendieta's work by Bruguera (re-enactment, simply put, is a process by which the past is restaged for the present). As Roselee Goldberg argues, Bruguera's *Homenaje* project – of which *Ana Mendieta/Tania Bruguera* is a part – represents the first instance where performance (by way of re-enactment) is used as a historiographical method for writing performance history.⁴⁶ Working from a catalogue of a 1987 New Museum retrospective of the artist, Bruguera restaged many of Mendieta's works. In her re-enactment of *Nile Born* (originally of 1974), for example, Bruguera used her body (as Mendieta once had) as the basis for a sculpture made of wood and sand, creating an abstract (and, as Mendieta saw it, 'universal') symbol of the female figure while simultaneously referencing Cuba's African heritage through the work's title. In her re-enactment of *Body Tracks* (originally of 1982), she immersed her hands in a concoction of red tempera and animal blood, the latter referencing African mythologies of female sexuality, before proceeding to repeatedly slide her hands down a piece of paper in a kind of hypnotized state (Fig. 2.4). There were many more re-enactments of Mendieta's work by Bruguera for the *Homenaje* project, many of which invoked the tropes of cultural hybridity, female essentialism, and a desire to connect the body to the earth and universe. But while tropes such as cultural hybridity or the earth bear a relation to the task of locating a means to remember the exiled Mendieta within Cuba, ultimately the symbolism of Mendieta's work is not of such particular interest to this chapter as is the potentiality of re-enactment for enabling a recuperation of Mendieta's position in Cuba's cultural and historical memory. This positionality spans not only the exile of *los '80s*, which must be seen as a key impetus for Bruguera's work, but also the systematic erasure of *gusanos*, parasites and 'anti-Cubans'.

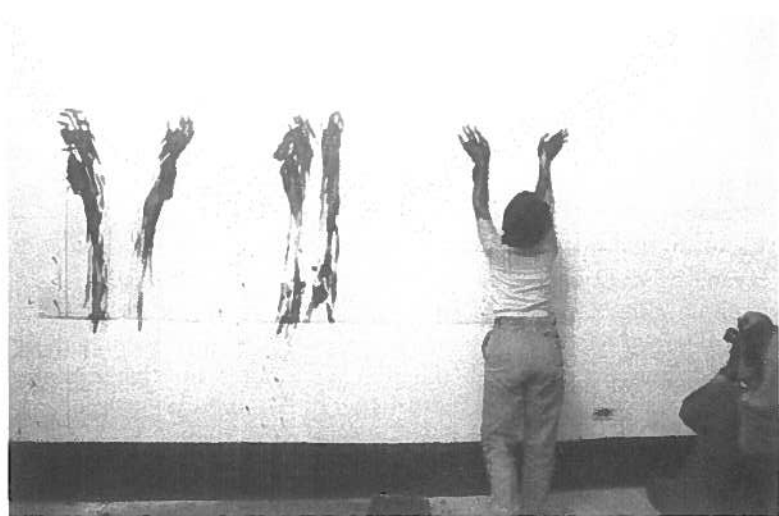


FIGURE 2.4 Tania Bruguera, *Homenaje a Ana Mendieta (Tribute to Ana Mendieta)*, 1986–96. Performance for solo show, *Tania Bruger/Ana Mendieta*, January 1992, Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, Cuba. Photo: © Gonzalo Vidal Alvarado.

Can Bruguera's re-enactments be seen as a form of 'cultural archaeology' akin to counter-memorial aesthetics? – that is, as a desire to offer an aesthetic of popular struggle, which is discounted by the Revolution as historical or material, while at the same time offering a means to think beyond the exclusionary boundaries of the nation?

As a process of displacement, or cultural archaeology, Bruguera's re-enactments can be read as a disruption to the ways in which the Cuban State writes its history of exiles ('scum'); it places a glitch in this system and reanimates Mendieta's project (in the wrong time and in the wrong place) while opening up the island's embodiment of heterogeneity: hopefully and eventually 'moving out of a situation' of selective amnesia. Re-enactment intentionally disorients perceptions of time/place as a means to trigger remembrance for otherwise censored histories. Re-enactment is, then, a strategy of survival. But the survival of the past is contingent on the capacity of those who witness the re-enactment (and register

the associated affects of disorientation) to carry the burden of remembrance.

In Bruguera's work, counter-memory tends to be ephemeral and contingent on participation, or *arte de conducta*. Bruguera did not want there to be documentation of *Homenaje* for future remembrance: she destroyed all the photographs and remains of the performances of *Homenaje* in her possession. Documentation of the work survives nonetheless in the photography of others, but the gesture of attempting to destroy this documentation reveals that *Homenaje* was designed to elicit an embodied, affective mode of remembrance akin to *arte de conducta*.⁴⁷ Underpinned by a desire to generate a collective of disjunctive subjectivities, *arte de conducta* attempts to bring about a shift in existing discourses on Cuban exiles through an affective reorganizing of the social body *vis-à-vis* what it is possible to remember and what is possible to be thought as history and subjectivity. Through re-enactment, Bruguera's body and, in turn, the bodies of those who participate in her *arte de conducta*, become vehicles for designing new histories and art histories within Cuba – in other words, new futures. The gesture of re-enactment becomes a catalyst for collective recall: one body becomes many (allowing for bonds and solidarities but not essentialism or homogeny). It relies on an infectious mode of remembrance, or the capacity to unite over what the State considers to be heterogeneous (excess).

The introduction of Mendieta's oeuvre via Bruguera bore tangible outcomes including art history Honours theses written by students at the ISA. Bruguera cites this result as a key reason for ending the *Homenaje* project, since it signalled the transmission of the care of historiography and remembrance onto a new generation made urgent by the departure of *los '80s*.⁴⁸ But the future orientation of *Homenaje* also has a relatively more abstract outcome too. It shapes conceptions of Cuban cosmopolitanism in the aftermath of mass exile.

As a result of mass exile, contemporary Cuba has not experienced cosmopolitanism in the same way as have other nations. Certainly, the nation has been shaped by waves of migration through Spanish colonization. This includes a slave trade that brought to Cuba tens of thousands of Chinese during the nineteenth century, and hundreds of thousands of Africans during the sixteenth, late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁹ In spite of the horrific conditions of this

economic endeavour – and the schizophrenic oscillation between ‘separatist racism and racial intermixing’ that has historically structured biopolitical relations in Cuba – cultural hybridity and particularly Afro-Cuban culture have been widely seen as an integral part of Cuban identity during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵⁰ However, the integration of longstanding cultural ties that have existed in Cuba for hundreds of years, in a country where a large percentage of the population is *mestizo* (mixed race), is quite distinct to the development of a cosmopolitanism that welcomes – within the context of contemporary Cuba – the paradoxically positioned exile as stranger: the nation’s former citizen.

In the context of the 1959 Revolution and its continuing affects, welcoming the exile would comprise bringing to bear a mode of cosmopolitanism that, after Ulrich Beck, pluralizes borders and manifests ‘a legitimation crisis, of the national morality of exclusion: on which principles are the internal hierarchies of unities or states based?’⁵¹ If the principles of exclusion in contemporary Cuba are subject to the biopolitical structures that the Government insists on – detaining and eliciting the exile of counter-revolutionaries and non-believers – then the labour of constructing a cosmopolitan future is contingent on doing away with a ‘nation based memory of the past’. The antithesis to this constructed future, argues Beck, is a ‘shared collective future’ that is generated by adopting the strategy of imagination. To this end, the imagination, rather than being perceived as something that mediates the interior (the mind) and the exterior (the world), is fundamental to perceptual capacities and processes of becoming; it is an affective force underpinning inter-relations between humans, objects and discourses, through which subjects develop meaning and an anticipation of what is to come.⁵² The imagination is critical to understanding the futurist orientation of cosmopolitanism, influencing perceptions and actions toward the exile, the stranger.

The politics and significance of Bruguera’s *Homenaje* reside precisely in its orientation toward a cosmopolitan future. It orients itself so by facilitating a mode of affective co-remembrance of the stranger and by imagining her return. Here, participating in remembering the spectres of the past and biopolitical exclusion is tied to imagining a path toward the looming horizon line of cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan future is hinged on recognizing the contemporary *crisis* of cosmopolitanism. Thus, it is not a chronological continuity of what has been (in this sense it is different

to how the horizon line has been conceived in modernist theory). Rather, it expects a rupture of such a historical continuum.

But what kind of rupture is possible in the post-1989 Cuban context from which Bruguera’s work emerges? As some critics argue, ruptures are no longer possible following 1989 and the loss of the horizons of ‘communism’ and ‘revolution’.⁵³ Yet, post-1989, Bruguera’s art maintains something of a utopic commitment to paradigm shifts: though, one may ask, to what end? After 1989, any new order in Cuba will doubtless be informed by the horizon of ‘capital’, which is the sole surviving horizon line of modernity. But with capital, supposedly, comes the simultaneous paradigm shift of democratization and openness to what the national body can tolerate. Cuba’s claims to democratization and openness are, however, deeply hollow. Bruguera’s 2014 arrest in Havana after attempting to facilitate free speech in one of the city’s public squares through the project *Yo Tambien Exijo*, and her subsequent charges for disrupting public order and inciting counter-revolutionary behaviour, are only a couple of examples. Processes such as *arte de conducta* which, as represented by *Yo Tambien Exijo* and *Homenaje*, facilitate shifts in the perceptual and biopolitical order – in a word, disagreement – are absolutely necessary for the future-oriented possibility of a heterogeneous national body.

Bruguera recognizes that the fates of actual democracy and cosmopolitanism are tied together. The realisation of actual democracy and cosmopolitanism, or ‘democratic cosmopolitanism’, where forms of disagreement, the capacity to ‘internalize the other’, the capacity to coexist in ‘rival ways of life in the individual experience’ is at the centre not only of *Homenaje* (and *Yo Tambien Exijo*) but another work by Bruguera, *Postguerra*, initiated in the depths of the Special Period.⁵⁴ The full significance of *Postguerra*, being its capacity to initiate disagreement and chart a sense of being in and with a constellation of disjunctive subjectivities in and outside the island and across different generations of exiles and those who stayed, can only really be understood by first considering the media ecologies of Cuba.

1993: Exile media

The Revolution was won and fought through the media: the radio stations and newspapers set up by Che Guevara played a pivotal

role in communicating the Revolution's advances. Guevara's broadsheet, *Revolucion*, would be renamed *Granma* after 1959, and become the Communist Party's official communication channel. Given the weight that the Revolution placed on its propaganda machines, and the value of projecting and maintaining certain mythologies and discourses, as well as maintaining coherence over its broader structures, it is no surprise that by the early 1960s the Cuban Government had moved to nationalize and centralize all Cuban media outlets (and all commercial business).⁵⁵ In effect, this led to a very real limitation on what Foucault terms *parrhesia* – the right to speak freely and have a say in the fashioning of the social body. For if *parrhesia* is given only to the 'few' who have the right to govern and who have access to power, then what is considered to be 'good' for the State and healthy for the social body is spoken only by the few. And so, the logic goes, what is good for the State is what is good for the few. This institutes divisions of equity of power, and divisions between those that have a claim on the structure of the State and those that do not.⁵⁶

Cuba's (centralized) propaganda machine bears a totalizing effect on subjectivity. As Stephanie Schwartz argues, the media makes everyone part of the nation's body: 'It takes you with it.'⁵⁷ The immersive affect of the Cuban media is catalysed through the State's policing of information, which in effect shapes historical consciousness and concepts of the present and future, augmenting or diminishing agency.⁵⁸ It is for this and no other reason, the capacity to manage the energy of Cuba's social body, that the Government has placed such an enormous strain on *parrhesia*.

Even as (at the time of writing) the US is lifting its embargo on Cuba (through the Cuba Trade Act of 2015), the island nation is still considered to be one of the world's most highly censored places (the arrest of Bruguera in 2014 is just one example).⁵⁹ If at various points in time, such as after 1989, Cuba's Government has appeared to bear some 'democratic' values regarding its media, this has been more than anything a performance to attract foreign money (through aid and trade), since at the same time local journalists have been experiencing intensified crackdowns on any news items that are perceived to be anti-Government.⁶⁰

For the purposes of this chapter, it's worth highlighting that media censorship in Cuba has also been fine-tuned to eliminate the transmission of exile news and histories, especially those broadcast

by exiles living in Florida via *Radio Marti* (set up in 1985 and funded by the Republication Party and Reagan Administration) and *TV Marti* (set up in the early 1990s). Even if their signals reach the island in sporadic fashion despite the Cuban Government (in collaboration with the Chinese Government) jamming their transmission, it is believed that the population largely ignores these programmes since they are perceived as little more than US-sponsored counter-revolutionary propaganda – and viewers risk penalties.⁶¹ But nonetheless, the *Marti* programmes reveal the extent to which it is a challenge to intervene in Cuba's media ecology, whether because of self-imposed censorship or censorship by other means.

This gives some context to the significance of Bruguera's newspapers, which like *Radio Marti* and *TV Marti* made their appearance around the early 1990s. But unlike the generously funded *Marti* programmes, the very possibility of Bruguera's newspapers was mediated by the severe material limitations of the Special Period, including the profound paper and fuel shortages which led to major cuts in the circulation of official newspapers and magazines – including *Granma* – and presumably rendered unofficial publications impossible. Bruguera rightly maintains that *Postguerra* was the only independent newspaper operating at that time.⁶² *Postguerra* is significant not only because it manifested concurrently with the State's dwindling capacity to distribute its voice through its official communication channel (by 1994 *Granma* had halved its publication quota as the State began to use the immaterial medium of radio more and more),⁶³ but also because it appropriated the very aesthetics of this official communication channel – a tool of the Revolution – as a means to rewrite history and reshape social relations.⁶⁴

Acting as the newspaper's editor, Bruguera shaped the first edition of *Postguerra* so that the usual rubrics found in *Granma* – Agriculture, Health, Culture, Events, News Articles and Correspondence – would also be found in her paper (Fig. 2.5). But the usual mythologies of Cuban independence and its ongoing Revolution were replaced in *Postguerra* with stories of struggle: agriculture in the underdeveloped world, the negative impacts on sexual and psychological health after the Revolution, the censorship of cross-cultural exchange in spite of increasing tourism (foreign affairs), and an advice column on how to 'make do' during the postwar period and its accompanying poverty and disenchantment. *Postguerra* carved out a 'space to think', as one of its drawings (by Jación Zen, Fig. 2.6) suggests, and

I discovered that the legacy of the artists who had left now belonged exclusively to the realm of memory and oral history. There were few tangible signs of what they had done . . . I thought I could assume the post of the artist as witness who would leave a record of the social upheavals of the era . . .⁶⁷

The second edition was exclusively dedicated to the theme of exile and to historicizing this condition, drawing on perspectives from inside and outside the island. It used the postal service as a means to communicate with exiles living, for example, in Mexico and the US. To this extent it's possible to cast *Postguerra* as a form of mail art, enmeshed in a transnational flow in a supposed post-Cold War period where circulation is relatively free. But the real aim of Bruguera's work was to reveal the limitations of such global flows, and the ways in which geopolitics both trigger and repress particular flows and associated historical narratives. Thus, it is no surprise to encounter, amongst many other texts and images in the second edition of *Postguerra*, articles such as *El Post-Exilio Y La Post-Guerra* (Fig. 2.8) which document a constellation of both well-known and muted histories of Cuban exile; a poetry section with contributions in English, offering highly personal accounts of exiledom in the US; and a haunting photograph of two *balseros* (rafters, or boatpeople) waving and smiling at a camera (Fig. 2.9).

In recalling and layering the struggles of exiles and those that remained on the island, *Postguerra* locates ways of coexisting in spite of the borders that maintain the homogeneity of the nation and the separation of bodies as a consequence of geopolitics.⁶⁸ Ghosted histories which relentlessly haunt contemporary subjectivity – earlier moments of the Revolution and waves of exile – return to reshape bonds and solidarities (ephemeral, permanent). If these newfound connections between a field of disjunctive subjectivities (bonded over a desire to narrate multifarious narratives rather than ideological cohesion) could lead to a cosmopolitanism capable of sustaining and inviting the presence of the exile in Cuba and a new sense of the social body, then its sustenance would surely be hinged on more than the bonds and solidarities felt between the artists and authors involved in producing *Postguerra*, and would need to extend to the many other subjects on the island: the readers. For if Bruguera's practice really finds its drive through its desire to generate *arte de conducta*, to provide new structures to live, and to



Año I, No.2

La Habana, CUBA, Junio de 1994

EL POST-EXILIO Y LA POST-GUERRA

Tania de la Nuez / Juan Pablo Ballester

1. Hay una diferencia radical entre un viaje y un exilio. La experiencia al respecto de los países cubanos lo confirma de un modo abrumador. De un viaje al regreso es habitualmente

2. Si bien las circunstancias del viaje han sido experimentadas por muchos antes de la isla, estos desconocen casi todo lo que implica un exilio (que por cierto suele ser más complejo que una galería, un catálogo o un museo en Art in America). Los gestos de "afuera" son complejos, diferenciados y se entizan con diferentes niveles de circulación. En el exilio, vanguardia cubana de los 30 que fue algo más que "un año y nada más", ha arribado a distintos países y, aunque siempre ha mudado, los límites prefijados, en cada caso se ha replicado de un modo diferente. México, por ejemplo,

funcionó como un gran catalizador que reunía su producción cultural en exposiciones institucionales dedicadas al "problema cubano". Miami, tratada como el espacio por excelencia de la producción cultural, pasó por el agua, siempre turbia, de la política y por el encuentro con un mundo otro tan convencional como su "cubanidad" como poco arraigada en la esfera de la política cubana de los 80. Mientras en Europa de Massera, involucrada con los exiliados y embalsamada con los nacionalismos.

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AÑORANZAS POR CUBA

Enrique Ichikawa Murín

A mis amigos, los que están desde México

"Los pedras de la isla parten en que van a salir volando", dice un verso de la poesía cubana Dulce María Loynaz, dueña de un premio Cervantes de Literatura y, además, de un altísimo un hablador como el de Sor Juana. En la isla las cosas son leves, y sus definiciones, a veces, parecen haberse es decir, les falta gravedad: sus ríos son delgados, sus montañas menudas y sus bragues más próximos a los jirónes que a las lavas.

Cristo es rico, y Cristo mismo parece que va a salir disparado Quidá por eso el maestro, macho y metido, se encuentra en Regla, marginado fuertemente izquierdo de la bahía desde donde zarpan los barcos.

Los cráteres de la Isla son como sus avíos que, a fuerza de repetirse, más parecen indicar un accidente de nivel que un accidente: una del país. A pesar de las funciones de algo propagandista, tiene en sus letras recurrente el espíritu de cualquier cubano; triste, aunque dulce, uno no encuentra a los del lugar donde las cosas le van bien. En buen cheherro: me es una lista guardada para cuando el destino se trague.

Hasta el idioma quebra bajo el peso del hábito. Cuando a usted le dicen que Estren se quedó, no le significan que dejó, por ejemplo, una vida bohemia por un modo de llegar a que es más serio en Escobar, la calle más cañada de la Habana. Nada de eso. Quedarse es dejar, es abandonar, que está también y eso lo saben quienes se quedaron: la nostalgia por regresar. Nostalgia cada vez menos culpable pero culpable aún.

El problema cubano, para ellos y para nosotros, en que de Cuba uno jamás puede irse, un darme cuenta de que no hay lugar en el mundo para escaparse de ella.

Una escapada deparada es a vivir en diferentes grados. No estar desde Londres, así se sea un exilio de sensibilidad sin par, es de un exiliamiento más intenso que no estar desde Miami. No estar desde México es, por esta parte, una forma bastante peculiar de exiliarse. Tal y como hay en los acontecimientos. México D.F. llegará a ser, sin duda la tercera ciudad de los cubanos.

Estar y no estar, irse y quedarse, es la tensión que sigue a la gente de la isla, de esta isla, y que se define en cualquier caso, dentro o fuera. Sin embargo, ese doble signo se potencia. Ora en su extremo, ora en el otro, es esa potencia la que Rega a hacer distinguibles a algunos cubanos entre sí. Es una distinción de acento, no de cualidad; pero, y esto es lo que quiero advertir, es una distinción que existe.

No estar, irse, es una condición posible. De hecho, hoy quienes no fueron y el exilio cubano es una realidad, tengo la tentación que tenga. No están o están lejos, porque esto de aquí siempre nos es un ente sino un algo contingente que permite todos los días. Cambio reiterado que es capaz de pasar al

continúa pág. 11

FIGURE 2.8 Tania Bruguera, *Memoria de la Postguerra II*, (*Memory of the Postwar II*), 1994. Creation of a newspaper edited by Bruguera in collaboration with Cuban artists living inside and outside of the nation. 12.2" x 8". Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Tania Bruguera.

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BERARDO MOSQUERA: (1945) Fédato humanista cubano, luchador contra la Excentricidad y promotor de la Reforma Orbeñiana/Comunista el Resacamiento de las Artes Nacionales como necesidad para llegar al concepto de "densidad" artística/ Dijo con lazo al estudio de las artes Plásticas Cubanas, y creó tanto el oficio como las posibilidades que se formaban a finales de los '50/ En uno de sus libros más famosos "El tiempo se defina en Octubre" encontramos su celebre doctrina: "...que ejerció gran influencia sobre la tradición humanista en todo el país, es su peso estructural a la esencia nacional y a la juventud".

INSTITUCIÓN ARTE: M Bor Plasta realista de hojas muy grandes y con pecoñas legas, flores olorosas de color blanco azulado y fruto giboso con semillas comestibles/ Flor de esta planta? So trito, árbol románico de Africa puesto al acualto de fruto en drupa roja del sabor de una rueta, que según los antiguos había olvidado de su patria a quien lo comía.

LEGITIMACIÓN: Concepto muy ligado, o relativo a la acción de viajar, sentido que se adquiere al emigrar/ Idea/ Último eslabón y fase superior del desarrollo del movimiento de los cubanos/ Lanza petición que se le hace a la Virgen de la Caridad, con vista a mejorar cierta posición o para el milagro y curativo santo necesario/ Donde las fuerzas benéficas se poseen a disposición de uno/ U.T.C.S. Relativo al comercio.

MAIA HERBA: Sentimiento con que se desarrolla el arte que se desarrolla dentro de Cuba, delicada dada por Gerardo Mosquera (ver de función Gerardo Mosquera).

MERCADO: Evolución. Mercado sentido de tener que adquirir el especializado pensamiento intelectual del artista/ Nuevo tipo de relaciones que se establece entre la obra como producto material de ingresos y la metodología de producción/ Te Oum. Hacer que una substancia adquiere propiedades metálicas/ R. Convertirse en metal o impregnarse de él alguna cosa/ Fig. Ponerse uno en tal estado de ánimo, que se pierde completamente el apetito.

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"TODO ACERCA DEL ALMA". Expo Personal de Luis Gómez



FIGURE 2.9 Tania Bruguera, *Memoria de la Postguerra II* (*Memory of the Postwar II*), 1994. Creation of a newspaper edited by Bruguera in collaboration with Cuban artists living inside and outside of the nation. 12.2" x 8". Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Tania Bruguera.

reshape the social body including how it imagines its past and future, this would occur by engaging the reader: but how should she do so if *Postguerra* was censored and its transmission muted?

The Cuban Government censored both editions of *Postguerra*. The first edition was censored in November 1993 and the second in June 1994. With the first edition, Bruguera was given a warning and told to stop distributing the paper. With the second edition, the newspapers were confiscated and destroyed. Officially the Arts Council's protestations (specifically the more extreme measures it took to suspend circulation of the second edition) arose out of the illegal use of State resources. One of Bruguera's collaborators with access to *Granma's* printers, which were used for the publication of *Postguerra*, was fired from the agency. Another was imprisoned for a period of six months. As editor of the paper, Bruguera was summoned by the leader of the Arts Council and reprimanded for her 'invalid use of state resources, [and] the illegal distribution of subversive propaganda'.⁶⁹ Unofficially, the censorship was triggered, Bruguera argues, because the Arts Council was alarmed by the second (to a lesser extent than the first) edition's effective gathering of artists who up until that point had not been united or active following the crackdown on *los '80s*.⁷⁰ The inclusion of exiles was particularly controversial, since many of them had not made contact with Cubans on the island since their departure, and certainly had not had a public platform upon which to communicate their concerns.⁷¹

The appearance of ghosted exiles via *Postguerra* and the State's opposition to Bruguera's project invoked the wars of *los '80s*. And, as had been the case in the 1980s, State censorship revealed both the limits and potentiality of art as a catalyst for democracy on the island. With the materiality of the newspaper threatened, *Postguerra's* dissemination was contingent on creative, informal distribution strategies that were fundamentally enabled by participation, *arte de conducta*. Some critics argue that the first edition was able to circulate in spite of censorship because copies survived and were circulated by readers; others claim that it was because participants photocopied the first edition and circulated it independently (an ambitious feat considering the paper shortage).⁷² The release of the second edition was scheduled to coincide with the opening of the 1994 Havana Biennial. Some accounts claim that it was confiscated by the State before it could be disseminated; others

claim that it managed to be distributed nonetheless and even more effectively than the first edition, perhaps through photocopies as the first edition had.⁷³ Others relay that, because of the second edition's censorship and the first edition's continued clandestine circulation, it was the first edition that was distributed during the Havana Biennial. In any case, censorship led to participation via informal distribution. But clearly, given the different and at times contradictory accounts regarding the circulation of *Postguerra*, its circulation was contingent on another informal distribution strategy: rumour.

Rumour transmits the history of *Postguerra* in spite of censorship. As an immaterial, informal distributing strategy common in totalitarian regimes the rumour is defined by its exteriority to official media channels and discourses. It spreads because of a desire for knowledge as well as heightened paranoia.⁷⁴ Its circulation is contingent on its credibility: the more credible the rumour, the longer it circulates. And it circulates through repetition: one person passes the information on to another, and so on. It spreads, then, through an affective engagement not only with information and knowledge but also with intersubjectivity. The rumour enables a form of collectivity through participation, which may lead to the kinds of biopolitical recalibrations – new knowledge, memories, inter-relations – that are central to *arte de conducta*.⁷⁵ In Bruguera's words, 'historical rumour' is 'an effective defence mechanism against the amnesia [of the] numerous and frequent re-editing[s] of Cuba's history'.⁷⁶ But it also offers a means to contribute to this process of re-editing, surely, since *Postguerra* quite clearly represents a model of counter-memory wherein, to borrow Foucault's words, 'those who are barred from writing, from producing their books themselves, from drawing up their own historical accounts . . . nevertheless do have a way of recording history, or remembering it, of keeping it fresh and of using it'.⁷⁷ This model is clearly driven by the materiality of the newspaper but perhaps sustained by the ephemerality of the rumour.

Through participation, *Postguerra* attempts to circumvent the monologism of Cuba: its internal control of borders, who has a say in the transmission of history, and when and how the exile (if at all) can be incorporated in the national imaginary. It shows that while the Cuban State may centralize the media, shaping a particular version of the national body, it is possible to instate some difference, some disagreement, therein. Through processes of democratic

cosmopolitanism, *Postguerra* projects a collective rejoinder to the totalizing spectacle of the Cuban news media. It charts a distinct version of history, one that literally includes the voice of the many, to project heterogeneous accounts of the present condition. This is a field of disjunctive subjectivities, their tremors affectively reverberating with a multitude of experiences of postwar life. The heterogeneity that the newspapers make possible is also an affect of the transnational underpinnings of Bruguera's project, as a form of mail art, as a sign of the biopolitical struggle that can suspend political and geographical borders. But this transnationalism is not a symptom of a supposed opening up of borders between Cuba and other nations. The censorship of the newspaper due to its attempts to render the national body more heterogeneous and more cosmopolitan by invitation of the exile, is testament to the fact that, in spite of the censorship, the newspaper registers an aspect of the Cuban national psyche that is otherwise without a voice. And if the censorship of this voice, or field of voices, leads to the burden of remembrance being dependent on rumour – an ephemeral form – or clandestine publishing and distribution, then it is again *arte de conducta* that can sustain and build resilience in the nation's biopolitical restructuring.

1994: The Cuban *balseros* crisis and bare life in America

Throughout the *Postguerra* newspapers there are some, though few, references to the *balseros*, the rafters, who had begun to leave in significant numbers in late 1993 (as noted above, this includes Kcho's drawing of the palm tree metamorphosing into an oar, and the photograph of the smiling *balseros*, Figs 2.6 and 2.9). But the main exodus of *balseros* would not take place until a few months after the attempted dissemination of the second edition of *Postguerra* and a month after the 1994 Havana Biennial, where the newspaper was meant to be disseminated and where Bruguera ended up showing a series of performance and installations under the rubric of *Postguerra*, but with distinct affects.

More than the newspapers, these performances and installations do focus on the plight of *balseros*, particularly the hundreds if not

thousands that had drowned on their way to the Florida Straits (it is estimated that one in four drowned; the numbers are not known). Because they are all similar in effect, description of one of these works will suffice: *Table of Salvation* (1994, Fig. 2.10), in Bruguera's words, is 'a monument to those [*balseros*] who have died trying to get to the other side',⁷⁸ and is comprised of a row of slabs of black marble that rest across a wall. Measuring 1.65m in length, the average height of a person in Cuba, the slabs are punctuated by a series of timbers sculpted in the shape of a hull's frame. The latter are conjoined to the marble by white cotton, which acts as a symbol of suspension or salvation. The repetition of the skeletal hulls and marble plans is intended to reflect 'an unpredictable finitude', the repeated and unknown number of deaths experienced during the exodus of Cuban *balseros*.⁷⁹ Such a work is doubtless moving, but it operates in a kind of profound melancholia that reflects a paralysis

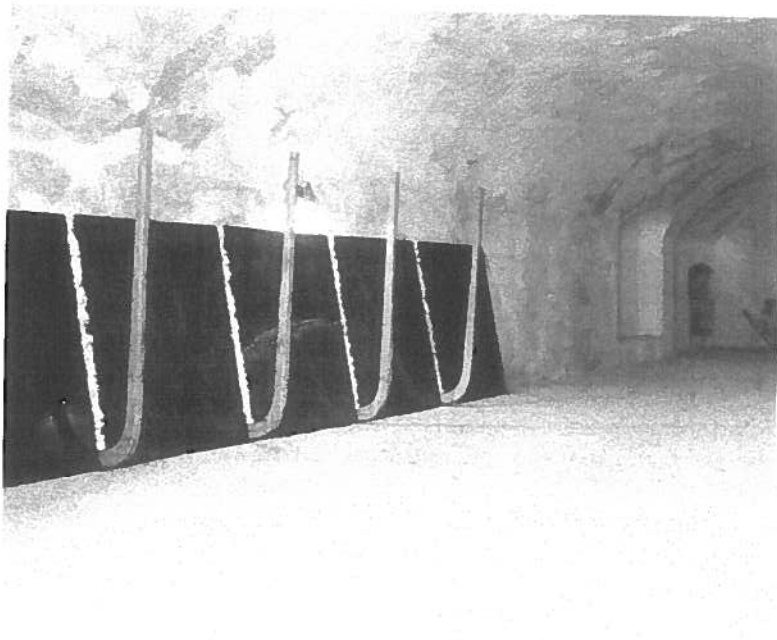


FIGURE 2.10 Tania Bruguera. *Tabla de Salvacion* (*Table of Salvation*), 1994. Installation of marble, wood, cotton. Courtesy of the artist.

of agency in the artist, more than a critique of the conditions that led to the mass exodus of *balseros* (malnourishment, sustained poverty, economic recession, ideological conflict). Bruguera often looks back toward such works and claims that the censorship imposed on her and the newspaper and the imprisonment of her friend and collaborator following the second edition led her to make overly symbolic work which fails to generate the affective dimensions of *arte de conducta*.⁸⁰ Tellingly, unlike the newspapers, Bruguera's performances and installations at the Biennial were not censored. This is the same with the Cuban artist Kcho, who presented a work at the Biennial comprised of found materials such as old shoes and broken vessels sculpted to resemble numerous small boats and arranged to point in the direction of Miami, 'alluding to the bricolage of Cuban boat-people: the manual building of rafts and the cultural survival of the diaspora'.⁸¹ I raise these works not to focus on their aesthetics but rather on the discourse of the Havana Biennial in which they were included at a moment of the supposed end of the Cold War, and at a moment when the geopolitics of the US and Cuba started to shape a completely different conception and attitude toward each other and the Cuban exile.

It would seem that during the 1994 Havana Biennial the Cuban state only feared those projects that allowed exiles a platform to express themselves and chart a constellation of heterogeneous histories like the broadsheets, rather than those works that invoked signifiers of exile and associated tragedies in relatively more abstract form (this may also explain tolerance of *Homenaje*). To put it another way, the censors seemed to tolerate images of and symbolic gestures toward the exile, but not the voice of the exile, which seemed to be perceived as dissensus. This is further evidenced by the censorship of another work invoking the voice of Cuban exiles. The Mexican photographer Lourdes Grobet was invited to exhibit work on the migrant workers of Tijuana, and had decided to include documentation of the experiences of Cuban exiles living in Mexico. These were exhibited alongside video interviews relaying the reasons why Cuban exiles left the island. As Camnitzer argues, '[t]he statements were strong for Cuban sensitivities', and clearly infringed on the amount to which the Cuban State would sanction the incorporation of the Cuban diaspora back into the nation's psyche and body. This is the case even in a context wherein the State was organizing talks with exiles, and on an international platform.

Paradoxically, all the works, censored or not and including Bruguera's newspaper, were intended to be shown in the exhibition the *Other Shore*, a node in the Biennial that focused on celebrating the cultural input of migrants and cultural diversity in various parts of the Third World. On the surface this curatorial theme may have seemed to continue the legacy of the inaugural 1984 Havana Biennial, curated by Mosquera, which harnessed diverse cultural energies and ecologies from the Third World as a means to celebrate what Terry Smith has termed the productively messy 'meeting of cultures'.⁸² But Bruguera's work, particularly the newspapers, and the work of her contemporary Grobet, demonstrated the farce of this task and of Cuba's cosmopolitan crisis in 1994. The biennial did not represent cosmopolitanism, but rather, in the *postguerra* era, it had to facilitate and embody processes of globalization. This would mean using art to attract tourist dollars and for cultural diplomacy. By internalizing globalization, Cuba paradoxically produced a 'pluralisation of borders' (Beck's term), including borders of intolerance to manage 'cosmopolitanism' and the flows of information: records, counter-memories that documented popular struggles of the national body's 'excess' spanning from 1959 to the Special Period.

But the cosmopolitan crisis would extend in new ways to the US at the very same moment. In August 1994, a month after the Havana Biennial closed and thus after the making of Bruguera's memorial *Table of Salvation* and the other works shown at the Biennial and part of the *Postguerra* series, the *balseros* crisis intensified in quite a radical way. Thousands attended riots at Havana's seaside wall of the Malecón. The riots eventuated in 30,305 Cuban refugees fleeing to the US via the Florida Straits using small boats and makeshift rafts (like the *balseros* before them, many died at sea): an event which had been in the making for some time.⁸³ The *balseros* who didn't perish found themselves intercepted by the US Coast Guard in an unprecedented move and taken to Guantanamo Bay. Most of them would face indefinite detention without recourse to seeking asylum in the US and then either be returned to Cuba or taken to a third nation. Many committed suicide or died while attempting to escape. The elderly, their carers and unsupervised children were granted asylum in the US on humanitarian grounds.

Up until this point, the US had maintained an open door policy for Cubans since the 1959 Revolution, accepting over a million of the island's refugees without question.⁸⁴ In fact, it had done so even

while it maintained far stricter immigration policies toward refugees from Caribbean nations such as Haiti, El Salvador and Nicaragua. These refugees came from right-wing totalitarian regimes that were supposedly pro-US (and often financially supported by it too) and were rejected and repatriated, likely to face execution.⁸⁵ In a very clear way, then, the US's new immigration policies toward Cubans were reflective of the kind that had long been imposed onto refugees from non-communist regimes. The shift was driven by the rise of a new political climate, that is, the postwar climate after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

If with the end of the Cold War globalization surged, it also brought with it what Beck terms 'globophobia': the rise of racial and ethnic tensions as a result of increasing proximity.⁸⁶ This manifested in the US through a desire for greater sovereignty and the upholding of a mythologized unity in the face of a seeming invasion of other bodies. Consequently, as the Berlin Wall fell, an anti-immigration movement in the West coast of America emerged in the early 1990s, focusing on a supposed influx of Latin Americans, including Cubans, Mexicans and Haitians who were deemed to be in excess of the nation and a danger to its prosperity. Tapping into this atmosphere of globophobia, Bill Clinton won the 1992 Presidential Election by critiquing George Bush's immigration policies and introducing new anti-Cuban refugee policies in August of 1994, just as in California the Republicans put forward a bill, Proposition 187, which called for the disbandment of all publicly funded welfare for undocumented migrants, including health care and all levels of education.

The effects of these shifts in policy and attitude signal an intensified displacement of the Cuban refugee and in particular the displacement and utter disenfranchisement of the *balseros* who left following the riots at the Malecón in 1994. This new condition for the Cuban refugee would not be reflected in Bruguera's practice until three years after these events, when she travelled to the US (for the first time) to complete a residency at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was here, as Johannes Birrenger observes, that Bruguera registered the extent to which 'the *balseros* were treated as parasites that need to be fished out of the water and shipped back'.⁸⁷ Their disenfranchisement is nothing if not a product of postwar, *postguerra* politics that saw a shift from the care of the Cuban refugee to its subjection to bare life under the new configurations of geopolitics. Bruguera produced an immersive installation in response, titled *Art*

in America (The Dream). Audiences had to hand over their identification in order to enter the installation, a dark 'cell-like space' where they encountered tarot card readers, prophesying the future, and were subjected to a series of interrogations based on the US citizenship test (performed by women acting as Immigration and Naturalization Service Officers). This is a work that speaks to the failure of the US's hospitality toward the refugee and migrant (Cuban or otherwise) in the midst of globophobia, and also to the impending doom that would ensue in the coming years.

As the constellation of *Art in America* and Bruguera's earlier works reveals, the postwar, *postguerra* condition extends beyond the borders of Cuba and beyond the temporal constraints of the immediate aftermath of 1989. This is not a situation of being 'post socialist' or postwar. Given that today the tools of governmentality used by the US to produce the conditions of bare life in Guantanamo Bay for Cuban refugees are clearly not singular gestures, but find their many repetitions and counterparts after 9/11, including for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib but also for refugees at the Woomera detention centre in Australia (which is the subject of the next chapter), the question arises of whether or not we are still living under and witnessing postwar, *postguerra* conditions as articulated by Bruguera's art. And if so, what other structures or strategies are available to resist and construct counter-memories in order to determine our dynamism?

CHAPTER THREE

Aftermath Photography, Temporal Loops and the Sublime of Biopolitics

Rosemary Laing's *to walk on a sea of salt*

Anachronism

Rosemary Laing's photographic series *to walk on a sea of salt* emerged in the aftermath of the *Tampa* and 9/11, and the parallel, global rise of detention centres for the incarceration of refugees and suspected terrorists (which at times were, and still are, seen as synonymous terms). In this era, Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib became household names around the world, but in Australia, another detention centre came to occupy the nation's imagination. Located in the South Australian desert, the Woomera detention centre opened in 1999 to imprison undocumented refugees who arrived on the nation's shores by boat. It immediately became mired in problems of overpopulation, mismanagement and inmate heat exhaustion. However, it was not until after the *Tampa* affair and 9/11, and during the intensified focus on refugees and border-protection in Australia and elsewhere, that the Woomera detention