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Chapter 6

Translocating the Caribbean, Positioning Im/Mobilities: The Sonic Politics of Las Krudas

from Cuba

Julia Roth

'Qué vienes del norte, yo sé que no es así,
del Caribe pa' todo el mundo, y en Cuba te
conocí!'

[That you come from the North, I know it's
not true,
from the Caribbean all over the world, and in
Cuba I got to know you!¹]

Olivia Prendes²

In the course of the current acceleration of travel and the circulation of goods, people, and ideas via new communication technologies, transculturality, transnationalism, and mobility are frequently considered in a positive light as a way of crossing borders and boundaries. In the Americas in particular, transcultural and transnational processes can be traced back to a long legacy of often enforced mobility and migration such as colonization and the transnational slave trade. Respectively, the region has for centuries been a site of the creolization of cultures and ideas. Discussing the Cuban queer-of-diaspora hip hop band Las Krudas' interventions, the article focuses on the unequally distributed structures that decide who can be mobile and move while restricting and hindering movement and mobility for many. Drawing on a selection of song lyrics and videos by as well as on an interview with Las Krudas, this paper examines the ways in which Las Krudas employ hip hop as a means for rendering problematic and negotiating the persistent worldwide power structures in form of stratified migration and citizen regimes. On the other hand, their interventions serve in order to celebrate and empower creolized positions and claim recognition for non-hegemonic positions—and for the Caribbean respectively—as a site of queer-feminist intersectional knowledge production. Against this backdrop, this chapter takes a look at the dialectical—or at least ambivalent—character

¹ My translation

² Quoting popular hip hop lyrics, interview, Roth 2014.

of mobilization and transculturation. Such a take on mobilities, transculturalities, and flows might contribute to a more differentiated discussion and theorizing of the long legacy of received entanglements in the Americas as well as the respectively ambiguous and manifold character and current forms of movements.

Being located at the center of the Caribbean basin, Cuba has played a central role for international trade and politics for centuries. The island was a crucial center of the transnational slave trade, which enabled the wealth of Western regions and moreover produced luxury goods such as sugar for the rich countries (cf. Mintz). Cuba has also served as a geostrategic site for European colonial powers and more recently for the US. When it comes to inter-American (and international) relations and spaces of entanglements, Cuba provides a special and ambiguous case. With the growing power of the US, the island served as important location for predominantly US-American companies (cf. Ceceña). Right after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the USA imposed an economic, political, and financial embargo on the island in 1960, restricting most exchanges between the two spaces. Ideological feuds on both sides and Cuba's control of the media and internet access further make the exchange and circulation of ideas a difficult one. At the same time, the USA allows Cubans who leave the island to stay once they make it to US-American soil under its "wet food, dry food" policy. While Cuban President Raúl Castro has loosened regulations for visas, it is still particularly difficult for Cubans to travel, due to financial hardship, but also because most countries do not provide Cubans easy access. These dis/entanglements and im/mobilities on the macro level are well studied. This chapter is in turn particularly interested in the not-so-obvious and alternative or counter-hegemonic circulations and interweavements that crisscross such metanarratives from a genderqueer perspective and in sonic form.

Las Krudas, from Cuba ...

The all-female hip hop band Las Krudas Cubensí was founded in 1999 by Odaymara Cuesta (Pesita), Olivia Prendes (Pelusa), and Odalys Cuesta (Wanda) in Havana. The three artists were cofounders of the first post-revolutionary Havana-based black lesbian-run organization OREMI in 1996. Oremi

means “close friend” in Yoruba, hence the name evokes a West African legacy. In 1997, the three artists united as the street theater group *Agrupación de Creación Alternativa CUBENSI* and performed in the streets of Havana. The group became internationally known under the name of their street theater groups *Tropazancos* and *Gigantería*, both founded in 2000. However, being dependent on the donations by tourists in the street made it difficult for them to survive. As Las Krudas themselves put it (cf. the documentary “Queen of Myself. Las Krudas d’Cuba”), they started to “revolutionize” in the streets. They thereby situated their politics clearly within the rhetoric of the continuing process of the revolution as claimed by Fidel Castro in his famous 1961 speech to the intellectuals “Palabras a los intelectuales” [Words to intellectuals], in which he claimed that “within the Revolution, everything goes; against the Revolution, nothing” (1961). By situating their interventions clearly within the “glorious revolution,” Cuban artists and intellectuals can utter relatively clear critique, as long as they do not question their solidarity with the revolutionary state.³ However, Las Krudas resisted the Castro government by insisting on addressing and fighting racist, sexist and homophobic inequalities experienced most harshly by queer women of color.

In 1998, the three artists performed for the first time as Las Krudas at the Cuban hip hop festival in Havana. Women have participated in the rapidly growing Cuban hip hop scene from its beginning in the early 1990s. While there were no female rappers at the first hip hop festival held in Havana in 1995, already the second festival could count on performances by the all-female group *Instinto* and the rapper *Magia MC*, who was part of the duo *Obsesión*. Since then, the number of female hip hop artists has continuously been increasing and diversifying in Cuba.

The Cuban state had been supporting the festival since the end of the 1990s via the agency of rap and hip hop. This agency was founded at the end of the 1990s during the economic crisis and hardship referred to as the “special period” after the breakdown of USSR support. The government realized that its support of subculture would at once serve its image abroad and enable control of critical texts and subcultures. After a real hype of Cuban hip hop in the late 1990s, however, the

³ How precarious this endeavour is can be observed in the “causa Zurbano”, a debate following Casa de Las Américas editor Roberto Zurbano’s article published in *The New York Times* in March 2013. Zurbano was accused of publishing in the “inadequate” medium, the title was translated badly (“For Blacks in Cuba, the revolution hasn’t begun” instead of the original “For Blacks in Cuba the revolution hasn’t been fulfilled/completed”). Zurbano finally resigned from his prestigious job and now continues to work as a researcher.

agency became subordinated to the Instituto Cubano de Música [Cuban Music Institute] in 2001. The genre of Reaggetón had proven more economically effective and less politically subversive than hip hop and started to dominate Cuba's musical scene. Las Krudas recorded their first two albums in Cuba, "Cubensi hip hop" (2003) and "Kandela" (2005). In 2005, they founded Omegas Kilay, a "Womyn hip hop Theatre Collective in Havana."⁴

As an out-lesbian band, Las Krudas have added a significant dimension to Cuban public discourse, as they addressed topics of gender violence and homophobia as well as racist hegemonic beauty ideals, topics that have by now entered a wider societal discourse in Cuba. Las Krudas do not represent a condensed, revolutionary image of Cuba, but current and complex, multifold levels of discourse and exclusion. They have, hence, contributed to the creation of a public sphere and to putting feminist topics on the agenda that had been subsumed under the rhetoric of equality of the revolution (cf. Saunders, *The Cuban Remix*). In their songs and in their lyrics Las Krudas promote alternative body and gender politics. The songs "Eres Bella" [You are beautiful], "La Gorda" [The Phatty], "Candela" [fire, precarious/dicey, on fire], "Mi barba" [My beard], "Mi cuerpo es mio" [My body is mine] are illustrative in this regard. "La Gorda" for instance celebrates the big, black female body, and "Eres bella" the beauty of blackness facing racist stereotypes. These songs call women to work against the false colonial consciousness catering to a white and slim beauty ideal and towards overcoming heteronormative thinking, for which their song "Candela" is exemplary. Drawing on the personal experience of being discriminated against, ignored, badly treated, and excluded from the presumed "norm" (of maleness, humanity) the singing voice addresses a "burning" need to change things:

y aqui tambien me quemas	[...] and here it also burns me,
una realidad muy dura,	a very hard reality
injusta y constantemente	Injustice and constantly
somos ignoradas,	we are ignored,

⁴ Cf. <http://www.krudascubensi.com/bio/>, last accessed September 18, 2014.

maltratadas, discriminadas	poorly treated, discriminated
casi nunca bien representadas	hardly ever represented well
caballero	gentlemen,
esa expression no my incluye	this expression does not include me
el hombre	man [as a universal term]
esa expression no me incluye	this expression does not include me
los humanos	Human beings [the masculine universal sense]
esa expression no me incluye	this expression does not include me
somos hembras	We are women
todo eso influye	and all of this influences
en lo que voy a explicarte	that which I am going to explain to you
aqui adelante	in a moment

The chorus introduces the objective of the “womanist vanguard” to “give class”/“become the thing” and resist sexist, heteronormative structures:

[coro]	[Chorus:]
Candela	On fire
vanguardia mujerista haciendo escuela	the womanist vanguard giving class
Candela	On fire
removiendo tu techo y tu suela	removing your roof and your floor
[...]	[...]
Candela	On fire
Krudas las primeras	Krudas the first ones
[...]	[...]
continuamos que en la resistencia	We continue the resistance
[...]	[...]

In these lyrics as in many songs, Las Krudas have especially pointed at the situation of multiple marginalization and exploitation experienced by black women in a society marked by growing racial

and gender inequalities (re)inforced by a transnational (sex) tourism industry.⁵ For black Cubans, and more so for multiply marginalized black women in Cuba, prostitution (and *Jineterismo*)⁶ often provides one of the few ways of access to the convertible peso. By pointing at the systemic character of such oppressions, Las Krudas not only address Cuban society, but a transnational audience, which is further underscored by the songs' reference to black international "womanist" (*mujerista*) feminism.

In 2006, Las Krudas migrated to the USA via Russia and Mexico and have since been living in Austin, Texas.⁷ However, they return regularly to the island to perform and keep up the dialogue with musicians, feminists, and activists in Cuba. It is noteworthy how Las Krudas Cubensi construct Cubanidad as a clearly transnational locus of enunciation, especially as they continue to situate themselves as Cuban, regardless of their actual locatedness. As the second part of their band name "Cubensi," which refers to Cuba/the Cuban/Cubanidad, indicates, Las Krudas identify clearly as Cuban, as "Cuba concentrada" [concentrated Cubaness/Cubanity], as Odaymara Cuesta put it in the

⁵ Racist and sexist stereotypes are increasingly revived and exploited by Western sex tourists who fulfill the desires oftentimes not available in their societies in places of the South where their class and white racial capital outnumber their disadvantages with regard to age and attractiveness. Their desires are mostly marked by racist colonial fantasies of black bodies as available, lustful, and exploitable, and they see prostitution hence not as a business based on harsh inequalities, but rather "what comes naturally" to the perambulated people. Tourism brochures as well as sex tourism blogs have been presenting colonial images of black Cuban women as good dancers and lovers, and Cuba has become increasingly dependent on opening up to the tourism market since the 1990s and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Cuba is highly dependent on the tourism industry, which accelerates and deepens inequalities between Cubans, since whoever manages to get a job in the tourism sector (or run an own business, restaurant, rent their houses etc.) has access to the convertible peso and thus a much higher income. Blacks are structurally disadvantaged in tourism.

⁶ *Jineterismo* refers to a wide range of practices aiming at taking advantage of tourists in Cuba. It includes—but is not limited to—romantic and sexual services. It provides poorer Cubans – among whom there is a large non-white percentage – access to the convertible peso. Jineteros and jineteras use their "racialized and sexualized capital" caused by the tourists' stereotypes for that matter.

⁷ Since then, their focus has shifted more towards embracing the right of being masculine—or "fuck gender," as they put it in the interview—for which the song "Mi barba" [My beard] provides an insightful example.

documentary “Queen of Myself.” As queer of color activists living in an alternative community, they identify as Cuban and Caribbean. And their website underscores that Las Krudas have since 2007 been:

performing, recording, giving workshops, educating and touring in The Caribbean, North, Central and South America, bringing Cubensi Hip Hop, Dance Hall, Cumbia, Old School, Mixtapes, and new strongly beautiful Beats from all around the World with their Amazing Afro Caribbean Rebel Lyrics & Voices to empower the community, mujeres, people of color, immigrants, queers, workers, anarquistas, feministas & conscious people.⁸ (No page)

Las Krudas hence construct Cubanness and Caribbeanness as a transnational locatedness or position, which is by no means a new phenomenon for the region but has been a lived reality for centuries.

Transnational, Decolonial: Evoking an AmerAfrican History of Enforced Im/Mobility

Throughout their songs, Las Krudas continuously refer to their Afro-Cuban heritage as a product of a black Atlantic culture, initiated by the violent transnational slave trade and European colonialism as well as to transnational black cultures of resistance. The intro to their song “Amikemiñongo (500 Años Basta)” [Amikemiñongo (500 Years is Enough)] is illustrative in this regard. Already the subtitle—“500 Years is Enough”—evokes the legacy of colonization and enslavement. Accompanied by Afro-Cuban bata drums, the first lines refer to the indigenous cultures which in Cuba have to a large extent been extinguished by European colonizers:

Cojoba, taina, siboney	Cojoba, taina siboney [Indigenous Cubans]
Caribe, guanajatabey	Caribbean, guanajatabey [Indigenous people of western Cuba]
Manicato [...]	Manicato [...] [bold and honest man, independent music award]

In the following lines, the lyrical/sonic “I” confronts an addressee, most probable an oppressor, be it the colonizers of 500 years ago, or their patriarchal racist descendants today. Interestingly, the voice identifies with the experience of violent enslavement in Africa, as expressed in the line “de África me

⁸ Cf. <http://www.krudascubensi.com/bio/> (last accessed September 18, 2014).

adueñaron, Y me trajeron aquí” [They took possession of me in Africa, And brought me here].
 “Amikimiñongo” (500 años basta) contextualizes multichronotopic Afro-Cuban experiences and
 persisting racist, sexist and homophobic oppression as a colonial legacy, connecting past (enforced)
 translocal interweavements with current local inequalities:

¿Qué más?	What else?
¿Qué más?	What else?
¿Qué mas quieres tú de mi?	What else do you want from me?
Con las armas coaccionaron	They came to force with arms
Se colaron	Deployed themselves
De África me adueñaron	They took possession of me in Africa
Y me trajeron aquí	And brought me here
Genocidio	Genocide
Llanto, lamento, sufrimiento	Tears, moaning, suffering
en todo momento	all the time
Siempre fue así,	It's always been this way,
que violento	what violence
Hasta cuando permitir que me lo cuenten	For how long allow them to tell me
500 años	500 years
Basta	Enough
[...]	[...]
Que te creías pequeña que el mundo	What do you think that the world is small
De estar organizado seria como tu cuarto	As to be organized like your room
[...]	[...]
Explotación discriminación	Exploitation, discrimination
pobreza violencia osorbadera	poverty, damn violence
[...]	[...]
Bruja, tuerca,	Witch, screw,
Yo mujer, yo	Me woman, me
Libertad por siempre [...]	Liberty forever [...]

The question “What do you think that the world is small as to be organized like your room” points at the entanglements between colonial violence and gender violence, narrow-minded Eurocentrism and gender norms. The last lines emphasize the intrinsic gender dimension. The song “Resistiendo” [Resisting] provides a further showcase example of the transnational gender focus of Las Krudas’ music and politics—as well as their focus on the unequal character of transnational and transcultural encounters. As becomes obvious in these lyrics, Las Krudas construct their “Nu Caribbean Feminism” as a project addressing entangled axes of oppression for uniting “women, migrants, black people, queer people, the Caribbean, black feminism (black sister)”:

Las mujeres Resistiendo.	Women, Resisting.
Emigrante Resistiendo	Migrant, Resisting
Black people Resistiendo	Black people, Resisting
Cuban people Resisting	Cuban people, Resisting
Queer people Resistiendo	Queer people, Resisting
El Caribe Resistiendo	The Caribbean, Resisting
Black sister Resistiendo	Black Sister, Resisting
Krudas Cubensi Resistiendo	Krudas Cubensi, Resisting
Krudas Cubensi	Krudas Cubensi
de Cuba Internacional,	from Cuba International,
Krudas Cubensi	Krudas Cubensi
Esto es Nu Caribbean	This is New Caribbean
Feminism, Nu Caribbean	Feminism, New Caribbean
Feminism.	Feminism.

“Resistiendo” illustrates a transnational focus expressed on various levels: On the level of language, the bilingual text and the combination of Spanish and English terms such as “Nu Caribbean Feminism” recalls the textual strategies of Chicana authors and theorists like Gloria Anzaldúa or Cherrie Moraga. However, distinct from Chicana activists who mostly grew up in the United States and use English as the basic language, most of Las Krudas’ songs have Spanish as their basis and contain largely Spanish than English parts (plus inserts in Yoruba and Tainó). Generally, they give

Spanish priority in the English-dominated world of hip hop. Yet, depending on their space of performance, English plays a larger role. At many concerts in Canada and the US, Las Krudas for instance and in some of their videos translate passages from the original Spanish lyrics into English to address a local (and wider) audience.

Transculturality, mobility, and creoleness is constantly expressed also on the musical level in Las Krudas' work, as the songs include fusions of numerous different styles and often the beats of Cuban bata drums. This transcultural dimension is even more evident on the textual level: "Resistiendo" is introduced with the lyrics "Las Krudas, de Cuba, para el mundo, internacionales, presentes" [Las Krudas, from Cuba, internationals, present], and later the singing voice announces "Cuba, Colombia, Ghana, Australia, China, Russia [...]" as spaces of solidarity and anticolonial resistance. By claiming a form of "Nu Caribbean feminism," Las Krudas moreover situate the Caribbean as locus of resistance and queer-feminist knowledge production (and politics), thus challenging the hegemonic notion of the Caribbean as the object of theorizing from the so-called Global North.

It seems to be no coincidence that Las Krudas choose music as their medium and hip hop as their genre, as these forms have a long tradition in black culture. As the artists emphasize in the interview, they do not appropriate the commercial genre of hip hop that has become famous in the United States. Rather, they see the form of expressing experiences and telling stories as part of a long tradition typical for the Caribbean in particular. When I asked in the interview I had the honor and chance to conduct in Austin, Texas, in 2014, what role the US-American and male-dominated form of hip hop played for them, Odaymara Cuesta replied the following:

Aquí en Estados Unidos fue donde se comercializo el hip hop, donde se lo pusó cultura hip hop. Pero [...] yo pienso que mucho antes de eso existen comunidades que cuentan a través de la música y a través de la historia entera de cómo contar qué pasó, como contar que va venir la lluvia. Que contar historias de curación, de crear comunidades, fortalecer. Yo pienso que siempre ha existido, mucho antes que el dato que dicen que surgió el hip hop en los Estados Unidos.

Ahora después de muchos años que existe, en muchos países, en lugares remotos e inimaginados, muchas personas hacen Rap, hacen hip hop, cuentan su vida, su diario

a través de rima, de música, poesía, [...] Y para nosotras es [...] la música con la que puedo ser yo. No es ni hip hop, es como música de liberación, no sé, otro género, porque tenemos tantos tópicos, tantas mezclas dentro de esa música. Es como hip hop, música de los barrios, música de la gente para expresar su incomodidad, como se siente, contra el sistema [...] hablamos de temáticas queer, de migrantes, como somos diferentes. Una mezcla bien interesante, bien alternativa, bien diversa.

[The United States was where hip hop was commercialized, where hip hop culture emerged. But [...] I think that since long before that communities have existed that tell stories through music and how to narrate what happened throughout history, how to narrate that the rain will come. To tell stories of healing, of community building, empowerment. I think that this has always existed, long before the date that hip hop came up in the United States. Now after the many years that it has existed many people in many faraway and unimagined places make rap, make hip hop, narrate their lives, their everyday lives, via rhymes, music, poetry [...] And for us [...] the music in which I can be me. It's not even hip hop, it's music of liberation, I don't know, it's another genre, because we have so many topics, so many mixings in our music. It's like hip hop, music of the barrios, music of the people to express their discomfort, how they feel, against the system [...] we speak about queer topics, migrants, how we are different. An interesting mix, quite alternative, quite diverse.]

Against the backdrop of sexist structures in mainstream hip hop, Las Krudas not only capture and appropriate the—in mainstream popular culture—male and (homo)sexist genre of hip hop for their queer-feminist empowerment, agency and cultural critique, but also perform an “intersectional” politics. By situating the related interlocking forms of oppression they address—racism, sexism, homophobia, Euro- and US-centrism—as inherent to the logic of Western capitalism and colonial legacies, Las Krudas moreover follow an implicitly decolonial politics.

What is more, Las Krudas in their songs and performances often reverse the perspective, for example by pointing at the practical everyday feminism they see practiced in Cuba outside of official discourses, theorizing, or institutions/organizations. Las Krudas thus contest what I call “epistemic Occidentalism,”⁹ by which I mean a hegemonic structure privileging Occidental (“Western”) spaces

⁹ “Epistemic Occidentalism” is based on Fernando Coronil’s concept of “Occidentalism,” which he defines as “the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide Western

and speaking positions as only valid loci of enunciation and knowledge production. Las Krudas' songs open alternative spaces of queer intervention and thus question the singularity and exclusivity of relevant hip hop and critical gender knowledge as being produced solely and unquestionably in the US-American and European centers.¹⁰

Postcolonial Piracy—Media Distribution from Below

In order to enter and intervene into such privileged discourses, Cuban hip hoppers like Las Krudas who have no access to the international music market marked by the dominance of the US culture industry apply particular media strategies. Many musicians have begun to produce their own discs with foreign funding and help from friends and mostly use the internet as distribution platform to reach international audiences, thus producing a growing underground network of distribution and circulation. Bands like Las Krudas use alternative labels and the internet—a space highly dominated by the US-American communication industry—for such conversions and redefinitions. They practice a sort of what Ramon Lobato has referred to as “postcolonial piracy” dedicated to a “media redistribution from below” of knowledge and cultural goods that would otherwise have no chance to reach the market or gain access to cultural-political participation and representation in an unequal world system.

Technologies serve Cuban hip hoppers as a “source of their professional and civic action” (Faguaga 56) with regard to distribution, organization, networking and exchange on the island and on a transnational level. These strategies enable Las Krudas—and many other Cuban hip hoppers and musicians worldwide—to create a heterotopic transgressive music which (in Armstead's words)

dominance” (Coronil 57). Occidentalism is hence expressed in “the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which 1) separate the world's components into bounded units; 2) disaggregate their relational histories; 3) turn difference into hierarchy; 4) naturalize these representations; and thus 5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations” (57).

¹⁰ See Hill Collins, who elaborates on the role of Hip Hop as a new form of feminist knowledge production and a legacy of the Black Power Movement in the US. Hill Collins emphasizes that Hip Hop serves especially to reach audiences other than purely academic ones and thus democratize feminist politics.

“expands diasporic space, transgresses geographic borders [...] fashioning a musical aesthetic that allows for the articulation of the local as well as the global” (139). Or, in Ella Shohat’s terms, one could speak of their performances/politics as creating a “multichronotopic space” including manifold histories and locations and manifold positions of resistance.

However, Las Krudas do so not in a positivistic or simplistic manner, as they make clear that mobility is no value in and of itself, but closely tied to power structures that may enforce, restrict, or deny movement according to numerous axes of stratifications such as citizenship, class/socio-economic status, race, or gender.

A Nationality that Doth Not Favor You: Global Politics of Im/Moblization

In numerous songs, Las Krudas deal with the current revivals of inequalities based on persistent colonial power structures and axes of stratification. Migration and the situation of migrant women from poor regions in its racialized and gender dimension is a recurrent theme in their songs. They are thus addressing one of the most widely discussed topics in international feminist discourse on the so-called “feminization of labor” and the related “feminization of migration” due to the unequal evaluation of work on a global scale based on racialized and gendered stratifications. Their song “No me dejaron entrar and España” refers to the migration and citizenship regimes that continue to stratify our world and have a decisive impact on who has mobility to where and based on which preconditions. The lyrics draw on their personal experience of having been rejected entrance to Spain in order to then render the underlying policies and stereotypes problematic. In the video to the song, a female border police agent in a green uniform glances at a Cuban passport and in a voice with a strong Spanish accent addresses the viewers through an airport control camera and denies them entry to Spain due to their “unfavorable nationality”:

Voz en Off:	Voice over:
Cubana? Teneiz una nazonalidad	Cuban? Thou have a nationality
que no oz favoreze,	that doth not favor you,
no le daremos visa en España ni	we shall not give you a visa to
en ninguno de los paises	any countries
de la Comunidad Economica	in the European Economic

Europea, soiz posible emigrante!!	Community. Thou art a possible immigrant.
Coro:	Chorus:
No me dejaron entrar en España,	They didn't let me into Spain,
dicen que Cuba tiene Mala Maña.	sayin' that Cuba has a bad habit,
No me dejaron entrar en España,	They didn't let me into Spain,
dicen que Cuba tiene mala maña.	sayin' that Cuba has a bad habit. (Translation: Las Krudas)

By stressing the financial dimension and the politics of guarding the wealth of the “*Economic Community*,” the voice over refers to citizenship and poverty as decisive axes of stratification and categories of access to (physical, social, and cultural) mobility. The next line addresses the clearly racist basis of such denial. Odaymara Cuesta describes how she as a black Cuban migrant faces multiple stereotypes:

Odaymara:	Odaymara:
Ey, no me dejaron entrar en España	Hey, they didn't let me into Spain
porque como soy negra	because since I am black
pa esa gente soy extraña,	I'm strange to those folks,
y con este pelo asi dijeron	and with that hair,
tiene la cabeza en las musaraña'	they said she's got her head in limbo.
y por mis tatuajes pensaron:	And 'cause of my tatoos they thought to themselves,
Esa negra no se baña, y yo [...]	that negra doesn't bathe [...]
Viniendo 'e la poma,	And I, coming from the Capitol,
llevando el idioma, cogi la guadaña,	taking language, I grabbed the scythe,
me fui a la montaña, no como lagsaña,	and I went to the mountain, not like lasagna,
no tengo lagaña, babilon no me engaña,	I ain't got no eye lint. Babylon don't fool me,
pa'rriba 'e la fiera, pa' fuera piraña,	on top of the fair, out piranha
esta negra no se empaña	this negra don't get fogged up
y sigue aqui con su krudisima calaña.	and continues here with her Krudisima quality.

By emphasizing that Cuba was founded by emigrants from Spain, who are the ancestors of many Cuban families, the following line addresses the colonial legacy that structured persistent inequality

regimes in the first place. The song then claims the right to travel and migrate as a universal one, and once again include numerous spaces and places (Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean [...]) has the right to emigrate):

Olivia:	Olivia:
Dicen que toda nuestra gente	They say that all our people
se quiere quedar alli,	want to stay there,
acaso olvidan cuanto	but they forget how much
colonizaron aqui,	they colonize[d] here,
desde antes de mi abuela	Since before my grandmother,
la gente quiere emigrar,	people want to emigrate
de España misma llegaron	from Spain itself,
pa mi familia fundar,	they came so my family could [be] founded,
que la tierra entera es nuestra	That all the Earth is ours
y el derecho de viajar, huir, escapar	and the right to travel, flee, escape,
no es solo una actitud de quien teme,	is not just the attitude of the fearful,
es un desafio de quien	it is a dare for they that
mas no puede sostener su realidad,	cannot sustain their reality,
es la dignidad de quien decide cambiar,	it is the dignity of those that choose change
aunque a donde vaya no haya ni casa	Even if where they go they have no house,
ni mama ni papa ni na de na na na.	Mother, Food, or nuttn' nuttn'
Latinoamerica tiene derecho a emigrar.	Latin America has the right to migrate.
Afrika tiene derecho a emigrar	Africa has the right to migrate.
Asia tiene derecho a emigrar.	Asia has the right to migrate.
Caribe tiene derecho a emigrar.	The Caribbean has the right to migrate.
To' el mundo [...]	The whole world [...]

The song ends with the outlook of overcoming the described inequalities and injustices in a feminist endeavor by calling women to rule in the form of a new “matriarchy.” For that aim, the “interlocking systems of oppression” of racism, sexism, and classism are to be overcome and free movement and travel available to everyone. For that matter, the various intersecting levels of oppression—machismo, racism, and classism—have to be confronted and finally done away with:

Olivia:	Olivia:
[...]	[...]
amar a quien tu quieras	love who you want,
nunca sera ilegal,	it won't be illegal.
viajar por todas partes	Travel to all places
posible no ideal,	possible, not ideal.
las razas a mezclarse	All the races mixing,
el sexo liberal,	the sex liberated,
la tierra sera una sola	The Earth will be one
llena de hermandad	full of sisterhood
y sin fronteras	and without borders
porque las mujeres	because womyn
vamo'a gobernar.	are gonna run things.
Quitate machismo,	Get out of the way misogyny.
quitate racismo,	Get out of the way racism,
quitate clasismo	Get out of the way classism.
quitate babilon.	Get out of the way babylon.
Quitate la' cera	Get off the sidewalk
mira que te tumbo	or I'll knock you off,
aqui estamos Krudas	here we are Krudas
pa cambiar el mundo.	to change the world.
[...]	[...]

The video to the song is shot at airports and bus terminals and shows the musicians with suitcases, thereby bringing into focus an often overlooked side of such temples of globalization and acceleration—which with the wrong passport and racial categorization turn into sites of rejection and stagnation. The strong presence of asymmetrical migration regimes and citizenship policies in Las Krudas' songs is in line with recent studies on citizenship and global inequalities (cf. Shachar; Boatcă, *Global Inequalities*), which examine citizenship as decisive factor for exclusion and maintaining (colonially structured) privileges on a global scale. The last part of “No me dejaron” once more underscores the gender dimension of the global inequalities addressed by migration and citizenship

regimes and the related racism. In the video, this aspect is highlighted through the insertion of media clippings focusing on the situation of (poor) women in migration (for instance of a woman living in the streets in Mexico or a women from Salvador wanting to get her son to the US for better opportunities).

Towards a “Nu Caribbean Feminism”: Creolizing Intersectionality

Las Krudas’ music, lyrics, and performances incorporate a sonic, discursive and performative response to Euro-centric and US-centric visions imposed by the canon of contemporary feminist thinking and thereby put Cuba and the Caribbean on the map of transnational queer-feminist, antiracist, and decolonial knowledge production. Not coincidentally, then, Cuban female hip hoppers like Las Krudas situate their work within the tradition of black Cuban artists and activists¹¹ or they refer to black feminists of an international range and within a musical tradition of asserting female agency expressed by US-American blues women¹² and Cuban rumba (cf. Fernandes 12).

Hence, they not only appropriate the US-American predominantly male and (hetero)sexist genre/art form of hip hop in order to re-signify it and practice what Walter Mignolo terms “epistemic disobedience” on several levels: by introducing their personal experiences and Afro-Cuban musical elements and non-hegemonic feminist paradigms to the genre and by further claiming the art form as a Afro-Caribbean one in the first place, Las Krudas practice a form of epistemic “de-linking from the web of imperial knowledge” and construct themselves as knowing subjects. If, as Martha Zapata Galindo has claimed, it is necessary to “put Latin America on the map of intersectionality”—meaning the “canonized,” Western one—Las Krudas might be among the protagonists of this discourse. Their addressing of multiple axes of inequality and, vice versa, bases for solidarity bring intersectional discourse back to its radical political roots as expressed by founding protagonists such as The Combahee River Collective. I thus argue that Las Krudas not only apply and reflect queer-feminist and antiracist theorizing, but actually produce it. Yet, it cannot be ignored that their interventions take

¹¹ Cf., for example, Rubiera Castillo/Terry.

¹² See Davis 1999.

place in a rather limited subcultural sector that cannot be compared to the knowledge machine of Ivy League universities or English language University Press publications. Thus, their inclusion requires the unlearning of received hegemonic paradigms from the dominant side in order to see Las Krudas' music not as anything but a meaningful contribution to discourses dedicated to the overcoming of inequalities.

As a way to contest US-American hegemony on knowledge, epistemic, and cultural production (in the Americas) controlled by the cultural industry and academe José David Saldívar has introduced the concept of Trans-Americanity. The concept is based on the notion of Americanity coined by Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein in their essay "Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World-System" ("Americanity as a Concept") as a logic of domination marked by structural racism and coloniality. However, his analysis remains very general and like many of his peers, Saldívar leaves the dimension of gender and intersectionalities out.

Interventions such as Las Krudas' provide a decisive corrective and bring the missing intersectional gender perspective into the discourse. They are more in line with feminist projects like the group around the volume *Translocalities/Translocalidades. Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latina Américas* (Álvarez et al., *Translocalities*), with the difference that they do not address a predominantly academic audience. As Tanya Saunders rightly points out, in line with hip hop feminism (cf., for instance, Morgan, Hill Collins) "Las Krudas link lived experience to theory in their social critiques, and they reject the generalized abstract universalism embedded in most theoretical frameworks concerning social life, including canonized academic feminism" (Saunders, "La Lucha Mujerista" 5). Nevertheless, what editor Sonia E. Álvarez states for the "Latin/a Américas" might also hold true for the "Nu Caribbean Feminism" called out by Las Krudas. Based on the observation that "[m]any sorts of Latin/o-americanidades—Afro, queer, indigenous, feminist, and so on—are today constructed through processes of translocation" ("Introduction" 2), she claims that for the "Latin/a Américas—as a transborder cultural formation rather than a territorially delineated one [...] [t]ranslation is politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, prosocial justice, antiracist, postcolonial/decolonial, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies" (1).

Promoting a “hemispheric politics of translocation [...] attentive to the heterogeneity of Latinidades within the United States *and* within and among Latin American and Caribbean peoples, as well as to the diverse positionalities that shape Latina/o lives across multiple borders” (2), however, she to a certain extent keeps on focusing on groupings and becomes rather geographic again stating that “Latinidades in the South, the North, and Caribbean ‘middle’ of the Américas, then, is always already constituted out of the intersections of the intensified cross-border, transcultural, and translocal flows that characterize contemporary transmigration¹³ throughout the hemisphere” (2) .

Such a vague and depersonalized, decontextualized reference to (cross-border, transcultural, and translocal) “flows” runs the risk of losing sight of the related power dynamics that regulate who or what “flows” or not under what conditions and at what costs. Further, the proposed focus on *Latinidades* might cater to the assumption that for “non-Latinidades” these observations and processes do not hold true.

The concept of “translocational positionality” coined by Floya Anthias (2006) seems more concrete and suitable for the processes in which Las Krudas situate their musical interventions. It is based on the refusal to think movement and settlement in terms of culture and identity, but in terms of social inequality and transformation in relation to cross-cutting social divisions (gender, race, class, age, and so on) (27). Anthias emphasizes the necessity to engage critically with the notion of politics of belonging and to consider the underlying unequal social resources of different actors. She moreover calls us to think in “intersectional” ways, as concepts and identity formations such as diaspora, hybridity, transculturalism and cosmopolitanism are not attentive to intersectionalities of social position and positioning. Las Krudas do address multiple axes of discrimination in their historical and

¹³ The term “transmigration” is a blurry one. In migration studies, “transmigration” (or “transit migration”) refers to the process of migrating through a country in order to reach another, the “originally intended” one (for example transmigrate from Guatemala through Mexico in order to reach the USA, or transmigrate through Greece in order to reach Germany or France). Transmigration also refers to migrants who move back and forth between two or several locations. Transmigration often turns out to be an enduring or even permanent state.

entangled character as represented also in the (Caribbean) concept of “creolization” introduced by Édouard Glissant (cf. Glissant).¹⁴

In contrast to numerous theoretical elaborations on intersectionality, Anthias considers an intersectionality approach as tied to what she calls “translocational positionality.” “Translocational positionality” refers to a social process (not to group identities) and to related practices and arrangements creating positionalities. She thus stipulates to move the focus away from the focus on “groups” toward forms of violence and exclusion and to incorporate the notion of hierarchy. This includes the parameters of unequal power relations within and between cultures that create positionalities and consider the local in connection with the transnational/global. According to her notion of translocational positionalities, differences and inequalities are to be considered as a dynamic and changeable process. Las Krudas’ sonic politics provide interventions in this direction, as they address structural inequalities and violent regimes in their transnational dimensions as well as in their concrete and local articulations beyond a notion of identity politics towards a politics of alliances and solidarity.

Their particular version of a politics of “translocational positionality” positions Las Krudas in a tradition of African-American and AmerAfrican feminist struggles rather than in one of established academic theorizations. Caribbean feminists such as the contributors to the volume *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century* have been theorizing the tensions between violent processes of creolization on the one hand, and ways to undermine them, on the other. As Consuela López-Springfield rightly insists in her introduction to the volume, the Caribbean—home of her “daughters of Caliban”—is “a site of permeable boundaries and multiple identities, offering continuous redefinition of the self and of one’s relationship to society. [... based on] a history of

¹⁴ Based on the linguistic concept of Creole languages which describes “the language of the Master’s command and power as much as of the slave’s struggle and identity” (*Caribbean Discourse* 161) Glissant sees creolization as a mutual penetration of cultural elements in form of “clashes, harmonies, deformations, retreats, repudations, and attractions” (171). Other than concepts such as métissage or hybridization, Glissant’s notion of creolization, is one of unpredictability. Even though often in conflictual ways, Glissant affirms “that the world is creolizing” and creates the utopia of an “All-World” based on relatedness rather than difference (176).

colonial oppression and a regional culture of resistance” (xi–xii). Elaborating on the long trajectory of AmerAfrican feminist struggles, Keisha-Khan Perry assails:

[even though] there is a long trajectory of a ‘Black Feminist Agenda’ of transnational scale in the Americas due to the specific transnational dimension of the exploitations they have experienced [...] Black feminists in Latin America are oftentimes left out of narrations of the black radical tradition in the Americas—thus they are the ‘sister outsiders’ of the region. (Perry, no page)

For Perry, then, the recognition and inclusion of AmerAfrican interventions and knowledges is a crucial endeavor in the fight for translocational feminist and antiracist alliances as an intersectional feminist politics requires black feminist scholars in the US “to increase their knowledge of black women’s thought and praxis throughout the Americas” (no page), as for her, “a black diasporic vision to emerge deepens black feminism’s radical possibility of global sisterhood and the convergence of common struggles” (no page).

Spheres like the realm of popular cultural production—and music in particular— “embrace dissonance and contend with internal differences [...] semantic residues of histories of contradiction and conflict” as Coco Fusco maintains (21). She sees musical interventions as a way of negotiating the pressing questions and tensions and hopes that “our intellectual debates will catch up with our popular cultural ability to engage with dissent, without the defensiveness that continuously rears in the head in other spheres” (21). The intersectional politics of Las Krudas provides but one insightful example. In Fusco’s words, they stand in a tradition of “exchange between black and Latino rappers [...] and in the formation of pan-Caribbean syncretism in Brooklyn and in the Bronx [...] transforming what was once a largely Caribbean phenomenon into the seeds of America’s cultural present and future” (24). By declaring the positionality of “Caribbeanness” as a translocational phenomenon, musicians like Las Krudas further question the notion of pureness and homogeneity underlying the imagined communities of national identity.

The politics that Las Krudas employ in their songs redirects the focus on transnationalism and globalization from pure “flows” as “circulations of people, capital, culture” to the often neglected

subjective mediation of such processes, which Elizabeth Povinelli¹⁵ and George Chauncey have claimed as crucial for sexualities in transnational contexts particularly (445). By enunciating their black lesbian personal subject position and referencing concrete contexts and personal experiences, they emphasize the context specific and multilevel character of processes of mobilization and transculturization. Foregrounding the enforced immobilities and mobilities of large parts of the world's population stratified by racist and sexist socio-economic structures, they contradict too positivistic notions of mobility. Thereby pointing at the long legacy of colonial inequalities and old and new enforced mobilities and, more importantly, their multidimensional (or "intersectional") character. Odaymara Cuesta and Olivia Prendes bring intersectionality back to its political roots, they relate it to concrete contexts and experiences (as in "No me dejaron") and use it as their basis for resistance against the related exclusions. They do so with the aim of overcoming geopolitical borders and cultural-economic boundaries towards a world beyond coloniality, heteronormativity, Occidentalism, and intersectional oppression. Las Krudas' sonic-performative interventions provide a decisive impulse generator in this direction and bring the often neglected gender dimension to the fore as well as "creole" musical genres like hip hop as a relevant form of epistemic and discursive production not only but especially in transnational contexts.

¹⁵ "If sex can learn from globalization and transnationalism, these schools have much to gain from critical studies of sex. A troubling aspect of the literature on globalization is its tendency to read social life off external social forms-flows, circuits, circulations of people, capital, and culture-without any model of subjective mediation. In other words, globalization studies often proceed as if tracking and mapping the facticity of economic, population, and population flows, circuits, and linkages were sufficient to account for current cultural forms and subjective interiorities, or as if an accurate map of the space and time of post-Fordist accumulation could provide an accurate map of the subject and her embodiment and desires. In many ways, reading meaning off practice, or practices off meaning, or meaning off texts, without regard to the subject mediating these meanings, texts, and practices, is no better or worse than the historicist accounts of sexuality discussed above. The dynamism of the subject is related in one-to-one fashion with the dynamism of discourse and practice" (Povinelli/Chauncey 445).

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