

# Affective (Re)constructions of the Imaginary Caribbean and Caribbean Imaginary in Reggaeton Music Video: The Cases of *Calypso* and *La Gozadera*

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**Ellen Rebecca Bishell**

*Newcastle University*

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**Abstract:** Since the release of Daddy Yankee’s *Gasolina* in 2004 and the subsequent entrance of reggaeton music onto the global stage, contemporary artists and music video directors have had to negotiate between the needs to address the changing tastes and demands of local, national, regional, and international audiences. Applying an affective, systemic functional lens to the analyses of Luis Fonsi’s *Calypso* (2018) and Gente de Zona’s *La Gozadera* (2015), this article investigates the various musical and visual strategies taken in these videos to meet the expectations of international consumers while simultaneously constructing an agentic image of Caribbeanness. Attending to the often-neglected coexistence of hypervisibility and limited and/or conditioned mobility for Caribbean peoples, places, and cultural products in an age of global capitalism, it argues that these videos’ channeling and mobilization of affect in the reproduction of hegemonic tropes associated with the region creates a space in which they can be reconfigured and revalorized through a strategic appeal to the senses.

**Keywords:** affect; Caribbean Imaginary; imaginary Caribbean; music video; reggaeton

Following a series of internationally successful releases, reggaetonero Luis Fonsi told *Rolling Stone*: “you think of us [Latinos], and you think movement. You think party. I like to be able to translate that into music” (Exposito). His statement speaks not only to the centrality of music and rhythm to Latin American and Caribbean cultural expression, but also to the acknowledgement and commercially driven harnessing of external imaginaries of the region as a site for indulgence and consumption (Sheller).

Reggaeton is the latest in a long line of Caribbean musics to dominate the increasingly popular “Latin” music market. It is generally thought that the style emerged in the underground music scene of 1990s Puerto Rico, when amateur DJs and emcees began mixing and versioning the newly audible sounds of Jamaican dancehall and rap from the United States.<sup>1</sup> This was a practice that took place in the *caseríos* of San Juan among poor, black populations who were—and largely continue to be—socio-spatially marginalized according to Puerto Rico’s strict racial hierarchy. The combination of dancehall’s heavy computerized basslines—known as dembow—and raw, often violent vocals became a popular form of cultural expression for these communities, circulating widely and rapidly through informal distribution networks. However, when the music first garnered recognition from an “above ground” record label in 1994, it was seen as a form of cultural contagion; given that black culture, poverty, and by extension crime were inextricably linked in white European ideology

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1 Scholars have also noted the Dominican (Pacini Hernandez) and Panamanian (Twickel) influences that contributed to the early development of the genre.

(Hall, et al.), the emergence of reggaeton signified a “criminal” threat to national culture (Rivera). It was only through the release of Puerto Rican artist Daddy Yankee’s *Gasolina* in 2004, and the release of its music video on YouTube, that reggaeton became gradually—and reluctantly—accepted by the State thanks to its commercial success. Alongside artists’ movement from the street to the screen, reggaeton has been criticized for its increasingly whitened image. In what Wayne Marshall refers to as the shift from “música negra to reggaeton latino,” the importance of remaining “authentic” was supplanted by the commercial need to appeal to wider audiences.

The consumption and appropriation of Caribbean musics by Western—primarily North American—audiences predate the eminence of reggaeton in the Latin music market. From the international fascination with Cuban mambo and Trinidadian calypso in the 1950s (Waxer; Vogel) to the reggae music boom in the 1980s (Alleyne), Caribbean—and especially black Caribbean—cultural production has long been listened to and re-produced by non-Caribbean, non-black artists. Yet reggaeton’s uniqueness lies in the fact that its emergence coincided with an important change in the way we were consuming music. Music video, as the genre’s primary mode of circulation, has exposed the music and its artists to global hypervisibility. Owing to the intense flows of peoples, images, cultures, and capital in an age of advanced global capitalism, reggaeton is now also produced and disseminated across geographic and linguistic borders via crossovers and collaborations. While *Gasolina* marked the beginning of a truly global phase of reggaeton, the ubiquitous popularity of *Despacito* (2017) highlights a recent culmination of this international visibility; the subsequent re-make of the song with Canadian pop artist Justin Bieber is proof of and further fuel to reggaeton’s popularity amongst a new—and huge—English-speaking audience.

Bieber’s participation in the track and the resulting so-called “Despacito effect” certainly highlights the continuation and perpetuation of the cultural imperialism that has historically characterized the consumption and appropriation of Caribbean musics, whereby the Caribbean artist becomes the exotic “Other” (see Rivera-Rideau and Torres-Leschnik). As Shane Vogel suggests in his discussion of the 1950s calypso craze, by harnessing and reproducing the “inauthenticity” of the genre associated with external perceptions and depictions of the region, Caribbean artists shore up a (precarious) agency to gain or maintain commercial success. However, with the advanced technology now increasingly at reggaeton artists’ and music video directors’ disposition, there is something more critical to be explored in how collaborations between local and diasporic Caribbean—rather than local and international—identities can intervene in existing power relations.

Cuban duo Gente de Zona and Nuyorican Marc Anthony’s *La Gozadera* and Puerto Rican Luis Fonsi and UK-based Stefflon Don’s *Calypso* are reggaeton videos in which this collaborative element is particularly significant. Released in

2015 and 2018 respectively, *La Gozadera* and *Calypso* have had considerable commercial success in Latin America, North America, and Europe, entering into the top ten in Latin charts and gaining monumental numbers of YouTube views, shares, and downloads. Making (distinct) lyrical and aesthetic appeals to local, national, regional, diasporic, and global audiences through the strategic channeling of affective cinematographic and editing techniques, these are two contemporary productions that exemplify the diversifying ways in which reggaeton artists are addressing personal, political, and pragmatic agendas. As we will see, they begin to recuperate the “authenticity” of reggaeton that has been largely erased through international crossovers and processes of *blanqueamiento* while simultaneously, and paradoxically, recalling and reframing external perceptions to appeal to foreign tastes.

Adopting a lens of affect to emphasize the importance of the Caribbean’s sensory appeal in both local and global contexts, this article provides a contextually grounded comparative analysis of *Calypso* and *La Gozadera*. In a Spinozian understanding, affect refers to a type of *feeling* that is not just psychologically emotional, but also physically embodied (Deleuze). Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg effectively describe it as a movement or passage of “intensities” that circulate between “bodies and worlds” and “stick” to them (1), showing how affective relations are spread, shared, and inter-embodied. The “affective turn” in the twenty-first century has led to increased attention on the role of affect in the moving image, both on horizontal levels between subjects of the image and between the image and its viewer. The presence of affect in cinema has recently shifted into the study of Latin American and Caribbean film, and has been theorized as crucial in establishing strategic relations that extend from the screen to the body of the spectator (see, for example, Podalsky; Pérez Melgosa; Moraña and Sánchez Prado). It is this most recent framing of affect in terms of audiovisual phenomena with which this article engages. It explores how artists’ and music video directors’ affective reproduction, reinterpretation, and resignification of local, national, and regional Caribbean identities can act as a strategy for navigating the tensions between the changing tastes and demands of international markets and the need to appeal to and represent the experiences of local audiences. Specifically, it adapts Kay O’Halloran’s model for systemic functional-multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the multifarious oratorical, musical, performative, cinematographic, and editing strategies taken in the videos to make the local and regional universally comprehensible and appealing while simultaneously constructing an agentic image of Caribbeanness.

Drawing on Michèle Praeger’s notions of the “imaginary Caribbean” and the “Caribbean Imaginary,” it provides a two-part discussion to examine how these videos enlist and reframe external perceptions of the Caribbean to create such an agentic image. First, it analyzes the videos’ depictions of place and space to explore how external perceptions of the tropicalized Caribbean, and of

Cuba as a land frozen-in-time, are harnessed and reproduced in a commercial endeavor to meet the demands of foreign consumers. Second, borrowing from Matthew Edwards' discussion of *La Gozadera's* "mundo-aldea" (456-457), it considers how the videos' party scenes construct a space in which these external perceptions can be "played with" and "bent," to quote Praeger (4), as well as the extent to which they serve to trouble and/or rework power relations between the Caribbean and the "dominant culture."<sup>2</sup> In the case of *La Gozadera*, we will also see how the party has an added political dynamic in its reconfiguration of relationships among Latin American nations. Ultimately, it argues that these videos' mobilization of affect in the reproduction of hegemonic tropes associated with Caribbean peoples and places creates a space, albeit narrow, in which they can be reconfigured and revalorized through a strategic appeal to the senses.

### **Place and Space: Harnessing and Reproducing the Imaginary Caribbean**

*Calypso's* video begins with a sequence of extreme long shots over crystal waters, exposing a small island on which Luis Fonsi stands alone and gazes out towards his surroundings. Its Puerto Rican location is revealed only by virtue of the on-screen text as the song begins. Underpinned by an aesthetic of natural, primitive beauty and anonymity, it evokes a sense of utopian unboundedness—a *u-topos*, or "no place," outside of time and civilization, much like Thomas More's own fictional island of Utopia. The mythologization of Latin American peoples and places—captured by Alejo Carpentier's concept of "lo real maravilloso"—has often assimilated the region with primitivism and barbarism, its seemingly fictitious or magical aspects symbolizing the threat and danger of the Other (see Beauchesne and Santos). Here, however, its utopian allegory is elicited by an exoticized remoteness. Enhanced hues of blues and yellows connoting a sun-sand-sea imagery and the use of toplighting to intensify the illusion of sunlight over the scene reproduce key tropes associated with Caribbean paradise. If it is primitive, then it is so in the sense of being untouched: a "premodern" space with symbolic charge as an icon of Edenism (Thompson 12).

Krista Thompson explains that visual icons of the Caribbean region have undergone a process of "tropicalization," in which generic, paradisiacal images of islands created through representational strategies have come to symbolize both distinct islands as well as the region as a whole. Such images, which have transcended linguistic and geographic boundaries through their appropriation

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2 I use "dominant culture" throughout this article to stay true to Praeger's original use of the term when referring to the "white Western world" (4). Debates surrounding the "correct" use of terminology (Western/Eastern, Global North/Global South) in Latin American and Caribbean studies are ongoing. The collection of essays and responses in the edited volume *Critical Terms in Caribbean and Latin American Thought* (Martínez-San Miguel, et al.) provides a particularly comprehensive overview of these debates.

in literature, film, music, and visual art, construct particular ideals of the region in the Western mind's eye. The sounds, sights, and smells of the Caribbean as a Garden of Eden depicted through these works would trigger a centuries-long fascination of and yearning for sensory and bodily immersion in the landscape and among its peoples.

The exoticization of Fonsi's remote island mirrors such utopian fantasies, its embodiment of the Caribbean sublime extending to foreign senses through the audio-visual realm. However, it is also worth pointing out that the video's exotic imagery stands in stark contrast with the reality of Puerto Rican landscape at the time of its release in 2018, just one year after devastation was brought upon the island by Hurricane Maria. Such conspicuous contradictions, it seems, are crucial to securing the video's—and the artists'—commercial appeal. Palimpsestic reproductions of tropicalized tropes affirm and reinforce geographies of desire through the “explicit interaction between aesthetics and ideology” (Pratt 201), that is, the construction of an image according to what is perceived and expected in the mind's eye of viewers rather than what is “real.” The postcolonial desire for control and sensory immersion is appeased via the fictitious, somewhat compensatory utopia that masks any sign of dystopian spoilage. Particularly interesting in *Calypso*'s framing of this paradise is the use of extreme long shots from a bird's eye view; conjuring in the viewer what Mary Louise Pratt calls a “monarch-of-all-I-survey scene,” the landscape is hereby organized, mastered, and appropriated according to imperial ideology (205). In turn, the following lyrics “tu cuerpo frente al mar, mezclando arena con sal” effect a rhetoric of proximity—it is a paradise that we have mastered, and that we can now consume.

By using this ambiguous, tropicalized narrative setting as a backdrop for sensual pleasure and indulgence, and especially given the viewer's enhanced command and mastery of the scene, *Calypso*'s island reproduces fantasies associated with Praeger's “imaginary Caribbean.” In her study of French Caribbean literary and theoretical works, she theorizes the Caribbean region as an “imaginary cultural construction,” using the term “imaginary” to denote “not only the representation of minorities to themselves and to the dominant culture but also the way the dominant culture represents the Caribbean” (4). In other words, these representations are socially constructed through the interplay of internal representational strategies and external touristified imaginaries. Certainly, the cinematographic creation of this imperial gaze in *Calypso* can be seen to replicate the oft-conveyed exoticized imaginaries of the region summoned by popular discourse and touristic works. Drawing on the wealth of literature surrounding tourism's embeddedness in an ocularcentric culture (see Hollinshead, for example), we can consider the viewers of the music videos with which this article engages as kinds of “tourists” in themselves. After all, both the physical process of tourism and the images depicted by media forms

involve the continuous flow of peoples, cultures, and desires, and are important conductors in symbolic sensory circuits (Crouch et al. 12).

*La Gozadera's* music video presents a context in which an appeal to the senses of the viewer reflects that of real interventions in local landscapes on the part of Cuba's tourism industry. Across decades of socio-economic turbulence and cultural change, Cuba has been branded as an island frozen-in-time, alluring tourists with the promise of affective, otherly encounters (see Ogden, "Lonely Planet"). Namely, invitations to gaze upon Club Tropicana's *mulata rumbera*, to experience "real" Cubanness and cultural intimacy through a stay in a *casa particular*, and to taste traditional foods that "[juegan] con los sentidos" (La Guarida), have contributed to the construction of an imaginary Cuba rooted in the desire for nostalgic, authentic and, importantly, *sensual* experience. The video's framing of a more locally grounded depiction of Havana as an ostensibly authentic site of sensuality and cultural intimacy draws on and reanimates the aforementioned images associated with an imaginary Cuba. From its initial dolly shot, which exposes several *almendrones* queuing up to a junction before Gente de Zona's broken-down vehicle, the video's seemingly unposed scenes of day-to-day Cuban life reinforce palimpsestic tropes of Cuba associated with nostalgic longing for a simpler time. This "aesthetics of nostalgia," as Dunja Fehimović notes in her analyses of Cuban cinematic works, is symbolized by "gold-tinted images of decay and ruin" (181). Considering nostalgia as a kind of sentimental wistfulness, a longing for the past, we can recognize the role of sepia-imbued aesthetics in adding a sentimental value to *La Gozadera's* images of peeling paint, free-hanging electrical cables, and time worn walls, their prevalence bolstered by long shots giving visual priority to the narrative setting.

Similar shots are used to capture the perimeters of the street scenes: buildings of multiple levels with laundry hanging from balconies and windows covered by metal grates, elements which Alejo Carpentier considers "*constant*es que pueden ser considerados como específicamente cubanas" (61). These *constant*es—as emphatically Cuban aesthetic markers of antiquity, decay, and habitation—are crucial in turning what could be seen as cold, historical, and monumental into an intimate, living, and lived-in space. The lyrical narrative of "la cosa está bien dura, la cosa está divina" has a similar allegory, connoting as it does the shift from hardship to resolution associated with the "authentic" Cuban practice of *resolver*. Accordingly, the *constant*es depicted in *La Gozadera's* imbrication of public and private spaces can be gazed upon and mobilized in the mind's eye of the viewer as affective sites for intimate and authentic cultural encounters, each extending and emplacing a non-conscious—or, rather, not-fully-conscious—sense or sensation of Cubanness. I use not-fully-conscious because, while affect "does not so much reflect or think" as it does *act* (Seigworth and Gregg 2), directorial decisions can be made to channel it in certain ways in order to appeal to the senses of international consumers.

We might therefore consider such decisions as strategies to construct an (artificial) image of Cuba, into which the foreign viewer can step back in time and satisfy their desire for authentic, intimate cultural encounters. Indeed, in her discussion of the island's most recent tourism campaign, *Auténtica Cuba*, Rebecca Ogden argues that such choreographed depictions of authenticity can be considered as “strategic exploitation[s] of the island’s status as a singular site of supposedly authentic, person-to-person connection in an inauthentic world” (“Living the Brand” 80). Similarly, then, by bridging a gap between public and private spaces and adapting to the post-modern tourist’s quest for authentic and/or alternative cultures, *La Gozadera*’s strategic channeling of affect could be seen as a commercial tactic to engage with international consumers’ affective desires and expectations.

The conspicuous difference between open and intimate space in *Calypso* also provides an interesting example of how these videos’ aesthetics can be staged in order to meet the demands of foreign audiences through the channeling of affect. While *La Gozadera*’s narrative setting of urban Havana remains consistent throughout, *Calypso* uses cross-cutting techniques to redirect the viewer’s attention to different places. We see a rather dramatic shift, for example, as the video moves from Fonsi’s picturesque island to capture (mundane) activities at play in the homes of various residents. Here, a modification in the aesthetics of the *mise-en-scène* marks a rupture with the previous setting’s depiction of a tropicalized Caribbean paradise. For example, the uses of color and lighting in the filming of everyday scenes, such as residents ironing and reading the newspaper, are appreciably more subtle than those used in the filming of the island. This evokes a more naturalistic indication of the Caribbean *quotidian*, contradicting and somewhat problematizing the paradisiacal connotations of Fonsi’s tropical paradise.

The relative anonymity of these scenes equally infers a more *intimate* continuation of the generalized and anonymized Caribbean ideal represented by the island; while Fonsi’s solitary presence reinforces the fantasy of the deserted and “exploitable” desert island—as Columbus said, “de [las islas] he tomado posesión...y no me fue contradicho” (qtd. in Ramos Pérez and González Quintana 133)—the video’s depiction of private spaces in residents’ homes reinserts a sense of personal and intimate connection. A notable example of the embodiment of intimacy is the video’s recurrent image of an elderly man in the bathroom of his house, where the appeal to the senses is heightened through the use of *staccato* camerawork. In this instance, the camera is hand-held rather than attached to a dolly, crane, or similar, thus foregrounding the viewer’s subjectivity and increasing the intimacy of their viewing experience (Kruger 237). Therefore, rather than publicizing private spaces to emphasize specific and individualized performances of cultural identity, as in *La Gozadera*, *Calypso*’s juxtaposition of these spaces harnesses imaginaries of the generic Caribbean

picturesque and supplements it with intimacy, thus reinforcing and adding to the region's associated sensory appeal.

As thus far demonstrated, *Calypso* and *La Gozadera* utilize representational strategies to make use of and adapt hegemonic ideologies associated with Caribbean landscapes, peoples, and cultural identities. In their respective affect-mobilizing depictions of the imaginary Caribbean as a tropicalized region genericized by serendipity and of imaginary Cuba as a localized and sensualized embodiment of cultural intimacy, these videos construct a universally comprehensible version of the local that meets the expectations and fantasies of international—primarily North American and European, non-Spanish-speaking—audiences. Ultimately, the strategies taken to appeal to such demands allow a certain freedom to navigate commercial imperatives; but there is certainly an accompanying constraint in the reproduction of the imaginary Caribbean and its interpellation as a consumable stereotype.

### **Hosts of the Party: Reframing and Revalorizing Perceptions**

Yet through the strategic channeling of affect in these videos, a space is simultaneously created in which the imaginary Caribbean encounters the Caribbean Imaginary. Whereas the former concept pertains to the realm of *representation*, the latter refers to the ways in which Caribbean subjects “bend” and “play with” such representations (Praeger 4). In going beyond mere representation, then, *La Gozadera* and *Calypso* can potentially carve out a space in which the Imaginary rather pertains to “the realm of possibilities and imagination,” of “freedom and invention” (2).

In Matthew Edwards' discussion of *La Gozadera*'s “stationary politics” (456), further connoting the land frozen-in-time, he draws on Rita Segato's notion of the “*mundo-aldea*.” As Segato explains, amidst the intense conditions of global capitalism and increasingly aggressive global markets, the *mundo-aldea* captures the elements of “traditional” community life and reconfigures them to assimilate and adapt to these new, often demanding circumstances (597). While Edwards insightfully suggests that the global interactions implied in *La Gozadera*'s uniting of different Caribbean and Latin American nations, cultures, and localities facilitates the establishment and sustainment of affective relationships (457), I argue that this culmination of local, regional, and global forces additionally facilitates the affective ability to harness, redress, and resignify hegemonic imaginaries of Caribbeanness within this “global village.” As is demonstrated by the following examples, while the channeling of affect in both *Calypso* and *La Gozadera* does not necessarily imply a complete *subversion* of key tropes associated with Praeger's imaginary Caribbean, the videos can nonetheless enlist them and revalorize them in the *mundo-aldea* to create a more powerful or agentic image of Caribbeanness by establishing the region as the “host” of the party.

We can apply this notion of the *mundo-aldea*—as a space in which the imaginary Caribbean can be bent and played with but not fully subverted—to *Calypso*'s party, where the residents depicted in the video's more intimate scenes of everyday life join Fonsi's *fiesta*. These scenes fuse the tropicalized connotations of the island with the paradoxically anonymous intimacy of the houses; the party's generic interior and unidentifiable location reiterate anonymity and mystery, while props such as inflatables and sunglasses reinforce hedonistic imaginaries associated with the region's tropicalized perceptions and sensory appeal. However, by bringing these tropes into this particular party/*mundo-aldea* which revolves around enjoyment and *insouciance*, the video establishes the Caribbean as the *host* of this hedonism, and the artists as agents with the prerogative to allow—or deny—the “dominant culture” entry. The gathering of young *and* elderly people in the party is a notable example of how the video bends these external perceptions; the spreading of affect between these bodies, separated by age but connected through intimate proximity in the *mundo-aldea*, creates a sense of both family and familiarity, almost humanizing the hedonism associated with the island. In this way, the stereotypes are not rejected, *per se*, but rather acknowledged and revalorized.

The affective dimensions of this pan-Caribbean multicultural collectivity become further apparent when examining *Calypso*'s musical components. It is interesting that calypso (as a music genre) has been considered an “audible entanglement,” reworking and reproducing articulations of nation and diaspora through its capacity to cohere social, cultural, and political relations and expressions (Guilbault 41). Contemporary reggaeton is also a hybrid music style; its socio-sonic roots and routes are plural, complex, and overlapping (Marshall et al.). Through *Calypso*'s superimposition of steel pan sounds and Afro-Caribbean rhythms onto reggaeton beats, this hybridity is multiplied and intensified. Albeit stylistically distinct, the heavy rhythms of these genres share the affective power to extend “beyond the ‘mind’ to the ‘body’” (Finnegan 340), engendering in the listener a haptic sensation of interwoven—rather than separated—Caribbean sounds. By bringing these pan-Caribbean musical and linguistic elements together in the *mundo-aldea*, where the styles, languages, and accents are unified and celebrated “al ritmo de amor y derroche,” *Calypso* constructs a space in which creative collective identifications come to signify closeness, affection, and solidarity.

Such musicalized and verbalized reproductions of pan-Caribbean connectedness and mobilization of affect are buttressed by one particular point of the video, at which Stefflon Don raises her head to meet the gaze of the camera upon a musical break. For Carol Vernallis, in an absence of music, the image has an increased ability to connect with us on an embodied level through a “flooding” of the senses (177). The viewer's attention is therefore centered on the (oppositional) gaze of the performer, with no musical cues to distract from

the gaze's affective power (see Mulvey; hooks). As María Cepeda identifies in her analysis of Shakira's *La Tortura*, a return of the gaze towards the camera can be considered an acknowledgement of voyeurism (245-246); it does not *free* the subject from the power of the imaginary Caribbean, but rather bends its representations to construct an image of Caribbeanness rooted in agency, individual defiance, and resistance. Don's (partial) absence from the party can also be seen to symbolize her position in the Caribbean diaspora, from the "outside looking in," which arguably represents her advantage of being able to manipulate the imaginary Caribbean fantasy. The video's affective musical and visual strategies are thus interlaced to convey the message that the world is welcome at the *fiesta*—but in this imaginary *mundo-aldea*, it is the Caribbean who hosts, making use of external perceptions in order to shore up a kind of precarious power and a position in the market.

In *La Gozadera's mundo-aldea*, it is significant that while the party unfolds in Havana, "la gozadera" itself is formed through a complex interplay of local, national, regional, and diasporic Latin American and Caribbean symbols and identities. The hitherto discussed aesthetic markers of Cuban cultural *constantas* appear as indicators of what Michael Billig calls "banal nationalism," the flagging of the nation through daily, mundane experience of nationness.<sup>3</sup> Here, the fact that Cuba's status as host is indicated through the appeal to the banal denotes an important shift between ideology and affect. In the 1960s—at the beginning of the Revolution—Cuba was a kind of symbolic leader in the region. It was also seen as the origin of ideas about pan-Latin American solidarity, as expressed in José Martí's "Nuestra América." In *La Gozadera*, this solidarity is reconfigured not as an ideological project, but rather as a kind of affective, post-political union. Yet, it should be noted that such markers of banal nationalism or "homeland space" (Billig, *Banal Nationalism* 43) are not always recognizable to those for whom it is not a homeland. As previously discussed, *La Gozadera's* video can enlist and reproduce Cuba's external imaginaries associated with authenticity, nostalgia, and cultural intimacy to appeal to the modern tourist's—or viewer's—desire for such sensory experiences. Its role on the world stage has changed; it no longer has a political or ideological exceptionalism, but rather an *affective* exceptionalism. In order to have an impact on international audiences and exert influence over the foreign gaze, dominant perceptions of the island must be more dynamically harnessed, affectively channeled, and reconfigured in a way that is universally comprehensible.

Through the depiction of heat, and through the performances of flagged bodies who both physically and emotionally embody their own nation but unite

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3 I adopt Rogers Brubaker's use of the term "nationness" to better understand nationalism as a mobile and contingent phenomenon, one that does not work simply within the boundaries of ascribed nationality but is rather a "changeable product of collective action" (Calhoun 59).

in performance, *La Gozadera* conveys a more explicit expression of nationness which seemingly moves away from the local and towards a pan-Latin experience. These more explicit performances of national identity are a form of what Billig originally termed “hot nationalism.” In contrast to “cold” or banal nationalism, hot nationalism signals a more explicit, often politically orientated expression of national identity and belonging in which greater “emotional energy” is invested in symbols of nationness (44). However, the distinction between hot and cold forms of nationalism has since been widely interrogated and reconfigured. The hot-cold dichotomy cannot sufficiently explain the motivations for different types of national reproduction; as Billig realizes in response to such arguments, we cannot assume that the history of nationalism can be generalized as having just one temperature (“Imagining of Politics” 314). Michael Skey rather suggests that the reproduction of nationness can “heat up” and “cool down” as a result of increasing global flows of people, culture, and capital. Considering the gradations of these temperatures in the context of *La Gozadera’s mundo-aldea* can aid us in forming a more nuanced understanding of the “force” or “forces of encounter” (Seigworth and Gregg 2) by which distinct and more generic cultural identities are enacted, reproduced, and resignified through embodied meaning-making foregrounding emotion and affect.

We might paradoxically consider the video’s depiction of heat to be at the cooler end of this spectrum, as it were, in that its reproduction of nationness is less *explicit* than it is *implicit*. For example, the warm colors of the sepia-tinted setting are further enhanced through the careful modification of lighting, ensuring that rays of sunlight fall on the street where the action takes place. This functions as a form of what Gustavo Pérez Firmat describes as “weak exoticism,” producing an atmosphere that is affective to the viewer on both a physical and imaginative level (Cruikshank 117). Such scenes are further intensified by the special effects used in the production of steam, which emerges from the engine of the broken-down vehicle and lingers among the performers in the *mundo-aldea*. Understanding warmth as a key trope of both Cuban *and* wider Caribbean sensory and sensual experience, the use of steam in the video can be seen as a visual manifestation of the spreading of affect. It is through such metaphorical depictions of heat, Cruikshank argues, that affect is “qualified with a variety of feelings and sensual encounters—both physical and imagined—that flow out of the desire to differentiate [the Caribbean’s] *atmósfera* from [one’s] own reality” (118). The sense of human warmth and lived-in-ness elicited in the video’s depiction of the Cuban *constantes* is hereby supplemented by a reinforcement of tropicalized tropes associated with a more generic image of Caribbeanness.

On the warmer end of the spectrum, I suggest that the flagged body in *La Gozadera* is less a form of *hot nationalism* than a strategic *heating up of nationness* in the affective enactment of a pan-Latin cultural identity. This is especially apparent when we consider the performance of the painted dancers as what Nicholas

Cook calls a “complementation” of the music, resulting from the manipulation of words, pictures, and music in a given context (105). For example, the shots in which the actors dance in unison coincide with lyrics referencing distinct national symbols such as Puerto Rico’s “arroz con habichuela,” as well as with those which embody cultural connectedness such as “del Caribe somos tú y yo.” These insinuations of cultural cohesion are reinforced as the velocity of the drumbeat increases and intensified continuity editing accelerates the rate of camera movement between the flagged bodies, thus heating up the lyrics’ articulation of a diverse yet united pan-Latin community.

However, while *La Gozadera’s* depiction of both heat and painted dancers incontestably contributes to the construction of a pan-Caribbean and/or pan-Latin community, I suggest that this reconfiguration of place and space is a strategic maneuver for both pragmatic and political ends. First, drawing on Skey’s argument that the heating up of nationness is a result of rapidly increasing global flows of people, culture, and capital, the construction of a more intelligible Latin image can be seen as a commercial imperative to meet the expectations of foreign audiences. In this way, the orchestration of a pan-Latin space facilitates the video’s and artists’ insertion into—and substantiates their position in—the aforementioned universalized “Latin music” market. Second, then, the creation of this *mundo-aldea* through the video’s pan-Latin cultural connotations opens up a more visible space in which it can revalorize Cuba as the host. Indeed, in the heated-up enactment of pan-Latin cultural identity, “el mundo se está sumando a la fiesta de los latinos”; but the region is “loqueando desde Cuba,” and it is from this particular *aldea* that “el mundo se entera.”

Its host status here is not associated with the country’s socialist internationalism project of the 1960s and 1970s; there is rather a shift towards a kind of nationalism that centers on the desire to take its place among equal or equivalent nations. The party bridges political divides that have arisen between Cuba and other nations since 1959, highlighted by the exclusion of Cuba from various Latin American and Caribbean political and economic organizations. In essence, it is a kind of redemptive celebration of pan-*latinidad* by which Cuba claims a new role in the region and, via the depiction of this shift through music video, on the world stage. The release in slow motion of the Cuban flag from a balcony, in particular, captures and sustains our attention and emotion on this specific place. Similarly, while the painted dancers collectively construct the image of a pan-Latin space, the dancer who wears the Cuban flag remains in the forefront and is the one who pivots to meet the gaze of the camera. Albeit in subtle ways, *La Gozadera’s mundo-aldea* is therefore used to bend and play with external perceptions of imaginary Cuba as a place that can be mastered, appropriated, and consumed by the foreign tourist or viewer. The video rather constructs an image of Cubanness that is more agentic, autonomous, and capable of troubling these power relations; not only is Cuba established as the host of a pan-Latin party

to which the world is invited, but it remains the most visible cultural identity of all its guests. We might therefore see it as a declaration of a new kind of presence that Cuba desires to have in the world, achieved through an affective reconfiguration of local, national, regional, diasporic, and global relationships.

## Conclusion

In considering the confrontation between the imaginary Caribbean and the Caribbean Imaginary, Praeger says that “put most simply, a global ideology allows the individual more freedom than one emanating from a particular community” (171). Yet in the case of *Calypso* and *La Gozadera*, the “freedom” to negotiate uneven power relations and navigate the global music market rather emanates from the specific way in which this “global ideology” is affectively harnessed, reframed, and revalorized.

These videos’ aesthetic and musical harnessing of dominant external perceptions of the region can be viewed as strategic imitations of the imaginary Caribbean for commercial ends. Owing to their palimpsestic, staged, and affective reproductions of an anonymous, tropicalized utopia supplemented by the intimacy of the everyday and an authentic, nostalgic, and lived-in space grounded in local sensual experience, these videos captivate the viewer through an appeal to the senses. Furthermore, through *Calypso*’s creation of a generic Caribbean image and *La Gozadera*’s construction of a pan-Latin party to which the world is invited, the videos become universally comprehensible and appealing, facilitating their assimilation into an existing and increasingly popular “Latin music” market. And, crucially, the strategic incorporation of diasporic Caribbean artists enhances these videos’ potential to navigate the demands of diverse audiences.

I have argued that through the channeling of affect, these videos’ party scenes come to symbolize a *mundo-aldea* where hegemonic imaginaries of the region can be acknowledged, reinterpreted, and revalorized. *Calypso*’s humanization of hedonism in the party’s embodiment of familial and familiar interaction, the visual enactment of defiance and resistance epitomized by the musical break punctuating Stefflon Don’s gaze towards the camera, and the strategic placing of Cuba in the foreground of the pan-Latin community constructed through the heated up performance of nationness all demonstrate how the *mundo-aldea* becomes a site in which the Caribbean Imaginary can play with and bend the representations of the imaginary Caribbean. Through the strategies taken to establish the Caribbean and Cuba respectively as the hosts of the party, *Calypso* and *La Gozadera* construct a more agentic image of regional and local cultural identities, intervening in existing power relations between the Caribbean and the “dominant culture.”

The artists and directors of the videos with which this article has engaged are not so much “caught between” the universality of Latin music and the “regional particularities” of the actors, as Praeger suggests is the case with the Caribbean writers studied in her own work (175), but can rather straddle the two, using this in-between position as a tool to navigate between local and foreign ideologies and imaginaries. Extrapolating from the strategic potential to harness and revalorize external perceptions of the Caribbean in these videos’ aesthetic and musical channeling of affect to the wider—and expanding—repertoire of diasporic and trans-Caribbean reggaeton collaborations, these cultural products clearly provide a valuable example of how the tensions between the imaginary Caribbean and Caribbean Imaginary are differently dealt with, experienced, and negotiated through the audio-visual medium. I suggest, then, that the strategies taken to channel affect in audio-visual content are beneficial sites for future inquiry into how ideologies emanating from “particular communities” and localized cultural expression can, in fact, shore up more of a “freedom” to manipulate global ideologies and hierarchical power dynamics.

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