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Practices and Environments of Collective Sleep in Twenty-First-Century Latin American Film

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Résumé de l'article

Que révèle le sommeil sur les relations de pouvoir, les divisions de genre et de classe, et les structures politiques dans les sociétés postcoloniales ? Comment le cinéma représente-t-il les binarités corps / esprit, conscient / inconscient, utopique / dystopique, et privé / public associées aux cycles de sommeil / éveil ? Cet article analyse des pratiques et des environnements collectifs du sommeil, du rêve et de l'éveil en tant que paysages affectifs dans des films d'Argentine et de Cuba.

Practices and Environments of Collective Sleep in Twenty-First-Century Latin American Film

Zaira Zarza

Introduction

On average, humans spend one-third of their lives asleep. Lying down, reclining, or sitting on objects, surfaces, and structures — on a bed, couch, or hammock, on the floor, in a car, at night or during the day — people find rest and achieve various levels of disconnection from alertness while asleep. Consequently, sleep references fill our quotidian language. We "sleep on it" when we must rethink a situation or idea. "You snooze, you lose" if too slow to make decisions. How, where, and with whom we sleep informs the role this activity plays in circadian rhythms and the quality of its brain and body stages. But, most importantly, "while sleep is something that all humans do, it is something that we learn within a specific sociocultural context."[1] Just as art forms, culinary habits, orality, and other traditions reflect cultural patterns, so do sleep and waking states. Less concerned with the scientific dimension of sleeping, dreaming, and waking up, this article is interested in the cultural aspects of sleep. It particularly aims to understand how its practice relates to expressions of identity and how its topographies become affective environments. Thus, the analysis will concentrate on experiences and settings of collective sleeping as well as their links to institutional and societal determinations, from rituals and political orders to social formations and sentimental bonds.

Collective sleep practices are both conduits of and occur in social spaces. When done in groups, sleep is both a physical and material process and an abstract realm of possibilities where shared vibrations, tensions, intimacies, and vulnerabilities take place beyond language. Consequently, these are conducive to affective experiences

1. Katie Glaskin and Richard Chenhall (eds.), *Sleep Around the World: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 3.

of landscape, space, or environment that will affect and be affected by bodies, energies, and objects in proximity. "The concept of affect fuses the body with the imagination into an ethical synthesis that bears directly on the micro powers inherent in everyday interactions."[2] These interactions take place in and form "affective landscapes,"[3] especially in their "valuing of the small-scale, the ordinary, and the everyday..."[4] The intuitive understanding and bodily input of sleep can determine a set of affective relations that precede intention and lead to multiple emotions. In this relational sense, life practices such as sleeping and other actions naturalized as private influence how people relate to each other and their environment, creating specific topographies of space-sharing.

Collectively falling asleep, waking up, and every mental and physical state in between produce affective environments that help us make sense of the world. "[T]he attention to affective landscape relations as a form of '[re]worlding' has specific political implications to do with how the land/world is 'used,' defined, represented, apportioned, exploited, and bound into discourses of the state, media, corporatization, or other systems of order and power."[5] In the context of neoliberal capitalism, sleeping bodies are also docile, unproductive, and non-consuming bodies. A prism through which to measure social acceleration, sleep is a "*qua unconscious somatic state*, [that] constitutes not simply a vital albeit temporary corporeal release but a potentially potent site or source of corporeal protest, refusal or resistance, in an increasingly relentless if not restless and ravenous age [...]."[6] This holds true for cinematic representations of sleep or conditions often associated with its group practice. In sum, affective landscapes "'consider space and place beyond their material properties' while recognizing that this 'beyond' of 'imaginary places, ideals, and real but intangible objects . . . underpin and produce material places and social spaces' too."[7]

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2. Tonya K. Davidson, Ondine Park and Rob Shields (eds.), *Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope*, Waterloo, Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011, p. 5.
3. Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell and Robert Hudson (eds.), *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses,* London, Routledge, 2015.
4. Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell and Robert Hudson, "Affective Landscapes: An Introduction," *Cultural Politics*, vol. 9, no. 3, November 2013, p. 313–322, p. 316, https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-2347000 (accessed 3 October 2022).
5. *Ibid*., p. 315.
6. Simon Williams, *The Politics of Sleep: Governing (Un)Consciousness in the Late Modern Age*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. x.
7. Davidson, Park and Shields Rob, 2011, p. 6, quoted by Berberich, Campbell and Hudson, 2013, p. 314.

In this article, Lucrecia Martel's Salta Trilogy — *La ciénaga* (*The Swamp*, 2001), *La niña santa* (*The Holy Girl*, 2004), and *La mujer sin cabeza* (*The Headless Woman*, 2008) — and Arturo Infante's film *El viaje extraordinario de Celeste García* (*The Extraordinary Journey of Celeste García*, 2018) will act as connected threads to analyze the affective landscapes of collective sleep in Cuba and Argentina. In the former, the principles of *drift* (*deriva*) (apparently incoherent forms of oral speech), *doubt* (betrayal of the viewers' expectations through sound manipulation), and *dread* (suggested danger in potential hazards and off-screen violence), are constructed around the ritual of mid-day siestas. In the latter, new understandings of communal sleeping are displayed in confinement situations as both a vehicle for remembrance and a bonding mechanism. The transient bodies of middle-aged women in Lucrecia Martel's films convey states of apparent hypnosis or profound lethargy, which are corporeal and psychic conditions tightly linked to sleep, dreaming, and sleepwalking practices. On the other hand, *The Extraordinary Journey…* reflects on the former design of Cuba's educational system, which encouraged collective living in rural year-round boarding schools to teach youth about the social values of work/study dynamics. For comic relief, the filmmaker portrays a group of marginalized individuals secluded in a former high school-turned-training camp while waiting for a spaceship to transport them to a different planet. The following analyses contribute to further interpretations of surreal, dystopian, and material conceptions of sleeping and awakening by linking sleep as resistance and shared beds as spaces of collective intimacy.

Critical examinations of the contrasting geopolitical contexts of Cuba and Argentina are possible in the films through analyses of the collective sleep practices described in them. In Argentina, the financial crisis that resulted from neoliberal economics and the bourgeois way of life reinforced class divisions between, for example, indigenous domestic workers and their well-established employers. On the contrary, in Cuba, due to the utopia of egalitarianism, class divisions were diffused, if not completely erased. Thus, collective sleep is a consequence of the work-study paradigm initiated by the Revolution, in a desire to create integral citizens. In Martel's trilogy, the siesta is the privilege and refuge of the bourgeoisie, while in Infante's case, it serves as a critique of the collectivist ideology of socialism. Educated and trained in these traditions, both filmmakers have experienced collective sleep situations in their own ways. Martel comes from the white Spanish-Argentine bourgeoisie, and their behavioural patterns and ideologies are precisely what she portrays and criticizes in her work. On the other

hand, as a student from Santiago de Cuba and a graduate of the International Film and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV), Infante attended intern school, which has undoubtedly informed his filmmaking practice.

While both self-referential filmmakers mirror opposing models or contexts of the Latin American ideo-sociological landscape, they also assume different degrees of continuity and rupture with the legacy of the New Latin American Cinema Movement. Although Martel and Infante come from traditions that contest the auteurism idea of the cinema of previous generations, they have both adopted or inherited specific positions as auteurs. Following the line of *tercer cine* or Third Cinema, Martel's films are more attuned to the creative and experimental search of the European auteur and the practice of art and essay cinema, with characters uninterested in achieving specific objectives and narratives that oppose commercial gimmicks. More aligned with *cine perfecto* or Imperfect Cinema, Infante's films are more in touch with popular culture and genres such as comedy and sci-fi and the typical elements that construct their imaginary worlds. Conversely, both Martel and Infante often center on women's experiences and display interests that combine ordinary incidents of everyday life and transcendental events such as virgin apparitions or aliens' visits. In this sense, both equally represent the wide range of ideo-aesthetic possibilities of Latin American cinema. Any relational study of their films must consider these distinctions and connections.

Drift, Dread, and Doubt: Siestas as Communal *Practice* in Lucrecia Martel's Salta Trilogy

Affective landscapes as a conceptual framework allow multiple interpretations. They can be used to analyze the politics of place and space, the symbolic dimension of collective sleep in cinema, and the embodied practices, relational spaces, and modes in which they are represented on screen. In Latin American and Latinx films, collective sleeping as a political form of connectedness is frequently a central discursive and aesthetic trope. These sleeping practices have taken place in reclusive environments such as mental health institutions — *Bicho de sete cabeças* (*Brainstorm*, Laís Bodansky, 2000); prisons and juvenile jails where power is associated with finding the best places to sleep — *El beso de la mujer araña* (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Hector Babenco, 1985), *Carandiru* (Hector Babenco, 2002), *Carpinteros* (*Woodpeckers,* José María Cabral, 2017), *El príncipe* (*The Prince*, Sebastián Muñoz, 2019), *Mis hermanos sueñan despiertos*

(*My Brothers Dream Awake*, Claudia Huaiquimilla, 2021); homes for the elderly––*El agente topo* (*The Mole Agent*, Maite Alberti, 2020); houses under siege—*La llorona* (Jayro Bustamante, 2019); and exploitative labour camps—*Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera, 2008). At other times, they have occurred in more privileged—yet portrayed as dysfunctional—spaces such as hippie communes—*Tarde para morir joven* (*Too Late to Die Young*, Dominga Sotomayor, 2018) and *Princesita* (*Little Princess*, Marialy Rivas, 2018); vacation homes—*Tigre* (Silvina Scnicher and Ulises Porra Guardiola, 2017), *Los sonámbulos* (*The Sleepwalkers*, Paula Hernández, 2019); and tourists' retreats and hotels—*Sundown* (Michel Franco, 2021) and *La Camarista* (Lila Avilés, 2018). Lucrecia Martel's films stand out in this panorama and have particularly inspired many of the women filmmakers mentioned above.

Martel is part of the *nuevo cine argentino* generation, which includes other renowned filmmakers such as Pablo Trapero, Israel Adrián Caetano, Martín Rejtman, Daniel Burman, and Lisandro Alonso. This generation emerged in the 1990s following a long period of military dictatorship in Argentina and film narratives that privileged *realismo costumbrista*.[8] In this context, Martel's films helped transform the narrative landscape of Latin American cinema in the dawn of the twenty-first century by signaling "an overcoming of Third Cinema,"[9] "a unique blend of experimental avant-gardism,"[10] an example of "queer-haptic

8. *Realismo costumbrista* incorporated ideo-aesthetic elements of comedy and melodrama, portraying idealized characters, often from stereotypical perspectives. It represented the daily life, customs, and moral inclinations of people in certain localities, serving also as a marker of nationalism. Much like the social and political climate, during the country's transition to democracy after the dictatorship, cinema underwent a significant transformation. *Realismo costumbrista* was then followed by a testimonial and militant realism with political denunciation at the core of films. Both forms of realism included conventional stories, such as family dramas with linear narratives and a clear interest in attracting wide audiences. Films such as *My Husband Doesn't Do It* (*Mi mujer no es mi señora*, 1978) by Hugo Moser, *Waiting for the Hearse* (*Esperando la carroza* ,1985) by Alejandro Doria, *The Official Story* (*La historia oficial*, 1985) by Luis Puenzo, and *Night of the Pencils* (*La noche de los lápices*, 1986) by Héctor Olivera are examples of these two tendencies. For more on this subject: Susana Alicia Constanza Rodríguez, "Cine argentino e identidad," *Cuadernos de Humanidades* no. 16, 2005, p. 231–238, and Esteban Di Paola, "Las Formas Políticas del Cine Argentino: Montajes, Disrupciones y Estéticas de una Tradición," *Aisthesis* no. 48, 2010, p. 128–140.

9. Júlia González de Canales Carcereny, "La obra fílmica de Lucrecia Martel, Paz Encina y Tatiana Huezo a la luz del actual cine poético latinoamericano: una superación del Tercer Cine," *Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, April 2021, p. 91–110.

10. Katy Stewart, "Establishing the Female Gaze: Narrative Subversion in Lucrecia Martel's *La niña santa* (2004) and *La ciénaga* (2001)," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, June 2016, p. 205–219.

aesthetics,"[11] and "unpredictable realism[s]."[12] Against the hegemonic burden of the plot and the immediate satisfaction it provides, Martel's storytelling questions the highly referential world of images. The films in her ground-breaking Salta Trilogy are connected to practices of sleep in a vacation home, a hotel, and private households, respectively. They utilize evocative soundscapes, uninterrupted small talk, rural mythologies, and family rituals to critique Argentina's upper-middle class. All three women-centered films are often studied as expressive of underlying danger and violence, provoking feelings of discomfort and threat in viewers. These sensations converge to question religiosity and sexuality and portray the uncertainty of teenagers and middle-agers. Apparent confusion, digression, and distress might provide ideal frameworks to find more unambiguous answers to imbalanced power relations, social responsibilities, and impunity.[13] Martel's films represent discursive sites of resistance for queer characters whose desires endanger heteronormativity, for indigenous persons discriminated against and charged with menial and domestic labour and—although white and privileged—for women stuck in patriarchal predicaments that obscure their voices and autonomy.

Drift, doubt, and dread are crucial recurrent states to analyze siesta time in Martel's films. Drift, or *deriva* in Spanish, refers to apparently incoherent forms of speech and the circularity of oral narratives and verbal language constructions. Not so much the art of cinema itself but oral traditions and everyday life events have informed Lucrecia Martel's work. She grew up in a region of rural Argentina where taking naps in the afternoon was a quotidian ritual. Her grandmother told Lucrecia and her six siblings spellbinding stories between 1:00 and 4:00 pm so the children would remain in bed. Martel uses these horror tales based on form and sound as creative tools and sources of inspiration.[14] Ghosts and virgin apparitions, el *susto* or *espanto*,[15] and the loss of one's shadow were all integral to her storytelling experience from an early age.

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11. Missy Molloy, "Queer-haptic Aesthetics in the Films of Lucrecia Martel and Albertina Carri," *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017, p. 95–111.

12. From the "Retrospective Lucrecia Martel Unpredictable Realism," organized by Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema, 11 February 2022, https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/finearts/cinema/2022/02/11/retrospective-lucrecia-martel-unpredictable-realism.html?c=finearts (accessed 1 October 2022).

13. A devotee of *telenovelas* and B-movies, Martel gave all three films horror movie titles.

14. *'La Cienaga' Q&A | Lucrecia Martel Film at Lincoln Center*, Film Society Lincoln Center, 24 May 2018, video, *youtube.com*, Film at Lincoln Center, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZC1vKmGQKs (accessed 8 May 2023), 52 min.

15. This is an ailment in popular culture across South America that determines a condition under which souls leave affected humans and animals' aching bodies after a shocking event.

Sleep is thus crucial in Martel's narrative constructions: sleeping bodies on beds or reclining chairs, the drowsiness of daily naps, the semi-consciousness of dreams, episodes of sleep talking, and a certain inconsistency in speech contribute to the presentation of characters who juxtapose themes in conversational discourse and engage with flows of thought or streams of un/consciousness in apparently unprecise or trivial conversations. These conditions shape the *deriva* or drift that occurs when language transcends references to create poetic expressions. In her Salta Trilogy, an accident, a dream, tinnitus as an auditory disorder, and people talking under the influence of alcohol establish states of bewilderment, wandering, the almost hallucinatory condition of *duermevela*, or that moment between sleep and wakefulness.[16] All these references support Martel's consideration that time—as sound waves in liquid volume or through the air—can float disorganizedly within a story.[17] Hence her films' rejection of linearity and embracing of storytelling as a rhizomatic network.

Doubt—*la duda*—becomes another state through which we can attempt to understand Lucrecia Martel's cinema. Sound will be the unavoidable trademark of her storytelling to counter the visual domestication of our image-centered contemporary culture. The choice of attributes she uses in her sound design is a game with viewers and listeners in which she either betrays or satisfies their expectations. More interested in how a location will sound than how it looks, Martel believes that sound precedes the image and helps us distrust it.[18] Her first feature film, *La Ciénaga,* is an atmospheric portrayal of Argentina's bourgeoisie as a symbol of a country plunged into a devastating financial depression.[19] It follows two families gathered during summertime in Salta. Mecha and Tali, cousins with an irresponsible and oppressive

16. Exploring other considerations of sleep in Martel's cinema, she has mentioned that "we have all fallen asleep in movie theatres. I have heard that people fall asleep during the screening of my movies. I think that is fantastic. [...] I fall asleep when I feel safe. If a film generates trust, that is a good thing. [...] And when you sleep, you miss the visual reference, but something remains functioning at the auditory level. Because we can close our eyes but not our ears." *In conversation with... Lucrecia Martel on Zama*, British Film Institute, 2018, video, *youtube.com*, BFI, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F3jyD5cWyM (accessed 1 March 2022), 35 min.

17. *Phonurgia, la perspectiva sonora del cine y la escritura, con Lucrecia Martel*, Casa de América, 17 January 2018, video, *youtube.com*, Casa de América, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYqq1WltzpM (accessed 8 May 2023), 1h 41 min.

18. Lucrecia Martel, *El sonido en la escritura y la puesta en escena*, Casa de América, 8 October 2009, video, *youtube.com*, Casa de América, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-CKHzMzMlZo (accessed 3 October 2022), 30 min.

19. S.A., "La Ciénaga," cinelatino.fr, https://www.cinelatino.fr/film/la-cienaga (accessed 23 August 2023)

husband, respectively, gather with their many children in a decadent vacation house. Mecha suffers a minor accident at the beginning of the film, foreshadowing a fatal one—the death of a child—at the end of the story. Andrea Avidad utilizes Brian Kane's notion of "acousmatic sound" to analyze Martel's first feature film. She writes that

> a judgement of the listener, not an intrinsic quality of the sound itself, acousmaticity stresses the ontological inseparability of three aspects: the sonic source or material body from which a sound is emitted, the action causing the source to produce a sound, and the sonic effect, that is, the sound heard by the listener. In Kane's model, source, cause, and effect cannot easily be put into a consistent relationship and this inaugurates a crisis of signification, for the listener cannot determine the source of the sound heard.[20]

Martel often uses this resource to generate sensations and trigger memories in the viewers based on their degree of knowledge, certainty, and uncertainty about sound. It also helps construct drifting characters, evocative soundscapes, and dense, distorted atmospheres. A barking dog we never see in *La Ciénaga* will cause a tragedy in the film. Schoolyard noises in the sonic background of a hotel room in *La niña santa* lead most viewers to recall their childhoods as characters Helena and Freddy talk about theirs. In *The Headless Woman*, a hidden crime is represented in a limbo halfway between consciousness and unconsciousness. The film title's wordplay with the character's mental awareness presents an ambiguous relation to Verónica's responsibility for killing a person. The "headless woman" constantly wonders if she murdered someone on the highway. Mecha is often under the influence of alcohol, Helena has strange dreams and sonic hallucinations due to tinnitus, and Verónica is disoriented and forgetful following a concussion caused by an accident. They all live in peculiarly disturbed worlds within their worlds, reflecting and remodelling social norms.

Martel's films also present doubt through the characters' second thoughts about faith and otherworldly religious events such as epiphanies, stigmata, and miracles. In *La niña santa,* a pious teenager assigns herself the mission to "save" the man who molested her. The film also depicts repressed sexualities due to religious dogma, individual and collective acts of prayer, circles of girls attending catechism, ghost stories, and other references to the uncanny. The filmmaker based *La mujer sin*

20. Andrea Avidad, "Deadly Barks: Acousmaticity and Post-Animality in Lucrecia Martel's *La Ciénaga*," *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 2, June 2020, p. 222–240, p. 235.

cabeza on a nightmare she had one day in which she killed a colleague, and her father helped her get rid of the body.[21] The characters, much like the filmmaker, seem to be pondering: "Since I do not believe in God anymore, who will forgive me?"[22] Media reports on a Virgin Mary that appears on a water tank cause overwhelming feelings in *La Ciénaga*. However, mourning in silence after the tragic death of young Luciano, a disappointed Momi tells Vero that she went to where the virgin had appeared and did not see a thing.

Finally, dread is the trepidation we all feel when facing the unknown. The stories of the Salta trilogy feature women, teenagers, and children facing discomforting threats and suggested hazards under the constant influence of lethargic heatwaves. As the filmmaker often cuts a scene before the action takes place, a feeling of uncertainty and a latent risk often communicate the famous undertow of violence that defines Martel's cinema. In all three films, domestic spaces alternate with the wilderness of natural environments—menacing storms, rivers and muddy waters, vegetation, mountains, insects, and other animals. David Oubiña refers to dread as "something terrible [that] waits crouched outside the frame, and, at any moment, catastrophe could burst in."[23] Martel points to signs of a contemporary world in crisis by depicting unsupervised children with guns, hinted-at incest, imbalanced social and family relations, and racist behaviours. She understands dread and insecurity as gateways to explore new paths and regards cinema as a tool to help overcome the political impotence of the citizen, giving a chance for failure, forgetfulness, and apparent meaninglessness to be part of the conversation.

Sleeping conditions allow for anthropological analyses of "intimacy and embodied relationality, socialization and cultural change."[24] Daily rituals intrinsic to Latin American cultures, mainly in rural contexts, siestas shape people's spatiotemporal experiences "with biphasic sleep patterns (those that have a long nocturnal sleep and

21. *Lucrecia Martel, Part 1 — Inspiration for La mujer sin cabeza* (*The Headless Woman,* 2008), Pacific Film Archive, 22 April 2018, video, *youtube.com*, Film Quarterly, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puSzVyLBO2c&ab_channel=FilmQuarterly (accessed 22 May 2022), 8 min.

22. "Como ya no creo en Dios, ¿quién me va a perdonar?" (our translation). Lucrecia Martel, "Un shock te puede devolver las riendas de la vida," *Clarín*, 16 August 2008, par. 1, https://www.clarin.com/espectaculos/shock-puede-devolver-riendas-vida_0_BkeGTS20pte.html (accessed 23 August 2023).

23. David Oubiña, "*La Ciénaga*: What's Outside the Frame," *The Criterion Collection*, 26 January 2015, par. 7, https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/3444-la-ci-naga-what-s-outside-the-fram (accessed 3 October 2022).

24. Glaskin and Chenhall, 2013, p. 9.

a shorter afternoon one) [...]."[25] As in other colonized territories, daytime naps in the region have been indicators of class privilege associated with productive work cycles.[26] For example, unable to take a break in the middle of the day, women and racialized persons have most likely continued to work during otherwise "restful" hours.[27] Domestic workers and employees of her protagonists are often indigenous women with fewer opportunities to rest. Although accused of robbery and disloyalty, non-white domestic servants are the primary caretakers in *La Ciénaga*. In *La mujer sin cabeza*, Verónica's assistants, housekeepers, and even the child she murders on the highway are all in positions of service and maintenance due to their ethnocultural backgrounds and the class divides constructed around them. While the mother and teenage daughter of *La niña santa* laze by the pool or have a quiet chat before bedtime, their racialized employees are busy at work cleaning, washing, fixing, and cooking. These stories depict racial and social inequalities through their characters' contrasting leisure opportunities. Their situation is critiqued by depictions of their unequal access to rest. While Martel's films mirror reality, they also reimagine and distort it as a spatial and discursive contestation. Therefore, collective siestas are also junctures to establish bodily connections among women and open windows into their fears, expectations, and dreams of different realities. All in all, the collective experience of siestas and other forms of communal sleep, as well as their surrounding environments, create affective landscapes in the Salta Trilogy. To analyze the complex networks of affects that define their cinematic representations, drift, dread, and doubt — all defined by Martel herself — are only a few potential avenues.

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25. *Ibid*., p. 5.

26. Sleep breaks in the middle of the day have also been formative habits for students across the region. For those who could attend schools, siestas were programmed in schedules throughout elementary levels, and their cessation past a certain age felt like a rite of passage.

27. Enslaved person's sleep deprivation in colonial times was a traumatic experience that still resonates with their descendants to this day. Latin American diasporic Afro-descendent artists and activists Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa study this phenomenon deeply in their project *Black Power Naps*. Their research establishes a solid link to sleep and sleeplessness and its collective, racialized, class-related, and gendered practices. Using pleasurable methodologies, they seek to unsettle stereotypes of laziness associated with Black bodies and ask for energetic reparations to decriminalize restorative leisure among Black folks. The also highlight how zombies, dead walkers, aliens, and other sleep-related characters are linked to African and Afro-Caribbean traditions such as voodoo mythologies. For more on this subject, see Navild Acosta, Sosa, ad Naeem Douglas, *Black Power Naps, "How Can We Dream If We Don't Sleep?,* 2 February 2023, https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/842 (accessed 23 May 2023).

Sleeping Together: Collective *Environments* of Bedtime in Cuban Films

"Changes in sleep may be particularly accentuated in colonial and postcolonial contexts, where rapid or significant processes of change are taking place."[28] The Cuban Revolution is paradigmatic of this sociopolitical and cultural transformation, especially concerning the design and implementation of a new school system. For decades, Cuba's public education defined living in community as a crucial part of the students' learning process. The system functioned under the boarding school structure, where pupils practiced everyday activities together. Che Guevara's and José Martí's ideals were at the core of this mandate. Guevara's notion of the "New Man"[29]—a model of Latin American citizenship that advocated class struggle and emphasized the creation of a consciousness driven by moral rather than material motivations—and Martí's principle of work/study reframed to develop group responsibility, socialist consciousness, and revolutionary ideals ruled expected behaviour in Cuba's new sociopolitical order. ESBEC and IPUEC (Escuela Secundaria Básica and Instituto Preuniversitario en el Campo, translated as Junior High and High School in the countryside) became an integrative didactic conception in which productive human labour consisted of agricultural services carried out manually on fields. At the same time, janitorial work was also assigned weekly to the brigades or classrooms.[30] If the initial project envisioned productivity as a sustainable method to keep education free and public, the *escuelas al campo* eventually became financially unviable. The principle advanced ideals of social justice and voluntary work, but choices were limited. An authoritative system made alternative options for youth to access careers outside of it almost non-existent, except for individuals with severe health conditions.

The Camilo Cienfuegos military high schools and the residency buildings for enrolled students from outside the city in all universities aligned with the intern system and allowed cohabitation and coming-of-age experiences for generations

28. Glaskin and Chenhall, 2013, p. 13.
29. José Arico (ed.), *El socialismo y el hombre nuevo* [1965], Mexico City, Siglo Veintiuno, 1986, p. 3–17.
30. For more information on Cuba's intern school system, see Carlos M. Alvarez de Zayas, *La escuela en la vida (didáctica)*, Havana, *Pueblo y Educación*, 1999, available at Conectadel.org, http://www.conectadel.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2013/03/La_escuela_en_la_vida_C_Alvarez.pdf (accessed 9 October 2022); Adonis Guibo Silva and Milagros Sagó Montoya, "Concepción didáctica integradora del estudio-trabajo con enfoque de proyecto en el área de las Ciencias Naturales del preuniversitario en el campo," *EduSol*, vol. 8, no. 23, April — June 2008, p. 1–14, https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=475748662001 (accessed 5 October 2022).

of Cuban citizens. Film education was not foreign to this condition. Founded by Fernando Birri and Gabriel García Márquez in 1985, EICTV is an intern school where many Latin American filmmakers—Lucrecia Martel amongst them—have come to teach and learn. Although its international status makes it a privileged environment, EICTV has become an affective space where Cuban and international students recreate domestic dynamics while living, studying, sleeping, and dreaming together. This institution has established itself as a special zone, an island within an island or "a great example of how spaces—made by collective human agency in the forms of institutions, social action, and political mobilization—contribute to the formation of identity."[31] Being "from," EICTV is considered a demonym (*eicetevianes*), and its dispersed community—especially teachers and students—is united by the affective landscape the school signifies.

In Cuba, however, most intern schools were less favoured, and students' experiences diverged dramatically or intertwined two opposite approaches. At times, it was a teenage liberation from the household to live in community away from parents and other family members. Other times, it meant having to abide by the methods of a system that imposed strict schedules, precarious living conditions and distance from the comfort zones that home and family signify. Separated by sex, the dormitories functioned as spaces of collective intimacies to explore gender relations and masculinities, the sharing of food, clothing, ideas, and sexual awakenings. Privacy was unattainable in cubicles where bunk beds lined up in high numbers, and people slept collectively, sharing sounds, smells, and sights. Today, those prefabricated constructions look phantasmagoric, not unlike deteriorated Olympic villages or mining towns, never reused or repurposed once the games are over or extraction activities end. The empty spaces where defunct schools used to function now serve as refugee camps for people affected by climate stressors. Documentary films such as *Sola, la extensa realidad* (*Alone, Extensive Reality*, Gustavo Pérez Fernández, 2003) and *El proyecto* (*The Project*, Alejandro Alonso, 2017) present the devastated landscapes of these spectral settings. Sandra Gómez also portrays in *Las cama solas* (*The Lonely Beds*,

31. Susan Lord and Zaira Zarza, "Intimate Spaces and Migrant Imaginaries: Sandra Gómez, Susana Barriga and Heidi Hassan," Vinicius Navarro and Juan Carlos Rodríguez (eds.), *New Documentaries in Latin America*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 199–217, p. 201, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137291349_12 (accessed 11 July 2023).

2006) a building in danger of collapse as the residents are evacuated in the face of an impending hurricane leaving behind precious possessions: their beds.

Beds as cinematic tropes and bedtime as a source of solace or distress, confinement or refuge, are also noticeable in other Cuban films. Set during the literacy campaign, *El Brigadista* (*The Teacher*, Octavio Cortázar, 1977) follows a young student from the city who moves in with a rural family to teach the community how to read and write. Sleeping habits and settings are central to his integration into the village. Finally, sleep disorders in Cuban cinema are represented through the narcoleptic characters of *La vida es silbar* (*Life is to Blow*, Fernando Pérez, 1998) — who fall to the ground on the streets when they hear phrases such as "double standards" or "opportunism." Similarly, the lack of rest, leisure, and sleep as sacrifices to achieve the professional goals of a mother are depicted in *Cuando una mujer no duerme* (*When a Woman Does Not Sleep*, Rebeca Chavez, 1983), a documentary about Francisca Rivero Arocha, the first black woman to become a doctor in Cuba in 1920. More recently, *Camionero* (*Trucker*, Sebastian Miló, 2011) portrays an intern high school where bullying students in the dormitories lead to murder and suicide, and *El patio de mi casa* (Patricia Ramos, 2009) draws on the idea of how we relate to space when we are most vulnerable. Busy hand washing her entire household's dirty laundry, a mother of two and her grandmother doze off in their backyard as they reclaim their eroticized and provocative bodies in their erotic dreams.

Similarly, the bed functions as a threshold in *Hay que saltar del lecho* (*You Must Jump out of Bed*, 2002), where Patricia Pérez narrates the story of a depressed woman who will not leave her bed. A young man's obsession with a girl makes him spy on her from under her bed like a voyeur in Yimit Ramírez's *Quiero hacer una película* (*I Want to Make a Movie*, 2020). Finally, many films do not merely represent sleep practices. Still, their narratives take the form of waking dreams, as in *Juan de los muertos* (Alejandro Brugués, 2011), a zombie comedy presenting dissident dead who revolt against the government.

Not unlike most filmmakers mentioned above, Infante is a graduate of EICTV and belongs to what Ann Marie Stock has called Cuba's "street filmmaking." According to Stock, this term denotes a "new mode of audiovisual expression that emerged on the island around 1990, when lightweight, portable equipment began to replace the unwieldy industrial models and young media artists began producing films

with only a few friends and a handful of *fulas* [Cuban slang for foreign currency]."[32] Amidst the turbulent times of Cuba's Special Period, and "[u]pon completing their formal studies at the university and/or in art and film schools, these graduates stepped out of the classrooms into the street. And that is where they stayed."[33] Stock also highlights the inventive, collaborative, and contesting spirit of this generation that witnessed the end of Cuba's state paternalism and its historical epics to concentrate on idiosyncrasies and personal stories. "Out of necessity, working with limited budgets and without industry infrastructure, this generation became adept at *resolviendo* and *inventando*—figuring out creative ways to make do."[34]

Arturo Infante aligns with the tone of political humour present in the works of Latin American and Latin filmmakers Enrique Colina (*Estética,* 1984 and *Vecinos/ Neighbours,* 1985), Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo (*Agarrando pueblo/The Vampires of Poverty*, 1978), and Cheech Marin (*Born in East LA.*, 1987). He has always used intelligent satire in his films to describe and critique Cuba's sociopolitical situation and economic hurdles. Unsurprisingly, the social interest and double discourse in Infante's movies have limited government support. This street filmmaking style denotes Infante's work's public and idiosyncratic nature. In his short film trilogy, *Utopía* (2004), *Gozar, comer, partir* (*Enjoy, Eat, and Leave*, 2006), and *Comité 666* (2011), Infante mocks severe displays of revolutionary patriotism on the island. He discusses cannibalism to overcome food insecurity, uses criminality and banal sex for comedic relief, and refers to Cubans' unpreparedness to face "development" in the Global North. Sleeping, dreaming, and beds as tropes are also crucial to Infante's filmography. In the scatological *El intruso* (*The Intruder*, 2004), the entire film consists of a nightmare in which a stiff woman is chased across her fancy apartment by her depositions. In the final fragment of *Gozar, comer, partir*, two best friends wonder about life outside the country while, on the bed, they talk and pack a suitcase full of Cuban products that the departing woman will not be able to find abroad.

The Extraordinary Journey… is Infante's first feature film after a long career as a screenwriter and short film director. It follows heartwarming Celeste, a curious and naive retired teacher who works in a planetarium and decides to live on another

32. Ann Marie Stock, *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, coll. "Envisionning Cuba," 2009, p. 18.
33. *Ibid*., p. 14.
34. *Ibid*., p. 15.

planet. Even though Celeste loved and excelled at her teaching career for years, when she showed up at her school physically and psychologically abused by an alcoholic husband, she was deemed not a good example for students and was separated from the institution. Self-centered and materialistic, her only son and sister cannot wait for Celeste to leave to turn her apartment into a profitable restaurant in downtown Havana. In a leading role following her popular characterization of Ofelia in *Una novia para David* (*A Girlfriend for David*, Orlando Rojas, 1985),[35] Spain-based actress María Isabel Díaz returns to Cuban screens to portray this vulnerable, endearing, yet solitary woman who has very little to lose at this point in her life.

Awoken one night by strange sounds coming from the apartment next door, Celeste notices delicate non-human creatures in the hall. Later we learn that her neighbour, Polina Petrowsky, one of the principal mission officers from the imagined planet Gryok, has departed Earth and left Celeste an invitation letter to join her and work again as a teacher. It is impossible not to associate the "more developed civilization" on planet Gryok with the United States and the historic lottery that, for decades, allowed Cubans to obtain visas to travel there.[36] To train for life on the new planet, selected citizens are sent to a school-turned-training camp, where women and men will share mixed bedrooms. Rumour has it that the government has created another VIP base where artists, athletes, and resourceful people enjoy better lodging conditions. However, moving from a home and workplace of loneliness and sadness,

35. The film *Una novia para David* follows a young student who recently arrived in Havana from the countryside and who starts to live in residence. As he adapts to the new environment, he is torn between proving his masculinity by making friends with the misogynist show-off guy at school and dating his dancer classmate Olga, or loving Ofelia, the student leader depicted as overweight in the film. The story takes place in an intern school, and dormitories are settings of pivotal moments. In one scene, while most students sleep, bullies play a game to embarrass David, who decided to date Ofelia, simultaneously body-shamed in secret by most of her class and a symbol of female empowerment. The film criticizes the patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and the constructed social stigma around obesity. Opposite interpretations of the "New Man" are evident in the film. On the one hand, it is portrayed as a necessary antipatriarchal stance claimed by feminist students and, on the other hand, it works as the justification for sexist behaviour within the Revolution.

36. The OFICVI (Oficina Central de Viaje Interplanetario, Interplanetary Travel Headquarters), created to control migration to the new planet, is a humorous allegory of the slowness of the bureaucracy in official Cuban institutions. As he recognizes that farewells in Cuba are so transcendent that it seems people are travelling to another planet, he has mentioned that the film was a couple of years ahead of what would happen later in Cuba in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Now there are long lines in offices to get passports, visas, and legalize documents. There is a massive departure of people who no longer believe in the project of the Revolution." (*Conversación con Arturo Infante sobre El viaje extraordinario de Celeste García*, UCLA Spanish & Portuguese Department, 17 May 2023, video, *youtube.com,* UCLA Spanish & Portuguese Department, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f1sqTtipB8&t=3s (accessed 18 May 2023), 1h 25 min.

the joyful affective space of the camp will transform Celeste's appreciation for human relations. Women, queer, and black folks will become her friends and have a decisive role in the myriad of subsequent emotions. Celeste moves from sleeping alone at home to sleeping in the dormitory, accompanied by new friends: Hector Francisco — an overlooked gay singer; pious Mirta — pregnant with an alien child; and Perlita, a hilarious sex worker. The dimension of the dream as life expectation and desire is also present in the diverse reasons these characters want to leave the country. A fighter, Perlita wants to return victorious from another world to show off all the material things she could not have before and make her neighbours jealous. Hector Francisco hopes to finally obtain recognition as a talented singer. Mirta wishes to raise her child in the land of the baby's father. And kind-hearted Augusto, Celeste's local butcher, yearns to cure his insomnia. He has not slept since 1980 because of post-traumatic stress disorder from years as a soldier in the Angolan War. Head over heels for Celeste, Augusto is presented as someone who, due to his sleep deprivation, is often looking at the sky and is, thus, able to see beyond reality.

Significant events occur in the film in the limited sleeping environments and during resting hours. While people sleep in the dormitories, a simulacrum of the spaceship's arrival wakes the entire camp, forcing residents to jump from their bunk beds hurriedly. Previous socialist rituals, such as the preparation for defence against enemy attack, are ironically substituted in the film for coaching sessions on interplanetary migration tactics. The fake rehearsal, however, costs Hector Francisco his life. He suffers a heart attack and dies from the shock. In the bedroom where the four friends used to sit on each other's beds and share stories as they remembered and bonded, the women will later mourn their friend by listening to a CD of his greatest hits. Hector Francisco's sudden death connects the story's primary and secondary plots. The young man finally gets access to the facilities by bribing the corrupted waiting list organizers to get in. The people camping outside the school perimeter is an ironic recreation of the long lines Cubans stand in to obtain rationed essential goods or to get visas in foreign consulates. The eventual landing of the spaceship wakes the camp from their night sleep once again. In the rush of the departure, Celeste is deceived by a young man who leaves her unconscious and steals her access code to smuggle his girlfriend onto the spaceship. Hurt and unconscious, Celeste remains behind and wakes up alone the following day. She returns home only to discover that her sister and son have used her celebrity to open a restaurant in her apartment. The

otherwise optimistic woman is now depressed, wandering Havana as an alien with a deep sensation of non-belonging. Another woman *a la deriva*, she whispers "Gryok," the name of the planet, over and over. Still, her fate will change when a loving Augusto reappears one day to confess that he parachuted from the spaceship in Santiago de Cuba. Upon realizing that Celeste would not be a part of it, life on the new planet made no sense to him anymore. In the end, Celeste's extraordinary journey was where she finally found herself.

The biggest challenge for Infante was the sound and visual effects necessary to achieve his post-socialist sci-fi. Due to the precarious conditions of street filmmaking in Cuba, he was worried about the quality of the delivery, which turned out convincing and realistic.[37] Influenced by science fiction films from the 1980s such as *Cocoon* (Ron Howard, 1985), *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), and *ET* (Steven Spielberg, 1982), and raised by grandmothers, aunts, mothers, and neighbours, he learned to see the world through the sensibility of middle-aged women. He wanted then to recreate a narrative in which a Cuban mother faced an alien experience.[38] Aspects of the sensible, lights, wind, and other cinematic tactile-like elements, announce the extra-terrestrial visits, which always happen during sleeping hours. When aliens are near, echoing sounds of faulty telecommunication transmissions, interrupted radio waves, and Morse codes populate the airwaves and create affective atmospheres. The vibrant sequences where the spaceship approaches to conduct the human abductions that will bring Cubans to Gryok also feature intermittent lights and emergency sirens that dynamize the action. Altering noises come out of Mirta's belly as her alien baby participates in conversations with her roommates. In preparation for departure, one of the training activities consists of using 3D masks to adapt to another dimension. For Celeste, the otherworldly creature that shows up on screen is a giant Gryokite hen, briefly mentioned earlier in the film as a symbol of abundance on the new planet in stark contrast with Cuba's depleted economy, shown through the original limited chicken quota Celeste obtained through the monthly food rations. As Infante

37. *Short Interviews with Arturo Infante, director of El Viaje Extraordinario de Celeste García*, Havana Glasgow Film Festival, 11 November 2020, video, *youtube.com*, Havana Glasgow Film Festival, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ_ipZBzJ8U (accessed 18 May 2023), 6 min.

38. *Debate de A Viagem Extraordinária de Celeste Garcia de Arturo Infante com Maria Isabel PARTE 4*, Cineclube Ação e Reflexão, 4 September 2019, video, *youtube.com*, Cineclube Ação e Reflexão, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd_E0B0b6-4 (accessed 18 May 2023), 2 min.

presents the natural symbolism of Cubans' everyday lives and their desire to emigrate, he recreates the propaganda of the Cuban official discourse with ironic local humour. An aural leitmotif is the voice-over news advertising about aliens' celebration of the Cuban Revolution's achievements and detailed descriptions of life on the new planet.

While lying in bed one day, Celeste remembers a memory that haunts her and does not let her sleep. Presented as a dream-like flashback, she evokes the moment when she watched her drunk husband fall into the river and drown while she did nothing to save him. This intimate recollection is the materialization of Celeste's darkest secret. It reveals her unspoken urge to finally take control of her life. This and many other moments in the film mark subtly but unequivocally the power of sleep and dream-like events as instances where identities take shape in Infante's oeuvre. The multiple affective landscapes that they represent are seen "not as popular nostalgia but as 'spectral,' and so haunted by layers of time past, present, and future."[39]

Conclusion

A sensorial and embodied experience, sleep practices and their environments form political affective relations. As a sociocultural activity, sleep is always affective, as are the virtual and material spaces — sensed and lived — where it takes place. In Lucrecia Martel and Arturo Infante's films, the practices and environments of collective sleep can be conceived as actions and spaces of resistance to capitalist individuality in the Cuban case and as a site of patriarchal contestation in the Argentinian one. However, both filmmakers use representations to provide critical comments beyond these notions. In the late socialist film, there is irony and disillusionment about the early utopian goals of the Revolution. In their privilege, the middle-class homes in Lucrecia Martel's films also expose racial and ethnic discrimination. In essence, control over sleep processes and conditions is a biopolitical determinant of governance and power dynamics.

In the era of climate anxiety, global inflation, and multitasking, the quantity and quality of sleep have become a luxury and an issue of social justice concern.[40] The multiple spatializations of sleep and the social implications of its collective practice

39. Berberich, Campbell and Hudson, 2013, p. 319.

40. Radio emission of The Sunday Magazine with Piya Chattopadhyay, "In Today's Economy, Sleep Has Become a Luxury Many Can't Afford," aired on 19 June 2022, CBS, https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2044746307684 (accessed 22 October 2022).

can provide valuable insights into power structures and social relations as encountered in real life or expressed through art forms. In this article, group sleep events and wakefulness cycles help convey filmmakers' concerns and affective determinations in their stories' characters as mirrors and critiques of a broader citizenry. The sensorial and material analyses of bedtime conditions in Lucrecia Martel and Arturo Infante's work allow an interpretation of sleeping (or sleepless) bodies as sites of resistance against hegemonic discourses and state power. If Martel's stories present collective sleeping in private settings as a choice based on tradition, in the case of Arturo Infante—and other Cuban films––shared bedrooms are mandatory in a system fostered by societal transformation and new collective senses of civic belonging.

In Latin American cinema, affect is expressed and perceived in multiple acts of sleeping, waking, and sleeplessness and the various spaces where these activities occur. These places and actions become affective landscapes when they imply collectivity, intimacy, and togetherness and, in doing so, generate feelings of drift, doubt, fear, and hope. Group sleeping is, thus, one of the many possible landscapes where environments and affect merge, creating unprecedented spatial meanings in their symbiosis. The Cuban Revolution's sense of social egalitarianism generated cohabitation environments in which collectivism prevailed over individuality. Infante, however, looks past this perfect socialist utopia and plays with the idea of a dystopian reality, an improved place of freedom and abundance beyond the borders of his complex, contradictory, and geopolitically isolated country. All while creating characters still exuding empathy, solidarity, and love in these new settings. In the domestic and institutional spaces of Lucrecia Martel's cinema, on the other hand, collective or communal sleeping as a mid-day siesta ritual highlights beds as landscapes of affect where vulnerabilities, mutual bonds, and togetherness arise. It also conceives sleep-like behaviours as moments and states that lead to narrative ambiguity, doubt, uncertainty, and danger. The Salta Trilogy depicts unhappy marriages, complex sexual relations, covered-up murders, and the decadence of the bourgeoisie in a classist system. As the Salta Trilogy's subaltern characters navigate otherness between reality and fiction, between slumber, limbo, and alertness, their apparent failure ultimately becomes their strength.

Practices and Environments of Collective Sleep in Twenty-First-Century Latin American Film

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Abstract:

What do practices of sleep—or lack thereof—convey about power, social and class divides, and political structures in Latin American postcolonial societies? How does cinema represent and critique binaries such as conscious/unconscious, utopian/dystopian, individual/social, and private/public that are often associated with settings where sleep-wake cycles take place? In exploring these questions, this article analyzes *practices* and, more specifically, *environments* of collective sleep as affective landscapes and narrative tools in contemporary Latin American films. It draws from atmospheric family dramas in neoliberal Argentina and dark sci-fi comedies in post-socialist Cuba to examine embodied and em(bed)ded relations before, during, and after acts of sleeping, dreaming, and awakening.

Résumé

Que révèle le sommeil sur les relations de pouvoir, les divisions de genre et de classe, et les structures politiques dans les sociétés postcoloniales ? Comment le cinéma représente-t-il les binarités corps / esprit, conscient / inconscient, utopique / dystopique, et privé / public associées aux cycles de sommeil / éveil ? Cet article analyse des pratiques et des environnements collectifs du sommeil, du rêve et de l'éveil en tant que paysages affectifs dans des films d'Argentine et de Cuba.

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Zaira Zarza est professeure de cinéma à l'Université de Montréal. Elle est titulaire d'un doctorat en études culturelles de l'Université Queen's et d'une maîtrise en histoire de l'art de l'Université de La Havane. Son livre *Caminos del cine brasileño contemporáneo* a été publié par Ediciones ICAIC en 2010. Elle a travaillé comme programmatrice de films aux festivals TIFF, FICCI et LASA, et son projet *Raíces y Rutas* promeut le cinéma de la diaspora cubaine.