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*Assimilation and rejection of the Soviet heritage in the identity construction of post-Soviet Cuban generation: the case of nostalgia for Soviet Cartoons (muñequitos rusos) in Cuba*

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## Abstract

This thesis explores nostalgia in the discourses surrounding Soviet cartoons—popularly remembered in Cuba as *muñequitos rusos*—and their role in contemporary Cuban identity construction. Using a qualitative interpretive approach, the study analyzes a corpus of newspaper articles and Facebook user comments published between 2013 and 2025. The analysis combines thematic, discursive, and narrative methods, allowing us to map the tension between "top-down" and "bottom-up" discourses to examine how post-Soviet Cuban identity is constructed.

The findings demonstrate that the Soviet legacy—illustrated through nostalgic references to the *muñequitos rusos*—occupies an ambivalent position in the construction of post-Soviet Cuban identity, situated between acceptance and rejection, and marked by humor (Cuban choteo), criticism, aesthetics, and everyday reinterpretation. At the same time, the Cuban case reveals the importance of generational silence: younger Cuban generations construct their identities in contexts where the celebration of Soviet heritage no longer plays a central role. For them, nostalgia for *muñequitos rusos* appears primarily as commodified or ironic aesthetic references, rather than vehicles for restoring the past.

In this sense, nostalgia in Cuba for the Soviet heritage emerges as a reflexive, commodified cultural practice, criticized through censorship, humor, and everyday economic precariousness, as well as entering dialogue and dispute with other heritages that continue to participate in contemporary Cuban identity-building processes.

**Keywords:** post-soviet nostalgia, post-Soviet Cuba, Soviet cartoons, *muñequitos rusos*, identity construction

## Abstrakt

Niniejsza praca bada zjawisko nostalgii w dyskursach i narracjach wokół radzieckich kreskówek – popularnie zapamiętanych na Kubie jako „*muñequitos rusos*” – oraz ich rolę w kształtowaniu współczesnej tożsamości kulturowej Kuby. Wykorzystując jakościowe podejście interpretacyjne, analiza obejmuje korpus artykułów prasowych oraz komentarzy użytkowników Facebooka opublikowanych w latach 2014–2025. Zastosowanie metod analizy tematycznej, dyskursywnej i narracyjnej pozwala ukazać, w jaki sposób postsowiecka tożsamość Kuby jest ramowana, kwestionowana i resignifikowana w zróżnicowanych przestrzeniach medialnych.

Wyniki badań pokazują, że spuścizna sowiecka – ilustrowana nostalgicznymi odniesieniami do „*muñequitos rusos*” – zajmuje ambiwalentną pozycję w procesie konstruowania kubańskiej tożsamości, sytuując się pomiędzy akceptacją a odrzuceniem, a zarazem naznaczona jest humorem (*choteo*), krytyką, estetyką i codzienną reinterpretacją. Jednocześnie przypadek Kuby uwidacznia znaczenie pokoleniowego milczenia: młodsze generacje budują swoją tożsamość w kontekście, w którym celebrowanie dziedzictwa sowieckiego nie odgrywa już centralnej roli. Dla nich wspomnienia o „*muñequitos rusos*” funkcjonują przede wszystkim jako estetyczne bądź ironiczne odniesienia, a nie jako narzędzie przywracania przeszłości.

W tym sensie nostalgia za sowieckim dziedzictwem na Kubie jawi się nie tyle jako pragnienie powrotu, ile jako ambiwalentna praktyka kulturowa – refleksyjna i estetyczna – która łączy w sobie humor, ironię i reinterpretację, a zarazem wchodzi w dialog i spór z innymi warstwami dziedzictwa uczestniczącymi w procesach kształtowania współczesnej tożsamości Kuby.

**Słowa kluczowe:** nostalgia postsowiecka, Kuba postsowiecka, radzieckie kreskówki, *muñequitos rusos*, konstruowanie tożsamości.

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Mit potrzebny jest nam na co dzień. By umocnić siebie samego w trudach życia i by przekazać metafizyczną prawdę o wartościach następnym pokoleniom.

*A myth is something that we need every day to become stronger in our life struggles and to be able to convey to next generations the metaphysical truth about the values we uphold.*

— Maciej Chmiel, *Myth, Magic, Genius Loci*. Studio Filmów Rysunkowych (2022)

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The study of Soviet heritage is fundamental to understanding the construction, and transformation of large-scale collective identities. The creation of a common identity was one aspect of the Soviet project, which sought to unify peoples of different languages and cultures under a narrative based on communist ideology.<sup>1</sup> The USSR's policy as a multinational state that sought to dissolve differences contributed to the formation of national identities that, paradoxically, later contributed to nationalist movements that accelerated the dissolution of the Soviet state.<sup>2</sup> Today, this legacy has not disappeared; on the contrary, Russia is actively turning to the Soviet population in search of allies, which highlights the contemporary scale and political resonance of the topic. Therefore, studying this legacy allows us to critically review the past, understand the current mechanisms of symbolic construction in post-socialist states, and analyze how these legacies persist and are reinterpreted.

In turn, nostalgia and identity are also interconnected, with nostalgia being a powerful emotional and discursive tool through which individuals and communities negotiate, stabilize, or redefine their identities.<sup>3</sup> providing continuity during disruptions and serving as a “defense mechanism” that strengthens emotional ties to a shared, imagined past in post-Soviet and post-socialist contexts.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, nostalgia can also work as a discursive space for contestation, often functioning not as pure longing but as a political protest identity mobilized in moments of tension, demonstrating how it may simultaneously represent emotional attachment and strategic identity positioning.<sup>5</sup> In sum, nostalgia provides a framework through which individuals and communities reclaim coherence, articulate belonging, and respond to discontinuities through melancholic reflection or restorative mythmaking.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Ovchinnikova, ‘Una lengua para quince repúblicas: la construcción de la identidad soviética’, 7 May 2020, <https://elordenmundial.com/identidad-union-sovietica-urss/>, consulted 24 August 2025.

<sup>2</sup> J. L. Jiménez, ‘Construcción y deconstrucción de identidades nacionales en transición tras la disolución de la Unión Soviética.’ *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*. Vol. 68, (2023).

<sup>3</sup> D. Berdahl ‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things’, *Ethnos*, Vol. 64

<sup>4</sup> M. Markova, ‘The Political Use of Soviet Nostalgia to Develop a Russian National Identity.’ *E-International Relations*, (2020), p.3

<sup>5</sup> Tammpuu, Juzefovičs, and Seppel, ‘Claiming the ‘Right to a Happy Soviet Childhood’: Discursive Enactment of Memory Citizenship among Russian-Speakers in Estonia.’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol.51, no. 2 (2020)

The division of the world into Western and Eastern blocs after the end of World War II and the need of both sides to expand their political, economic and cultural models to the rest of the world led the Soviet Union to strengthen its Sovietization process in Eastern Europe and Eurasia and later to other regions of the so-called Third World.<sup>6</sup> Among these territories was the distant warm Caribbean island of the Republic of Cuba, which, following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 joined the socialist bloc led by the USSR, consolidating a political-economic alliance that intensified in the 1970s with the adoption of Soviet planning models and close institutional cooperation. Despite the fall of the USSR, the Soviet imprint remains visible in multiple spheres of Cuban life, reviving a nostalgic bond, which demonstrates how the memory of the Soviet past remains alive in contemporary Cuban imaginary.

This intriguing paradox of rupture and continuity in the Cuban case interests our research. On one hand, we see the dissolution of the USSR as the temporal mark of the end of Soviet support, triggering the beginning of the so-called Special Period (the name given to period of severe economic crisis caused by the end of Soviet financial support in Cuba). Still, on the other hand, we also perceive that the Cuban government did not follow a path of capitalist transition, nor a modification of the governmental ideology. Instead, during the rupture, it also preserved the socialist system, institutions, and ideological structures, resulting in the Cuban post-Soviet condition, where a society persists without the USSR but also without the neoliberal transition that characterized many countries of the former Soviet bloc.

Following this framework, our research analyzes the construction of a sense of identity among the post-Soviet Cuban generation in its interaction with the Soviet heritage and nostalgic expressions toward this heritage in contemporary Cuba. To illustrate and narrow the focus of our research, we decided to use the case of the discussions on the Soviet cartoons known in Cuba as *muñequitos rusos*, a typically local and cultural way of referring to the cartoons produced by the former USSR, broadcast on Cuban television during the 1960s to the 1990s. The phenomenon of *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) represents an imported and reappropriated cultural symbol, representing an element of the Soviet heritage that deeply penetrated the childhood memory of ordinary Cubans, becoming a representative part of the collective imagination. These cartoons are not a marginal anecdote but a central cultural artifact in the Cuban imagination. Broadcast

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<sup>6</sup> R. Fagen, 'Cuba and the Soviet Union.', *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1978)

almost daily during prime children's programming between the 1960s and 1990s, the *muñequitos rusos* became an obligatory and exclusive reference for several generations of Cuban children.

The discussions related to this cultural phenomenon resonate today and has even gained renewed visibility in recent years. Beginning in 2009,<sup>7</sup> with the gradual access to the internet in Cuba, a digitalization of social space began, allowing more Cubans to share memories, emotions, and narratives about their childhood. In this context, digital interactions began to be recorded, which evoked nostalgia for the Soviet cartoons expressed in blogs, forums, and social media.

Furthermore, contemporary Cuban fashion brands have incorporated printed images of former Soviet cartoons (Bolek and Lolek, Cheburashka, and the Wolf from the series "Nu, pogodi!")<sup>8</sup> into garments adapted to the island's tropical context, drawing inspiration from the nostalgia evoked by these cartoons to launch an emotionally charged fashion piece. This aesthetic style has gained popularity among the Cubans on the island and in the Cuban diaspora, who connect with this visual legacy.

Moreover, in 2024, a renewed cultural alliance between Cuba and Russia, consolidated through institutional collaboration between the animation division of the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) and the Soyuzmultfilm, revived the nostalgic element of *muñequitos rusos*<sup>9</sup> to develop joint animation projects and expand cultural cooperation through festivals in both countries.<sup>10</sup>

In our research, these cartoons illustrate the link between nostalgia and identity in the contemporary Cuban context. The *muñequitos rusos* memory is rooted in the childhood memories of a large portion of the Cuban population who grew up watching them. Nostalgia for Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) is analyzed in our work through its manifestation in

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<sup>7</sup> B. Reyes Ayala, 'Those Who Are Left behind: A Chronicle of Internet Access in Cuba.', [Companion Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference](#), (2023)

<sup>8</sup> Fresko Design – Fresko Havana, [Fresko Design – Fresko Havana](#), consulted on 22.07.25

<sup>9</sup> [OnCuba](#), 'Los 'muñequitos rusos' vuelven a Cuba durante una jornada de 'Cultura Espiritual' (2024), <https://oncubanews.com/cultura/los-munequitos-rusos-vuelven-a-cuba-durante-una-jornada-de-cultura-espiritual/>, consulted on 1.05.25

<sup>10</sup> [Cubadebate](#), 'Cuba y Rusia firman acuerdo para impulsar la animación cinematográfica' (2025), <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2025/04/26/cuba-y-rusia-firman-acuerdo-para-impulsar-la-animacion-cinematografica/>, consulted on 01.05.2025

contemporary Cuban digital written memory and its use for diverse purposes, ranging from fashion to political legitimization.

Their renewed visibility invites us to question how such symbols, once imported and ideologically charged, are now reinterpreted by post-Soviet generation who did not experience the USSR firsthand. This brings us to the core of our research inquiry: How is contemporary Cuban identity articulated through nostalgic cultural memory, using the case of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*)? To explore this broader question, we focus on three interrelated dimensions: (1) How do Cuban media use nostalgic references to Soviet cartoons to negotiate the meaning of contemporary Cuban identity? (2) What identity narratives emerge from contemporary Cuban cultural products (e.g. clothing) that employ imagery from Soviet cartoons? (3) How do discourses around Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) articulate the assimilation and rejection of Soviet heritage in the identity of post-Soviet Cuban generation?

In this thesis, the term *post-Soviet generation* refers to Cubans born after 1991, who grew up under a socialist regime but without the USSR as a global actor. Their relationship to Soviet cartoons is therefore mediated through inherited memories, reruns, and cultural symbols, rather than direct socialist propaganda.

This research focuses on the discourses and cultural narratives surrounding *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) in Cuban digital content aimed at Cuban audiences as a lens for exploring how nostalgia functions as an expression of post-Soviet Cuban identity. By analyzing the discussions related to how these cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) are represented in media, fashion, and popular culture, the study seeks to understand how post-soviet Cuban generation, particularly those born after 1991, negotiate the meanings of a Soviet legacy they did not directly experience but continue to encounter symbolically.

In this study, we adopted a qualitative interpretive approach based on a constructivist-interpretivist epistemology, with an inductive orientation. Our original sample consisted of 95 articles from independent Cuban media outlets, 20 articles from official Cuban media outlets, and more than 3,773 Facebook user comments extracted from 28 posts from groups dedicated to sharing memories among Cuban audiences about children's cartoons broadcast on Cuban television. Each sample was collected based on the criterion of containing explicit references to *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons), either as the main topic of debate and reflection or as part of a broader argument on other topics. Furthermore, this mixed set of sources allows us to contrast

institutional, alternative, and everyday narratives, offering a comprehensive view of how nostalgia for Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) circulates in Cuban society as a contemporary identity marker. This is why our sample covers a publication period from 2010 to the present, which coincides with the period in which open access to the internet began on the island and Cuban users could interact with these references. Due to sample saturation and the fact that it does not always provide a solid argument for our analysis, the sample was reduced to an empirical corpus comprising 14 articles from official Cuban media, 32 from independent media, and 1,297 user comments extracted from 11 Facebook posts published between 2013 and 2025. The analysis combines thematic approaches to identify recurring codes and patterns, discursive approaches to examine positioning and power relations, and narrative approaches to explore the symbolic and affective dimensions of the stories. This methodological triangulation provides a nuanced framework for investigating how nostalgic references to Soviet cartoons articulate identity in contemporary Cuba.

This research contributes to contemporary debates on identity construction and post-Soviet nostalgia by going beyond the Eastern European approach that predominates in the literature, as very few have addressed how this phenomenon manifests itself in Latin America, and particularly in Cuba. The Cuban case is significant because the Sovietization process was experienced at a distance: it was imposed through cultural exchange, education, and the media, rather than through direct territorial proximity, similar to a colonial encounter, and where the legacy was absorbed and Cubanized, but with traces that persist even after the collapse of the USSR. The study also fills a gap in research on childhood nostalgia related to the impact of childhood memories of cartoons, enriching discussions often addressed by other North American or Japanese children's cultural products. Furthermore, it expands on existing studies on Cuba and the USSR, which tend to focus on discussions of political relations or ideological influence.

The thesis is structured into six main chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study and outlines the research puzzle. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical framework, first addressing conceptual debates on identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts, and then situating these debates in relation to Cuban identity. Chapter 3 presents the empirical case, providing a historical overview of the Cuban–Soviet imaginary and examining the place of Soviet animation in Cuban cultural memory. Chapter 4 describes the research methods, including the epistemological foundations, the empirical corpus, and the analytical strategies, as well as ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter 5 contains the findings and analysis, organized into three thematic

sections: Media, memory and politics(5.1), Cultural artifacts and visual identity(5.2), and Nostalgia as a cultural narrative(5.3). The chapter concludes with a broader theoretical discussion. Finally, the Chapter 6 concludes and summarizes the main contributions of the thesis and reflects on its implications for the study of nostalgia, identity, and post-Soviet cultural legacies.

## Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

### 2.1 Conceptual frameworks on identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts

This section reviews key theoretical perspectives on *identity* and *nostalgia* in post-Soviet contexts, with the aim of establishing a broad and nuanced conceptual basis for this study. The purpose is to integrate complementary approaches that illuminate the ways nostalgia operates in identity-making.

The construction of individual and collective identities has become central to public life, functioning as a means of healing or legitimization. In this sense, some specialists consider that identity is constructed from the explicit narratives we create within the framework of ambiguity, gaps, and contradictions and from the implicit memories that constitute us. As a result, the subject who remembers occupies the positions of author, narrator, and character, since remembering involves deciding who we were and who we want to be. Therefore, identity changes depending on who remembers and what is remembered, turning identity into a symbolic process traversed by cultural, political, and affective disputes and epistemological and ontological issues mobilized by memory practices. However, identity is constructed in the dynamic between remembering and forgetting, an active exercise that does not mean rigidity.<sup>11</sup>

In post-Soviet contexts, nostalgia is sometimes perceived as an active form of identity elaboration. Some authors, such as Berdahl<sup>12</sup>, classify nostalgia in the post-Soviet context as a strategy through which people construct resistance and even political affirmation, using everyday objects, memories, and symbols of the socialist past, which reflects a profound transformation of identity in times of social dislocation and tension inherent to memories and processes of cultural reappropriation.<sup>13</sup> Others like Grünberg<sup>14</sup> explain that the symbolic use of nostalgia also creates a space for intergenerational collective reflection on the Soviet experience, provoking both familiarity and rejection responses. In this way, theater acts as a mediator between individual and collective memory and contributes to the production of identity.<sup>15</sup> Although we will discuss the

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<sup>11</sup> 'Preface', P. Antze and M. Lambek(ed), (Preface and Introduction), Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory, New York, Routledge(2016), p. xvi, xviii, xix, xxi, xxv, xxix.

<sup>12</sup> D.Berdahl, '(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things', p.207

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Grünberg, 'Remembering the Soviet Past in Estonia. The Case of the Nostalgic Comedy 'The Light Blue Wagon.', Satori(2009), p.15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

Cuban case in more depth later on, it is striking that when it comes to post-Soviet nostalgia, Jansen<sup>16</sup> suggests that this should also be understood as a relational phenomenon not only through the memory of the past but also through confrontation with the “other”, as in the Cuban case, where the equation between socialism and national identity was reinforced by the political slogan “Socialism or Death” (“*Socialismo o Muerte*”), which replaced the previous “Homeland or Death” (“*Patria o Muerte*”) without implying a profound ideological shift.<sup>17</sup>

Identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts are also projected into discursive, artistic, and political practices. For Jõesalu and Nugin,<sup>18</sup> the reparation of memory in cultural texts strengthens existing discursive patterns and introduces new configurations. In the case of citizen responses, Foxall<sup>19</sup> argues that these reveal the political and everyday nature of these symbols as spaces to produce identity.<sup>20</sup>

From a more critical perspective, Wakamiya<sup>21</sup> argues that post-Soviet studies have begun to challenge homogeneous forms of identity representation, highlighting the value of individual narratives and subjective responses to trauma and oppression, and drawing on theories of identity and cultural studies, allowing for a broader range of meanings to be identified in accounts of the Soviet past.<sup>22</sup> According to Polese<sup>23</sup>, national identity can be constructed by both state actors and individuals operating outside official structures. The latter are responsible for accepting, renegotiating, or rejecting the symbols and narratives elites promote through non-traditional channels of identity construction that emerge from the social base and ultimately acquire legitimacy as national markers.<sup>24</sup> Social identity in the post-Soviet context is a dynamic construction that must be analyzed from the lived experience and the impositions from above, so it is necessary for any analysis of this type to incorporate ethnographic sensitivity and attention to

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<sup>16</sup> S. Jansen, ‘Identities, Memories and Ideologies’, *Social Anthropology*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2007), p.328–329.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> K. Jõesalu and R. Nugin, ‘Reproducing Identity through Remembering: Cultural Texts on the Late Soviet Period’, *Folklore* (2012), p. 40

<sup>19</sup> Foxall, ‘A Contested Landscape: Monuments, Public Memory, and Post Soviet Identity in Stavropol’, Russia.’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol.46, no. I, (2013), p, 176

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> R. L. Wakamiya, ‘Post-Soviet Contexts and Trauma Studies’, *Slavonica*, Vol. 17, no. 2 (2011), p. 136, 142

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Polese et al., ‘Introduction: On Informal and Spontaneous National Identities’, *Routledge*, (2017), p. 2–4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

everyday detail. However, Tammpuu, Juzefovičs, and Seppel<sup>25</sup> also describe how identity construction in post-Soviet contexts is articulated through affective narratives and shared discourses in digital spaces, where identity construction not only arises from the testimonies of ordinary citizens, but also through politicians and journalists, thus giving rise to a transversal circulation of identity discourses in the digital public sphere, showing how national identities can be shaped by emotional memory and digital media.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, the instrumentalization of nostalgia is the construction of national identities, especially in contexts of transition or identity crisis, where the nation-state remains one of the most consistent and persistent forms of collective identity. Studies on memory and post-socialism have pointed out how nostalgia can function as a political tool to recompose fragmented national identities.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of nostalgia has been defined as an emotional experience marked by a longing for the past,<sup>28</sup> a therapeutic mechanism for dealing with trauma that adapts the past to emotionally manageable forms in the present in a strategically revisionist manne. Traditionally conceived as a desire to return to a lost place, more recent approaches understand it as a reaction to discomfort with the present and a yearning to transform current reality,<sup>29</sup> in addition to positively affecting emotional and social well-being since sharing nostalgic memories strengthens emotional bonds.

One of the most influential classifications in the study of nostalgia is that of Svetlana Boym in her work, *The Future of Nostalgia*,<sup>30</sup> which distinguishes between restorative nostalgia, focused on reconstructing an idealized past, and reflexive nostalgia, oriented toward a critical contemplation of loss. However, Nadkarni and Shevchenko(2004)<sup>31</sup> suggest these categories tend

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<sup>25</sup> Tammpuu, Juzefovičs, and Seppel, 'Claiming the 'Right to a Happy Soviet Childhood', p. 245, 247, 248, 253,

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Markova, 'The Political Use of Soviet Nostalgia to Develop a Russian National Identity', p. 3-4

<sup>28</sup> T. FioRito and C. Routledge, 'Is Nostalgia a Past or Future-Oriented Experience? Affective, Behavioral, Social Cognitive, and Neuroscientific 87 Evidence', Frontiers in Psychology (2020), p. 1

<sup>29</sup> Kalinina, Ekaterina. 'What Do We Talk about When We Talk about Media and Nostalgia.' Medien & Zeit. 2016., p. 6

<sup>30</sup> S. Boym, The Future of Nostalgia(2001), p. 41

<sup>31</sup> M. Nadkarni and O. Shevchenko, 'The Politics of Nostalgia: A Case for Comparative Analysis of Post-Socialist Practices', Ab Imperio, (2004), p. 497, 504

to blend in practice, as it has been observed that most practices fall somewhere in between or combine both dimensions, and this ambiguity has generated debate about the evaluation of nostalgia from a political or ethical perspective beyond simplistic moral classifications.<sup>32</sup> Qualitative studies, like Jõesalu and Nugin,<sup>33</sup> show a nostalgia that can be more reflective and linked to stability, childhood, or lost routines.<sup>34</sup> According to Kalinina,<sup>35</sup> this ambiguity requires understanding nostalgia as a hybrid emotion, with the potential to generate identity and critical reflection, but also to be used politically in a negative way.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Mazur<sup>37</sup> explains that the collapse of the previous order generated a symbolic division between the “before” and the “after,” the trauma of the fall of socialism generated nostalgia for the Soviet era that became a mass phenomenon with a tremendous cultural impact.<sup>38</sup> In these abrupt transitions, nostalgia defended against accelerated change and economic shock therapy.<sup>39</sup> Often associated with regret, it does not always imply a desire for political restoration but rather a search for affective and symbolic elements still present in the collective experience.<sup>40</sup> Rooted in profound historical experiences, this nostalgia also circulates and is transformed in the contemporary cultural market, as analysed below.

One of the first ways nostalgia manifested itself in the post-Soviet context was through its transformation into commodities,<sup>41</sup> aimed at both those who lived through that era and new generations who consume symbols of the past without having directly experienced it. The

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Jõesalu and Nugin, ‘Reproducing Identity through Remembering’, p. 18

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Kalinina, ‘What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Media and Nostalgia?’ , p. 13

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Mazur, ‘Golden Age Mythology and the Nostalgia of Catastrophes in Post-Soviet Russia’, Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol.57, nos. 3–4 (2015), p 218

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, p.64

<sup>40</sup> Kojanic, ‘Nostalgia as a Practice of the Self in Post-Socialist Serbia.’, Canadian Slavonic Papers, nos. 3–4 (2015) p., 199

<sup>41</sup> Nadkarni and Shevchenko, ‘The Politics of Nostalgia’ , p.500

commodification of nostalgia, according to Wojtkowski and Jeziński<sup>42</sup>, is a phenomenon rooted in Western societies that consists of transforming memories of the past into products with aesthetic, commercial, or symbolic value. This example demonstrates that nostalgia can operate through inherited narratives, symbolic objects, and digital culture<sup>43</sup> and as a form of symbolic resistance in the capitalist market, where nostalgic objects allow consumers to affirm their identity without rejecting the dominant system.<sup>44</sup>

The market has enthusiastically capitalized on this phenomenon, especially around the retro and vintage appeal of Soviet-themed products that can achieve commercial success among young people interested in their design and cultural value.<sup>45</sup> Despite its diversification in pop culture, the past continues to function as a source of solace and aesthetic pleasure.<sup>46</sup> This form of visual and commercial nostalgia is rooted in the postmodern condition, marked by the rupture of cultural continuity following the collapse of communism,<sup>47</sup> reinterpreted as an aesthetic devoid of temporal commitment, reduced to a style “in quotation marks,” with no real search for another temporality, absorbed by fashion, and emptied of its transformative power.<sup>48</sup>

Within this broader landscape, childhood nostalgia occupies a unique position by evoking idealized memories of stability and innocence under socialism and expresses generational belonging.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in post-soviet contexts, memory and nostalgia are intertwined in complex ways, mainly when expressed through cultural media. A central line of contemporary cultural memory studies is analysing how memory and nostalgia manifest in cultural products such as cinema. In this area, some authors suggest how cinematic images and sounds represent the past

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<sup>42</sup> Z. Medien &, Ł. Wojtkowski, and M. Jeziński. ‘Nostalgia Commodified. Towards the Marketization of the Post-Communist Past through the Media’ (2025), p. 96

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Berdahl, ‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present’, p.207

<sup>45</sup> Mazur, ‘Golden Age Mythology and the Nostalgia of Catastrophes in Post-Soviet Russia’, p., 225

<sup>46</sup> M. Lee, ‘Nostalgia as a Feature of ‘Glocalization’, Post-Soviet Affairs Vol.27, no. 2 (2011), p. 165

<sup>47</sup> MRoeske, ‘Moda czy nostalgia? O tym, jak PRL funkcjonuje w wyobraźni społecznej współczesnych Polaków’, Kultura Popularna, Vol.40, no. 02 (2014), p. 141

<sup>48</sup> Boym, The Future of Nostalgia., p. 208

<sup>49</sup> Grünberg, ‘Remembering the Soviet Past in Estonia’, p. 8

and act as psychic mediations between affects, subjectivity, and cultural identity, revealing how cinema, rather than representing the past, generates an internalized emotional and symbolic experience.<sup>50</sup>

Beyond cinema, other approaches highlight the difference between collective memory (shared knowledge) and nostalgia (emotional experience). In recent context, studies on hyperconnected memory cultures<sup>51</sup> show how identity and nostalgia have migrated to digital environments, where they are negotiated in real time on social media. This digital culture involves the joint action of traditional media and platforms, positioning nostalgia as a participatory tool that connects the individual and the collective.

In this context, it is also relevant to consider the approach that the living and plural nature of memory is a collective process in constant updating.<sup>52</sup> This understanding is key to analysing how post-soviet nostalgia functions as an emotional, symbolic, and political language that reinvents the past considering the present. Finally, although some authors have debated whether nostalgia can be considered a form of memory, others argue that the media activates both memory and nostalgia, especially from a symbolic or imagined dimension.<sup>53</sup> Thus, cultural objects act as affective triggers that do not seek to reconstruct the past but rather to express the absence of lost symbolic structures, which continue to resonate emotionally in the present.<sup>54</sup> From the theoretical perspective of nostalgia analysed in post-Soviet and post-socialist contexts, we see how certain aspects of the Soviet past persist in the memory of a generation and are negotiated in the present through new forms of cultural mediation. However, some dichotomies and gaps do not allow us to demonstrate that the memory of socialist childhood can operate without direct ideological connotations.

### **2.1.1 Concluding remarks on identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts**

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<sup>50</sup> S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, 'Memory : Histories, Theories, Debates', (2010), p. 328

<sup>51</sup> Kalinina and Menke, 'Negotiating the Past in Hyperconnected Memory Cultures: Post-Soviet Nostalgia and National Identity in Russian Online Communities', International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics, Vol12, no. 1 (2016), p. 59

<sup>52</sup> V. Orlova, 'Communism Happened!' Experiencing a Multiplicity of Nostalgias', Sibirica Interdisciplinary Journal of Siberian Studies, Volume 22, no. Issue 2 (2023), p. 40

<sup>53</sup> Z. A. Laks, 'On Longing for Loss: A Theory of Cinematic Memory and an Aesthetics of Nostalgia', New Review of Film and Television Studies, Vol 21, no. 3 (2023), p. 413

<sup>54</sup> Nadkarni and Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia."

The theoretical review undertaken in this chapter has shown that identity and nostalgia intersect in ways that illuminate the negotiation of belonging under conditions of rupture and continuity. Rather than being a marginal or sentimental category, nostalgia emerges as a productive analytical tool for examining how cultural legacies are reconfigured in post-socialist and transnational contexts.

Following Antze and Lambek, identity is approached here as narrative and performative, a process in which remembering and forgetting actively reshape selfhood. This dynamic is particularly relevant for imported legacies, such as Soviet media in Cuba, where memory must navigate both incorporation and distance. Nostalgia, in turn, operates as an intergenerational practice (Grünberg 2009), generating ambivalent spaces of familiarity and rejection between those who directly experienced Soviet culture and those who inherited it indirectly.

From a political and digital perspective, Polese (2017) underscores that identity is constructed not only by the state but also through everyday practices, while Tammpuu, Juzefovičs, and Seppel (2020) show how affective narratives circulate across online platforms, shaping identity through transversal testimonies. Boym's (2001) influential distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia provides a typology to differentiate longings for lost stability from playful or ironic memories of childhood. Kalinina (2016) further frames nostalgia as a hybrid emotion that can both foster belonging and serve political ends, while Nadkarni and Shevchenko (2004) remind us that not every gesture toward the past is necessarily nostalgic.

Finally, Wojtkowski and Jeziński (2025), Berdahl (1999), Roeske, and Kalinina and Menke (2016) extend the discussion to the commodified and aesthetic dimensions of nostalgia, highlighting how memories become embedded in cultural production and digital economies.

In conclusion, this thesis draws on an integrated framework: Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia as a primary lens, complemented by Grünberg's intergenerational perspective, Polese's and Tammpuu et al.'s accounts of identity beyond the state and in digital spaces, Kalinina's conceptualization of nostalgia as hybrid emotion, and Nadkarni and Shevchenko's emphasis on divergent trajectories. These will be further contextualized with approaches that frame nostalgia as aesthetic and commodified (Wojtkowski & Jeziński, Berdahl, Roeske, Kalinina & Menke).

Building on these perspectives from post-Soviet contexts, the next section turns to Cuban identity and nostalgia. While Cuba was never part of the USSR, its close alliance with the Soviet Union generated comparable dynamics of cultural transfer and memory, making it an important extension of post-socialist debates, providing the conceptual coordinates through which Cuban discursive practices of nostalgia surrounding Soviet cartoons—will be examined in the empirical chapters.

## **2.2 Conceptual frameworks on Cuban identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts**

The construction of Cuban identity has been marked by successive and overlapping legacies: Spanish colonial dependence (1492–1898), the republican period shaped by U.S. influence (1900–1958), and the post-revolutionary transformation aligned with the Soviet Union (1959–present).<sup>55</sup> These layers of inheritance interact in complex ways: while the colonial past provided cultural and linguistic foundations, the republican years embedded U.S. economic, political, and cultural models, and the revolutionary period introduced socialist institutions, ideology, and symbols of Soviet origin. It was precisely the post-1959 revolutionary period that motivated the redefinition of identity through ideological, cultural, and literary introspection, shifting from capitalist to socialist cultural models by revisiting marginalized themes such as slavery, Black identity, and rural life.

Several scholars also define Cuban identity as a product of historical struggle and revolutionary consciousness. Therefore, the integration of racial equality into nationalist discourse is a key component, particularly in the 19th-century wars of independence and at the institutional level during the 1959 Cuban Revolution.<sup>56</sup> The revolutionary identity is also visible in post-1959 political culture, in which Fidel Castro legacy continues to influence national consciousness.<sup>57</sup> It is in this post-1959 revolutionary period until today, that at a sociopolitical level identity seems to be part of a hegemonic apparatus based on national discourse, collective memory, and habitus.

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<sup>55</sup> Kapcia, 'Revolution, the Intellectual and a Cuban Identity: The Long Tradition', Bulletin of Latin American Research, Vol. 1, no. No. 2 (1982)

<sup>56</sup> W. A. Morgan, 'Cuba: Context and Consequences for the American Empire', The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Vol 49, no. 3 (2021), pp. 494, 497, 501

<sup>57</sup> D. Baden, S. Wilkinson, and N. Prakasam, 'CUBAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND LEADER SUCCESSION: THE END OF CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY IN CUBA', International Journal of Cuban Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 2023), pp. 72 ,86

However, social and economic stratification since the 1990s has weakened the integrative power of this identity, revealing its dependence on changing material conditions.<sup>58</sup>

From a theoretical perspective, the debate on Cuban identity has initially been shaped by a core group of Cuban thinkers whose work has provided valuable analytical metaphors on the topic. Their proposals lead us to view the issue of Cuban identity, also known as *Cubanness*, as processes of transculturation, emotional and poetic consciousness. These personalities have used metaphors that have illustrated *Cubanness* today: Fernando Ortiz's *ajiaco*, Jorge Mañach's *choteo*, and Cintio Vitier's poetic soul of the nation.<sup>59</sup> These metaphors challenge traditional nationalist discourses that define identity through territorial, racial, or psychological criteria and call for contemporary theories with more fluid and inclusive frameworks capable of addressing contemporary Cuban identity's plural nature.<sup>60</sup>

A historical precedent of transnational Cuban identity can be traced to the Ten Years' War (1868–1878). Cuban emigrants constructed their identity through solidarity with Latin American struggles, emphasizing a shared anti-colonial vision and regional imagination. This identity formation was also evident in the émigré press, where Cuban identity was articulated in dialogue with broader Latin American ideals.<sup>61</sup> In this context, there is a clear rejection of monolithic and territorial interpretations of *Cubanness* in favor of a diasporic, hybrid, and stratified model.

Moreover, Cuban identity is a space of accumulated and contested meanings. For example, Afro-Cuban voices and queer perspectives disrupt both exile nationalism and revolutionary discourse, revealing the suppression of subaltern experiences in dominant narratives.<sup>62</sup> In addition,

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<sup>58</sup> A. Pickel, 'After Fidel: The US–Cuba System and the Key Mechanisms of Regime Change', *International Politics*, Vol 45, no. 5 (2008), p. 628

<sup>59</sup> Ortiz, for instance, proposed the *ajiaco* as a symbol of transculturation, where diverse racial and cultural elements blend into a flavorful national stew. Yet this integrationist discourse tends to obscure the persistent hierarchies of race, class, and region, and notably excludes the Cuban diaspora from its formulation. Mañach, described *el choteo* as defined by irreverence, spontaneity, humor, and tropical lightness, traits he attributed to both geography and colonial history. In contrast, Vitier eschewed sociological analysis in favor of a spiritual and literary reading of the nation, tracing its symbolic maturation through canonical writers such as Martí, Heredia, and Guillén.

<sup>60</sup> Duany, 'From the Cuban Ajiaco to the Cuban-American Hyphen : Changing Discourses of National Identity on the Island and in the Diaspora', *Cuban Studies Association*, Vol. 2, no. 8 (1997), pp. 9, 12, 14, 17, 20-21, 30-31

<sup>61</sup> M. Ambio, 'Illustrating Identity in the Cuban Émigré Press: Latin American Transnationalism in El Ateneo', *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, Vol. 48, no. 2 (2014), p.323

<sup>62</sup> T. R. Dukes, ""BEYOND THE BINARY OF CUBAN IDENTITY: REVIEW ESSAY OF BRIDGES TO CUBA/PUENTES A CUBA", *Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (1999), pp. 346-348

several works criticize *mestizaje*<sup>63</sup> as a logic of "sameness" that silences racial differences, particularly Blackness.<sup>64</sup> These perspectives affirm the constitutive power of culture in reconstructing Cuban identity fractured by war, exile, and ideology.

Other scholars problematize the link between memory and identity, particularly in Cuban American literature, where essentialist and nostalgic constructions of *Cubanness* that tie identity to homeland or ancestry are questioned. Instead, they propose fragmented, disobedient, and politicized forms of belonging.<sup>65</sup>

In another sense, literature also suggests that state policy produces a "kaleidoscope" of identities for Cuban women, from the militarized and heroic to maternal, worker, and scientific figures, since conventional beauty standards promoted by the State itself persist, which at the same time tries to include women in roles and this shows a tension between emancipation and symbolic control.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, poetic and sensory anchors of identity emerge in the works of literary figures from the *Orígenes*<sup>67</sup> group, such as Lezama Lima<sup>68</sup> and Eliseo Diego<sup>69</sup>, who conceptualize identity through language, material culture, and nature. Their writings anchor Cuban identity in place and cultural memory, linking it to sensorial experience, hybridity, and poetic transformation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mestizaje is a Latin American term referring to racial mixture. It has been the foundation of many Latin American and Caribbean nationalist discourses since the 19th century. (Bodenheimer, 2019)

<sup>64</sup> O. Casamayor-Cisneros, 'Confrontation and Occurrence: Ethical–Esthetic Expressions of Blackness in Post-Soviet Cuba', *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, Vol 4, no. 2 (2009), p. 114

<sup>65</sup> Jiménez, 'The Problematic of Identity-Memory in the Cuban-American Fiction of Cristina García and Achy Obejas', *Complutense Journal of English Studies* 29 (November 2021), p. 97, 100-101

<sup>66</sup> S. L. Lutjens, 'Reading Between the Lines: Women, the State, and Rectification in Cuba', *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (1995), p. 114.

<sup>67</sup> 'Orígenes' (1944-1956) was a Cuban magazine that promoted poetic, philosophical and cultural discourse beyond political and nationalist frameworks. (Rialta Magazine <https://rialta.org/expediente-revista-origenes-1944-1956/#bibliograf%C3%ADa> consulted on 01.05.2025)

<sup>68</sup> José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) was a Cuban poet, essayist and novelist, a milestone in Latin American baroque literature. (EcuRed [https://www.ecured.cu/Jos%C3%A9\\_Lezama\\_Lima](https://www.ecured.cu/Jos%C3%A9_Lezama_Lima) consulted on 01.05.2025)

<sup>69</sup> Eliseo Diego (Havana, July 2, 1920 – Mexico City, March 1, 1994) was a Cuban poet, writer, and essayist and was considered one of Latin America's greatest poets. (EcuRed [https://www.ecured.cu/Eliseo\\_Diego](https://www.ecured.cu/Eliseo_Diego) consulted on 01.05.2025)

<sup>70</sup> Y. Aparicio, 'De «La Florida» de Escobedo al «Teatro histórico» de Urrutia: nombrar las cosas para definir lo cubano', *Hipogrifo: Revista de Literatura y Cultura del Siglo de Oro* 7, no. 2 (2019), pp. 646, 654

Afro-Cuban religious practices offer insights into identity as fluid and relational;<sup>71</sup> forged through rituals and transnational spiritual encounters. The politics of Black hair among Afro-Cubans reveal a contested and embodied identity, shaped by family dynamics, economic realities, and phenotype. Every day, hairstyling practices become key spaces for identity construction, highlighting the ongoing tension between racialized identity and the revolutionary ideal of a raceless Cuban nation.<sup>72</sup>

The rumba has been racialized throughout history but has also become a Cuban national symbol. It has also been presented as a symbol of the working class, reinforcing its usefulness within Cuban revolutionary nationalist discourse. This creates contradictions, as the official Cuban claim to eradicate racism has hindered public debate on racial issues in Cuba and, therefore, silences Black voices that denounce the persistence of racism. Affirming a Black identity can be seen as an anti-government stance that contradicts the idea of a raceless society (i.e., one where discrimination based on race does not exist). The example of the rumba, which shows the internal tension within Afro-Cuban identity, reflects.<sup>73</sup>

In the post-Soviet context, according to Binkley<sup>74</sup>, Cuban national identity is expressed through state socialist propaganda and the symbols of capitalism, which coexist in everyday life,<sup>75</sup> as the result of national pride and Cold War geopolitics., reflecting, in Gronbeck-Tedesco<sup>76</sup> words, younger Cuban generations pragmatism, as they inherit a strong sense of Cuban identity but reinterpret it based on critical openness to change and innovation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Gobin and Dominguez, 'An Interview with Emma Gobin about Her Anthropological Research in Cuba', American Anthropologist, 121, no. 3 (2019), p. 743.

<sup>72</sup> Mbilishaka et al., 'No Toques Mi Pelo' (Don't Touch My Hair): Decoding Afro-Cuban Identity Politics through Hair', African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal, 13, no. 1 (2020), p. 116

<sup>73</sup> R. Bodenheimer, 'National Symbol or 'a Black Thing'?: Rumba and Racial Politics in Cuba in the Era of Cultural Tourism', Black Music Research Journal 33, no. 2 (2013), p. 177, 182, 202

<sup>74</sup> S. Binkley, 'Inventado: Between Transnational Consumption and the Gardening State in Havana's Urban Spectacle', Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 9, no. 2 (2009), p.338

<sup>75</sup>Ibid

<sup>76</sup> J. Gronbeck-Tedesco, 'The Left in Transition: The Cuban Revolution in US Third World Politics', Journal of Latin American Studies 40, no. 4 (2008), p. 663, 672

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

From what we see, there is a difference in identity approaches even within Cuba itself, where those who are more pragmatic tend to assume personal responsibility for the continuity of the national project and value education and adaptation. In contrast, those with more Fidelista ideals see the Cuban Revolution as a project that demands sacrifice and obedience. There is also an even younger generational group, mentioned in the work of Krull and Kobayashi <sup>78</sup>, that identifies as disconnected, with an ambivalent identity disconnected from the nation and focused on personal aspirations for consumption and migration. They are only connected to Cuba by a family connection, not ideological, with a perspective on an individualistic and materialistic future. <sup>79</sup> With the collapse of the USSR and the experience of the Special Period in Cuba, identity forms oscillated between pragmatic commitment and structural disaffection in a context of economic crisis and controlled opening and redefinition of the national project.

For some scholars, like Williams <sup>80</sup> it is worth noting that Cuban identity has also been constructed as a tool in post-colonialist projects. Cuba has defined its identity by rejecting their influence to preserve symbolic autonomy. However, as we have already pointed out, the lack of discourse on ethnic or racial identities to avoid divisions has resulted in the exclusion of certain important post-colonial debates. <sup>81</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought economic crises and symbolic transformations where Cuban identity became unstable, and in constant redefinition. Identity is no longer controlled from above, generating a plurality of cultural discourses and exploring open forms in literature and culture. <sup>82</sup> On one hand, Alpízar <sup>83</sup> suggest that the current Cuban identity is based on reconfigured narratives of the past from a specific position: Sovietized Caribbean Cuba <sup>84</sup>, in which there is an abandonment of traditional ideals and in which post-Soviet Cuban youth question social and political reality, breaking the silences of the harmonious *Cubanness* promoted by the official

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<sup>78</sup> Krull and Kobayashi, 'Shared Memories, Common Vision: Generations, Sociopolitical Consciousness and Resistance among Cuban Women', Sociological Inquiry 79, no. 2 (2009), p. 179, 181-182

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Williams, 'The Cuban Short Story in the Twenty-First Century: Postmodern Perspectives', Journal of Caribbean Literatures, Vol. 6, no. No. 3 (2010), p, 96, 98, 106

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Puñales Alpízar, 'Nieve Sobre La Habana: El Ideal Soviético En La Cultura Cubana Pos-Noventa'(2010),p., 218-219

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p., 220

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

narrative. Afro-descendant cultural practices were integrated into post-Soviet art as a form of resistance, consolation, and denunciation of social chaos and racism. Thus, a more combative and explicit Afro-Cuban identity emerged in the 1990s.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, J. Mazzei<sup>86</sup> suggests that, after the Soviet collapse, economic and political power continued to be managed by the military and government, which caused a separation between Cubans and foreign tourists to manage the inflow of foreign currency, thus negotiating the coexistence between domestic socialism and global tourist capitalism, generating internal tensions and inequalities.<sup>87</sup>

Also, since the 1990s, the official narrative of Cuban identity began to separate itself from Marxist-Leninist rhetoric in exchange for a language with cultural and historical references such as the figure of José Martí.<sup>88</sup> For González<sup>89</sup>, the official narrative emerged in post-Soviet Cuba, replacing Soviet ideological symbols with those that exalted the local and traditional. Museums and heritage sites began to display local identities as proof of pluralism, turning identity into a symbolic commodity.<sup>90</sup> However, Astley<sup>91</sup> explain that the underground culture on the island begins to express banal and subversive everyday stories using tools such as parody and the recycling of cultural symbols to reflect the identity that already exists in the usual, unofficial discourse. With the introduction of Soviet references in unofficial cultural products, this memory is reclaimed as part of contemporary *Cubanness*, from which the centralized power sought to extract its Russianness. The historical trauma of the Special Period also becomes part of contemporary Cuban identity, sometimes treated humorously as a strategy of resistance and reconstruction. A critique of the imposed narrative of official discourse emerges, and a fluid, ironic, and plural identity connected to lived experiences is proposed. Thus, the spectrum of what can be

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<sup>85</sup> Casamayor-Cisneros, “Confrontation and Occurrence.”, p., 104-105, 109, 115,

<sup>86</sup> Mazzei, ‘Negotiating Domestic Socialism with Global Capitalism: So Called Tourist Apartheid in Cuba’, Communist and Post-Communist Studies Volume 45, no. Issue 1-2 (2012), 99, 102

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> José Martí (1853-1895) is Cuba's national hero. He was a Cuban writer, thinker, and independence hero, considered the most important Latin American political intellectual of the 19th century.(EcuRed, . [https://www.ecured.cu/Jos%C3%A9\\_Mart%C3%AD](https://www.ecured.cu/Jos%C3%A9_Mart%C3%AD), consulted on 01.05.2025)

<sup>89</sup> González, ‘Transforming Ideology into Heritage: A Return of Nation and Identity in Late Socialist Cuba?’, International Journal of Cultural Studies 19, no. 2 (2016), p. 140, 145

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Astley, ‘Remembrance as a Tool for Reflecting a National Identity: A Cuban Punk Approach’, Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, 23, no. 1 (2014), p. 65, 77, 81

considered Cuban within the culture expands as elements considered marginal to the national imagination are integrated.<sup>92</sup>

It should not be forgotten that religious identity is a fundamental element of Cuban identity. Religion is a factor that unites Cubans, as it has been part of identity formation from the era of Spanish colonialism to the Soviet and post-Soviet Cuban contexts. The transformations that began in 1991 in Cuba marked the transition of the Cuban state's official position regarding religion, altering the way Cubans began to express their faith within the island. Religious practices, especially Afro-Cuban ones, have been both stigmatized and valued as part of the national heritage, depending on the prevailing ideology. The incorporation of spiritual practices through political decisions reflects the state's continued modulation of the symbolic frameworks of Cuban identity in the post-Soviet period.<sup>93</sup>

The case of nostalgia for Soviet products arose in response to the extreme scarcity during the so-called Special Period, leading to an idealization of the Soviet past and its products that were once accessible. The disappearance of Soviet children's cultural elements, such as Soviet animation on Cuban television, also represented nostalgia linked to the loss of childhood identity. However, these memories were also imposed as an ideological imposition, making this nostalgia complex. Nostalgia can be presented as a deceptive feeling that could distort historical memory and prevent critical reflection on the imposition of Marxism-Leninism and Soviet culture in Cuba. Nostalgia in the post-Soviet Cuban context becomes an intergenerational reference within a Cuban culture marked by scarcity that reproduces the longing for the past (whether Soviet or capitalist) without question.<sup>94</sup> Some specialists share that Cuba's entry into the prolonged Special Period, characterized by economic crisis and uncertainty about the future, provided the ideal conditions for presenting the past in a context of certainty, which confirm that that Cuban nostalgia for all things Soviet exists and is explained both by the practicality of the fact that during decades of

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Dominguez, 'Foreword', *American Anthropologist* 121, no. 3 (2019), p. 744

<sup>94</sup> Águila, 'La Nostalgia No Es Carne de Puerco', (2009)

cultural and Soviet influence, relative prosperity existed within the revolutionary imagination, with access to services and goods, although they were rationalized for all.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, there is a real attachment to antique objects in Cuban everyday life, which generates nostalgia for the era and responds to an aesthetic that recycles these elements as a form of identity. This revival of Soviet imagery is especially evident among young people, even in digital spaces.<sup>96</sup> This past period was also characterized by a certain equality of material conditions, highlighting pure values and feelings without economic interests in family and romantic relationships, which today are more marked by precariousness and survival. In the case of the generations that participated most actively in the socialist construction of the Revolution, there is a nostalgia related to the loss of ideological certainties of socialism with the economic crisis of the Special Period, which provoked poverty and existential and epistemological crises.<sup>97</sup>

Cuban nostalgia for the Soviet era manifests itself in various aesthetic forms to approximate the cultural memory among generations that grew up with Soviet children's animations.<sup>98</sup> For Altuna(2015), nostalgia for the Soviet era in Cuba can take a restorative form, with communities formed by Cuban-Soviet families yearning to return to a physical place that represents the lost and impossible-to-recover home. In contrast, Cubans without Slavic roots express reflexive nostalgia linked to loss and the abstract desire for what is absent.<sup>99</sup>

The strong presence of products, materials, and opportunities for exchange with the USSR during the 1970s and 1980s is evoked with nostalgia by many Cubans, especially those who experienced academic training and direct cultural contact in the Soviet bloc. Cuban nostalgia for the Soviet past is also based on concrete well-being experiences for some sectors of Cuban society who benefited from subsidies, travel, student life, and access to Soviet culture, reinforcing the optimistic view of the era and reinforcing the term "nostalgia" in academic literature. Some studies

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<sup>95</sup> Puñales Alpizar, 'Nieve sobre La Habana: el ideal soviético en la cultura cubana pos-noventa', p. 220, 223

<sup>96</sup> Araoz, 'Historias animadas del cine cubano: entrevista a Raydel Aro', p. 179

<sup>97</sup> Andaya, 'Relationships and Money, Money and Relationships': Anxieties around Partner Choice and Changing Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba', *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013), p. 736, 740

<sup>98</sup> Cuesta, 'Dreaming in Russian: The Cuban Soviet Imaginary', *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 47, no. 1 (2014), p. 122

<sup>99</sup> Altuna, 'Las formas de la estalgia (cubana)', *Kamchatka. Revista de análisis cultural*, no. 5 (July 2015), p. 4

reveal an identity crisis, combining gratitude and resentment since the USSR's disappearance, also triggered general bewilderment.<sup>100</sup>

It is noteworthy that even political figures like Raúl Castro criticize the fact that nostalgia for the days of Soviet support represents an obstacle to renewing Cuba's socialist economy since a mentality anchored in the past also generates distrust in the future.<sup>101</sup> A part of Cuban identity linked to childhood and affection also hides the Soviet cultural imposition.<sup>102</sup> However, although Soviet memories in Cuba are usually associated with nostalgia, some works like Rempel<sup>103</sup> explain that critical stance has also been adopted towards the Soviet legacy, using alternative discourses to reformulate the Cuban nation and make visible marginal subjects who seek autonomy in the new global order.<sup>104</sup>

### **2.2.1 Concluding remarks on Cuban identity and nostalgia in post-Soviet contexts**

Post-Soviet Cuban identity emerges as a plural and negotiated field, where revolutionary legacies, everyday pragmatism, and imported cultural symbols coexist and are constantly reworked across generations. Following Baden, Wilkinson and Prakasam<sup>105</sup>, the revolutionary repertoire continues to shape national consciousness and political culture, even as its meanings are reinterpreted. Duany's analysis of Jorge Mañach's *choteo*<sup>106</sup> illuminates the ironic and parodic strategies through which Cubans recycle and subvert official discourses. Binkley<sup>107</sup> emphasizes the coexistence of state-socialist emblems and capitalist icons in everyday life, a

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<sup>100</sup> R. Pedemonte, "Birches Too Difficult to Cut Down: The Rejection and Assimilation of the Soviet Reference in Cuban Culture", International Journal of Cuban Studies, Vol 9(2017)

"Birches Too Difficult to Cut Down." p, 127, 137, 139

<sup>101</sup> LeoGrande, 'Updating Cuban Socialism: The Politics of Economic Renovation', Social Research: An International Quarterly 84, no. 2 (2017), p. 359

<sup>102</sup> Águila, 'La Nostalgia No Es Carne de Puerco', p188

<sup>103</sup> Rempel, 'Azúcar, borsch y cajitas chinas. Experiencias (post-)soviéticas en las revistas Naranja Dulce y Diáspora(s)', Badebec 14, no. 28 (2025), p. 77

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>105</sup> Baden, Wilkinson, and Prakasam, 'CUBAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND LEADER SUCCESSION'

<sup>106</sup> Duany, Jorge. 'From the Cuban Ajiaco to the Cuban-American Hyphen'

<sup>107</sup> Binkley, 'Inventado'

hybridity further elaborated by Gronbeck-Tedesco<sup>108</sup> in his account of younger generations' pragmatic *Cubanness*—anchored in strong national identity yet open to change. Krull and Kobayashi<sup>109</sup> identify an even younger cohort whose connections to the nation are primarily familial rather than ideological, oriented toward consumption, migration, and individual aspiration.

Other authors highlight structural reconfigurations of identity. Williams interprets Cuban identity as a postcolonial project aimed at safeguarding symbolic autonomy against foreign domination. Alpízar<sup>110</sup> proposes the notion of a “Sovietized Caribbean Cuba,” where youth narratives interrogate official harmonies of *cubanidad* and confront disillusionment with socialist promises. González tracks how, in the post-Soviet transition, Soviet ideological references were replaced by exaltations of the local and traditional, while Astley shows how underground culture mobilizes parody and recycled signs to articulate everyday and subversive stories. Finally, Águila links nostalgia directly to material scarcity during the Special Period, as well as to the loss of Soviet children's culture on television, stressing the ambivalence of such memories as both affectively powerful and ideologically imposed.

Taken together, these perspectives underscore the layered and contested character of Cuban identity in the post-Soviet era. They demonstrate how identity is produced not only through official narratives but also through irony, pragmatism, consumption, spirituality, and everyday cultural practice. They also highlight how nostalgia becomes intertwined with identity: sometimes romanticizing stability, sometimes critiquing ideological imposition, and often resurfacing through generational memories of scarcity and childhood.

This body of work provides the conceptual coordinates for the empirical analysis. By situating Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) within these frameworks, the thesis explores how cultural artefacts mediate memory and identity in Cuba today. The case of the cartoons exemplifies how imported media heritage—once embedded in socialist childhoods—returns as a site of negotiation where belonging, generational identity, and the ambivalent legacies of socialism are articulated. In doing so, the study bridges Cuban cultural historiography and post-Soviet memory

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<sup>108</sup> J. Gronbeck-Tedesco, ‘The Left in Transition: The Cuban Revolution’

<sup>109</sup> Krull and Kobayashi, ‘Shared Memories, Common Vision’

<sup>110</sup> Puñales Alpízar, ‘Nieve Sobre La Habana’

studies, positioning the Cuban experience as a distinctive yet comparable contribution to global debates on nostalgia, heritage, and identity.

## Chapter 3. Overview of Empirical Case

### 3.1 Historical and political context: the Cuban Soviet Imaginary

The relationship between Cuba and the USSR was not a natural or harmonious one from the outset. Many Cubans did not share the Soviet model and, instead of assimilating it, viewed it with suspicion or rejected it outright. Despite the officialization of the bilateral friendship, which brought cultural impositions such as the alignment of art with propaganda and the marginalization of experimental writers, selective forms of appropriation also existed. At the same time, the link with the USSR was also the subject of popular ridicule with references such as "los bolos"<sup>111</sup> to describe Soviet citizens. Daily, the massive presence of Soviet cultural assets, educational experiences in the USSR, and material comfort generated a nostalgic memory of the 1970s and 1980s in broad population sectors. The nostalgia that arises with reestablishing relations between Cuba and Russia does not glorify socialist realism but rather expresses generational disorientation and the search for meaning in the post-Soviet Cuban symbolic void, a key dimension for understanding the present-day reinterpretation of Soviet symbols in Cuban media.<sup>112</sup>

During the early years of the Revolution, the reception of cultural and literary theories in Cuba was mediated by Western authors, while Soviet theory was viewed with suspicion and limitations. Consolidating a single official line of thought during "The Grey Quinquennium"<sup>113</sup> drastically reduced the circulation of Western cultural theories. Despite the apparent openness

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<sup>111</sup> The term "bolo" is used colloquially in Cuban popular speech to refer to Soviet citizens during the decades of the USSR's presence in Cuba. Although its origin is not entirely clear (some link it to the word "Bolshevik," others to familiar names like "Volodya" or certain cultural stereotypes), the term does not usually have a pejorative connotation and is often laced with nostalgia, especially in memories associated with cultural exchange, Soviet economic aid, and everyday life during that time. (Echarry, 'La época de los 'bolos' en Cuba.' 2012 <https://havanatimesenespanol.org/cultura-cubana/la-epoca-de-los-bolos-en-cuba/>; consulted on 01.05.2025)

<sup>112</sup> Rafael Pedemonte, 'Birches Too Difficult to Cut Down' p, 128-129, 135-138

<sup>113</sup> The term "the Grey quinquennium" (El Quinquenio Gris in Spanish) was coined by Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet to describe the period between 1971 and 1976 in Cuban cultural life, characterized by censorship, the ideological marginalization of writers and artists (predominantly homosexual and religious ones), and the imposition of aesthetic criteria inspired by socialist realism. Although it was partially overcome with the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1976, the debate about its consequences continues in contemporary Cuban culture. (EcuRed [https://www.ecured.cu/Quinquenio\\_gris#:~:text=Quinquenio%20gris%20es%20un%20t%C3%A9rmino%20que%20inicialmente%20utiliza,y%20la%20designaci%C3%B3n%20Armando%20Hart%20D%C3%A1valos%20como%20Ministro.](https://www.ecured.cu/Quinquenio_gris#:~:text=Quinquenio%20gris%20es%20un%20t%C3%A9rmino%20que%20inicialmente%20utiliza,y%20la%20designaci%C3%B3n%20Armando%20Hart%20D%C3%A1valos%20como%20Ministro.) Consulted on 01.05.2025)

toward the theory of the so-called "socialist camp," Cuban publishing circulation focused almost exclusively on Soviet texts. The artistic relationship between Cuba and the USSR was not simply unidirectional imposition. Instead, it led to a selective reception by the Cuban authorities, who did not relax their questioning of the Soviet dogmatic aspects of Cuban culture until the 1980s. With the collapse of Soviet socialism, many Cuban intellectuals renounced their Soviet-philosophical affiliation, and everything Russian was erased from the cultural landscape.<sup>114</sup>

A less-explored dimension of this relationship is observed in interpersonal ties. The physical and symbolic separation between Soviet technicians and Cuban citizens during the period of greatest bilateral collaboration reinforces the idea that cultural exchange was scarce and superficial, limited to parallel coexistence rather than a true daily fusion.<sup>115</sup> Unlike Soviet technicians, who lived in isolation under strict rules of conduct, Soviet women who emigrated for emotional reasons were more visibly integrated into Cuban daily life, even participating in informal economies and establishing more lasting cultural ties. Cultural and literary representations of the period show a marked symbolic hierarchy between Soviet men and women in Cuba. While men were seen as authoritarian and distant figures, women were eroticized and perceived as more accessible, in part due to their lesser ideological burden.<sup>116</sup>

Although cultural studies on Cuba have traditionally privileged cultural relations with the United States, other authors point out that Soviet influence on Cuban cultural development has historically been underestimated. Far from passive adoption, Cubans selectively assimilated certain Soviet cultural elements to configure a form of socialism compatible with their Caribbean and Latin American roots. Movements such as photorealism served as forms of aesthetic resistance to American hyperrealism and Soviet socialist realism, positioning Cuban visual art as a space for international critique and prestige. From this critical perspective, there are important issues for the authors to consider regarding the direct impact of collaboration between Cuban and Soviet artists, the incorporation of socialist realism into everyday creative practices.<sup>117</sup>The

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<sup>114</sup> Navarro, 'CRITERIOS Y LA (NO)RECEPCIÓN CUBANA DEL PENSAMIENTO CULTURAL RUSO', p. 58-64, 67- 68, 74, 76

<sup>115</sup> Puñales Alpízar, "Nieve sobre La Habana: el ideal soviético en la cultura cubana pos-noventa.", p. 96,

<sup>116</sup> Loss, "Persistent Matrioshkas.", p. 184

<sup>117</sup> Yero, "Soviet Influence on Cuban Culture, 1961–1987.", p. 455-457

ideological flexibility of the Cuban regime has allowed for a reinterpretation of its symbolic heritage.<sup>118</sup>

On a more structural level, after the political and economic failures of the Cuban autonomous model and the period of profound Sovietization that Cuba entered during the 1970s, the island became a strategic "super-client" for Moscow. As a result of the Soviet collapse, it can be said that material and symbolic ties with Russia persisted in Cuba thanks to the accumulated Soviet legacy (which included inherited infrastructure, educational programs, and the presence of mixed Cuban-Russian descendants). Despite the political rupture, historical inertia and strategic necessity led Cuba and Russia to continue collaborating commercially, with a relationship that had lost its ideological anchor and became governed by logics of geopolitical survival and economic pragmatism.<sup>119</sup>

Culturally and emotionally, during the final years of the socialist bloc, many Cubans displayed an ambivalent reception toward the changes in the USSR, restricting access to Soviet publications after Gorbachev visited the island, thus marking a symbolic break with the reformist narrative. The sudden disappearance of the Soviet cultural reference in the 1990s left a symbolic void filled by growing nostalgia. What was previously rejected as an imposition was emotionally revalued, generating what Loss (2012) calls the "Cuban Soviet imaginary," a constellation of symbols and affective memories of the socialist era. The persistence or dissolution of the Soviet legacy in contemporary Cuban culture raises key questions about its social depth. Without solid empirical research that captures these cultural traces—beyond literature and art—the phenomenon risks being perceived only as a "symbolic hangover" from a long-forgotten past.<sup>120</sup>

In this context, contemporary Cuban creators of the "Generation of 2000" actively work to defamiliarize the Cuban Soviet imaginary, questioning its symbols, inherited narratives, and historical constructions. Their works reveal how the past is projected into the future through transmitted and reinterpreted memories. Recent cultural expressions, from photography to

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<sup>118</sup> González, "Transforming Ideology into Heritage.", p. 143, 145,

<sup>119</sup> Bain, "Russia and Cuba: "doomed" comrades?", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* (2011) 44 (2), p. 112, 114, 115, 117

<sup>120</sup> Álvarez, "Loss, Jacqueline and Prieto, José Manuel, Eds. Caviar with Rum Cuba-USSR and the Post-Soviet Experience. Palgrave/McMillan, 2012. Print. 262 Pp.", p. 138, 143,

literature and film, configure a critical inventory of the Soviet legacy in Cuba, exploring not so much a naive nostalgia as a profound revision of the inherited "order of things."<sup>121</sup>

Contemporary Cuban science fiction has begun to thematize the absence of the USSR not only as a political void but as a symbolic space that determines the projection of the future from the post-Soviet present. The Soviet presence on the island profoundly influenced Cuban literary production in the 1980s. What was experienced as a betrayal in the 1990s has been progressively reinterpreted in Cuban fantasy literature. This literary reinterpretation connects with a broader process in which Soviet influence is no longer denied but naturally integrated into new generations' cultural imagination.<sup>122</sup>

Parallel to the official discourse on Soviet progress, a Soviet image prevailed in Cuban daily life as clumsy and crude, revealing a gap between political rhetoric and popular experience. Following the Soviet withdrawal, Cubans began to reinterpret their memories of the socialist period, creating an identity narrative in which socialist civilization lacks subtlety. In this context, Soviet fashion and its representation in Cuban women's media illustrate how the ideal of "modernity" was linked to political progress and ways of dressing and behaving. Cultural representations of modern aesthetics and taste configure a "conflictive triangulation." From this symbolic crossroads, an artistic subject emerges in a society that is both Soviet and post-Soviet, facing an identity crisis between Western behavioral codes and previous ideologies, displaying a mixture of insecurity and symbolic superiority. The symbol of "dark and melancholic" matryoshka dolls, represented in some theatrical pieces, questions the racial and aesthetic limits of the supposed Cuban-Soviet integration, asking why blackness was not visible within the Soviet symbolic imaginary of children. Cuban culture, steeped in Soviet codes, has not only openly rejected them but has reproduced them more subtly at various levels of representation. Criticism of the Soviet era is not limited to denouncing its clumsiness but participates in a deeper reflection on the aesthetic tensions of Cuban modernity.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Loss, 'CUADROS DESFAMILIARIZADOS DEL IMAGINARIO CUBANO-SOVIÉTICO', CUADERNOS DEL CEL, 2016, Vol. I, Nº 2, p, 42, 47,

<sup>122</sup> Sánchez Gómez, 'Lo Que Quedó de Cuba Cuando Los Rusos Se Fueron a La Órbita. Breve Acercamiento a Algunas Características Del Espacio Ficcional Post-Soviético En La Más Reciente Ciencia-Ficción Cubana.', Kamchatka, 2015, p, 228, 239,

<sup>123</sup> Loss, "Paper Cut-Outs: Notes on Cuba, Taste and Mobility.".,p, 34-35, 38-42, 45- 49, 51-54

Finally, the Soviet imprint in Cuba is indelible in cultural productions, contributing to forming a shared symbolic archive. The personal and artistic memories of those who experienced the Cuban Soviet connection firsthand form a hybrid corpus destabilizing traditional categories such as nation, class, and cultural identity. Although the Sovietization of Cuban life affected all spheres, its disappearance was sudden and poorly developed, leaving an absence that paradoxically did not generate mourning but rather a silenced memory that resurfaces in unexpected cultural forms.<sup>124</sup>

Within this complex historical and political backdrop, Soviet animation occupies a particularly prominent place in the Cuban Soviet imaginary. More than any other cultural import from the socialist bloc, these cartoons became part of the daily lives and emotional worlds of Cuban children, embedding themselves in language, humor, and intergenerational memory. This direct, sustained presence across decades makes the *muñequitos rusos* an especially revealing site for examining how inherited symbols are reinterpreted, contested, and nostalgically reactivated in post-Soviet Cuba.

### 3.2 The Soviet animation in the Cuban imaginery: the *muñequitos rusos*

In Cuba, Soviet children's animation profoundly shaped the Cuban generation that grew up watching these cartoons. It must be stressed that this thesis does not analyze the cartoons as audiovisual texts in themselves, but rather the discourses, debates, and cultural practices through which they are remembered, reinterpreted, and mobilized in Cuba today. The cartoons are treated as cultural artefacts embedded in memory, rather than as objects of filmic or semiotic analysis.

The animation studios Soyuzmultfilm and Studio Filmów Rysunkowych<sup>125</sup>, among others, are responsible for creating a catalog of cartoons during the Soviet era that would later be broadcast on Cuban television as part of children's programming from the 1960s to the 1990s. Characters and stories such as the Wolf and the Hare from "Nu, pogodi!" (Cuban translation- "Deja que te coja")<sup>126</sup> "Pastuszka i truboczist" (Cuban translation- "la Pastora y el Deshollinador")<sup>127</sup>, "Uncle Styopa-a militiaman" (Cuban translation- Tio Stiopa, el miliciano)<sup>128</sup>, "Three from

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<sup>124</sup> De La Campa, "Caviar with Rum.", p. 119-120

<sup>125</sup> Platek et al., *Myth, Magic, Genius Loci*.

<sup>126</sup> Akekure. Muñequitos Rusos: !!ME LAS PAGARÁS!!! Dijo El Lobo a La Liebre. n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2005/12/me-las-pagars-dijo-el-lobo-la-liebre.html>

<sup>127</sup> akekure. "LA PASTORA Y EL DESHOLLINADOR." Muñequitos rusos .... y otros, June 8, 2006. <https://munequitosrusos.wordpress.com/2006/06/08/la-pastora-y-el-deshollinador/>

<sup>128</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: "TÍO STIOPA." 2006. <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/06/to-stiopa.html>

Prostokvashino"(Cuban translation- "El Cartero Fogón")<sup>129</sup>, "Bolek and Lolek"(Cuban translation-Bolek y Lolek)<sup>130</sup>, "Cheburashka and Gena the Crocodile"(Cuban translation-El cocodrilo Guena y Cheburashka)<sup>131</sup>, "The Bremen Town Musicians"(Cuban translation-" Los músicos de Breme"), "Zolotaja antilopa"(Cuban translation- "El antilope dorado")<sup>132</sup>, "Daughter of the Sun"(Cuban translation-"La hija del Sol")<sup>133</sup>, "Golden Feather"(Cuban translation- "Plumita de oro")<sup>134</sup>, "Mashenka i Medved"(Cuban translation- "Misha y el Oso")<sup>135</sup>, "In the yaranga gorit ogon"(Cuban translation- "En la Yaranga arde el fuego")<sup>136</sup>, "Pat & Mat"(Cuban translation-"Los chapuseros")<sup>137</sup>, "The rabbit with checkered ears"(Cuban Translation-"Orejitas a cuadro")<sup>138</sup>, "Reksio"<sup>139</sup>, "Poslednij lepiestok"(Cuban translation-"El último pétalo")<sup>140</sup>, "Fantik The Primal Tale"(Cuban translation- "Fantito, va a regar la Espina")<sup>141</sup> among many others are remembered and referenced in digital spaces.

The memory of these animations is not only emotional but also remains alive through the internet and its incorporation into everyday language, creating a generational slang in which the term *muñequitos rusos* is still used in the contemporary context<sup>142</sup>sovietization of Cuban culture, *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) circulated widely alongside other Soviet cultural products

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<sup>129</sup> Akerure. "EL CARTERO FOGÓN." Muñequitos rusos .... y otros, February 10, 2006. <https://munequitosrusos.wordpress.com/2006/02/10/el-cartero-fogon/>

<sup>130</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: LOLEK i BOLEK, Los Polacos Más Viajeros. 2005. <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2005/12/lolek-i-bolek-los-polacos-ms-viajeros.html>

<sup>131</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: Interpretando a Cheburashka. 2006 [Muñequitos Rusos: Interpretando a Cheburashka](https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/07/interpretando-cheburashka.html) <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/07/interpretando-cheburashka.html>

<sup>132</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: El Antilope Dorado («ЗОЛЮТАЯ АНТИЛОПА»), Soyuzmultfilm o Disney? n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025 <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/01/el-antilope-dorado-soyuzmultfilm-o.html>

<sup>133</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: "LA HIJA DEL SOL." n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025, <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/06/la-hija-del-sol.html>

<sup>134</sup> Akerure, "Plumita de oro." <https://munequitosrusos.wordpress.com/2006/01/15/viejuca-dame-de-comer-%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B5-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%8B%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%BE/comment-page-1/>

<sup>135</sup> . Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: "Desde Aquí Arriba, Mashenka Te Mira." n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/02/desde-aqu-arriba-mashenka-te-mira.html>

<sup>136</sup> Nuestra Infancia en Cuba, "En la Yaranga arde el fuego." <https://nuestrainfanciaencuba.jimdofree.com/videos/munequitos-rusos/independientes-5/>

<sup>137</sup> Nuestra Infancia en Cuba, "Los chapuseros." <https://nuestrainfanciaencuba.jimdofree.com/videos/munequitos-rusos/los-chapuseros/>

<sup>138</sup> Nuestra Infancia en Cuba, "Orejitas a Cuadros." <https://nuestrainfanciaencuba.jimdofree.com/videos/munequitos-rusos/orejitas-a-cuadros/>

<sup>139</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: Reksio, El Perro Que Nos Llegó de Polonia. n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025. <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/03/reksio-el-perro-que-nos-lleg-de.html>

<sup>140</sup> akerure. "– " Vuela, vuela hojita mía ." Muñequitos rusos .... y otros, June 9, 2006, <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/06/vuela-vuela-hojita-ma.html>

<sup>141</sup> Akerure. Muñequitos Rusos: Фантик Alias Fantito va a Regar La Espina. n.d. Accessed August 21, 2025, <https://munequitosrusos.blogspot.com/2006/06/vuela-vuela-hojita-ma.html>

<sup>142</sup> Araoz, 'Historias animadas del cine cubano: entrevista a Raydel Aroz ', p. 160

and materials. However, the *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) became part of the everyday media landscape that shaped a generation's imagination and cultural consumption, closely connected to socialist ideology and revolutionary projects.<sup>143</sup>

According to Darias (2015)<sup>144</sup>, the concept *muñequitos rusos* refers to:

*"a broad catalog of cartoons from the former socialist bloc, among which those produced by the Soyuzmultfilm Studios of the former USSR stand out. Cubans consumed these cartoons in an organized manner, as part of the children's programming on Channel 6 of Cuban Television, which began at 6 p.m. with a block of muñequitos rusos until 7 p.m., at which time animated series alternated with other nationally produced programs, followed by another series popularly known as "Adventures" from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m."*

Also Alfonso(2015), explain that this local way of referring to Soviet animation in Cuba represents a collective incentive for the expression of nostalgia for the Soviet period. Soviet cartoons also serve as transnational cultural vehicles, helping form a generational identity among Cubans. These cartoons are also characterized as a culturally traumatic concept, as they are also remembered as animated films with sad aesthetics and complex emotional plots linked to a post-Soviet melancholy phenomenon that remains enduring in Cuban generational sensibilities. It is noted that these cartoons were integrated into a model of ideological construction and Cuban revolutionary utopia. The political connotation that Soviet cartoons may have is considered transversal and not territorial since the debate surrounding these cartoons is not exclusively nostalgic or ideological but polyphonic. The memory of these *muñequitos rusos* only acquires social relevance through the socialization of memory in digital media, a function directly connected to Astrid Erll's concept of cultural memory. The nostalgia triggered by *muñequitos rusos* is considered political, cultural, emotional, and symbolically national. Furthermore, these *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) are "identity markers for a generation." The online spaces that serve as a forum for nostalgic debate about *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) also function as a tool for critical reflection on Cuba's Soviet past.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Porbén, 'FOTONOVELA, CIENCIA-FICCION Y REVOLUCION EN LOS MUNDOS QUE AMO. DE DAÍNA CHAVIANO ', Revista Iberoamericana 78, nos. 238-239, (2012) , p, 227

<sup>144</sup> Alfonso, 'Muñequitos rusos: la nostalgia y su contexto en la diáspora cubana', *Kamchatka*, p, 33

<sup>145</sup> Alfonso, "Muñequitos rusos.", p, 31-32, 36, 38, 40- 41, 43

Other works, such as Puñales<sup>146</sup>, reflect that the memory of *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) is not entirely negative due to the lack of different cultural references at the time, thus suggesting a naturalized, unmediated reception as was the case with previous generations. In the 1990s, Cuban cultural production re-appropriated Soviet memories from a nostalgic and aesthetic perspective. Artists born before the 1970s share a generational childhood memory influenced by the consumption of Soviet products, including *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons), which ceased to have an ideological meaning and became artistic resources. Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) were key in the formation of a Soviet-Cuban sentimental community. Those who grew up between the 1960s and 1980s developed an identity emotionally linked to *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) and other cultural symbols of the USSR, which still appear in art and daily life as references today. Given the absence of non-socialist audiovisual alternatives, the consumption of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) was obligatory and exclusive. This made them the only cultural references for children of several generations, consolidating their central role in Cuban cultural memory. It is considered that some representations of *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) in audiovisual scenes can show how these memories are inserted into a nostalgic aesthetic and a visual cultural narrative of the Soviet past.<sup>147</sup>

Memory, sometimes categorized as apolitical by various authors, is also considered to have been created through a process of assimilation of the logic of childhood consciousness and not as propaganda. Therefore, these memories can become endearing to people regardless of their ideological stance.<sup>148</sup> So Jacome (2012) suggests that “*Those of us who were born between 1965 and 1980 and belong to what could be called the ‘Muñequitos Rusos Generation.’*”<sup>149</sup> The nostalgia of this generation is a nostalgia considered by this author as apolitical and infantile nostalgia.

On the other hand, in more critical readings, the analysis of *muñequitos rusos* is seen with a more critical focus, pointing out the normative function during Cuban socialist childhood in which the Soviet cartoons functioned as role models for children who were intended to be instilled with the ideological values of socialism.

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<sup>146</sup> Puñales Alpízar, “Nieve sobre La Habana: el ideal soviético en la cultura cubana pos-noventa.”, p, 1, 18, 117, 181, 202.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Jácome, ‘The Muñequitos Rusos Generation’, *Caviar with Rum*, (2012), p, 27-28

<sup>149</sup>ibid, p, 27,

For Jácome <sup>150</sup>, the childhood nostalgia for *muñequitos rusos* is not merely anecdotal but meaningful acts of memory that challenge national, class, racial, and even gender boundaries, revealing the complexity of the post-Soviet experience in Cuba. <sup>151</sup> *muñequitos rusos*” evoke a shared childhood, emblematic of a period perceived as more stable and prosperous than the crisis of the Special Period. This nostalgia, like nostalgia for other Soviet products, is part of a selective memory that idealizes the years of cooperation with the USSR as a source of material and symbolic "abundance" for many Cubans born in Cuba who lived through that context. Nostalgia for *muñequitos rusos* is intertwined with childhood emotional memories, giving them an identity value. However, this nostalgia is experienced in tension with a conscious critique of the imposed nature of Soviet culture in Cuba, making people feel attached to the cultural symbols of his childhood and recognize that these were part of a process of ideological colonization with no room for dissent. <sup>152</sup>

### **3.3 Concluding remarks on the Cuban Soviet Imaginary and the *muñequitos rusos***

The Soviet Legacy reveals an experience marked by symbolic resistance and selective appropriation, full of tensions between the official discourse and the local people's experiences. Far from being extinguished, this legacy has reappeared in or through multiple cultural forms as part of a shared symbolic archive that spans generations. Its persistence in contemporary Cuba—particularly among the post-Soviet generation—demonstrates how inherited symbols are continuously reinterpreted and contested, offering a crucial lens for understanding identity negotiations in the present. This background not only justifies the empirical focus on Soviet cultural legacies, but also frames the *muñequitos rusos* as a privileged site where nostalgia, memory politics, and cultural reinvention converge.

The memory of Soviet cartoons in Cuba and their rebranding as *muñequitos rusos* transcends simple nostalgia for the animated content and functions as a cultural archive of Cuban childhood, ideology, and post-Soviet identity, as these cartoons became emotional pillars that shaped the early experiences of Cuban viewers, their social references, and their everyday language. Their continued circulation in both physical and digital spaces illustrates the long afterlife of childhood media in shaping generational identity. In this sense, the Soviet cartoons (*muñequito rusos*) are

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 119

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> Águila, “La Nostalgia No Es Carne de Puerco.”.p. 188

not examined here as aesthetic texts but as cultural artefacts whose significance lies in the discourses, debates, and practices through which they are reactivated and contested.

Although often remembered with innocence and affection, these animated films (*muñequitos rusos*) represent a complex terrain of ideological transmission, cultural imposition, and selective appropriation. The tension between the fond remembrance of these cartoons and the recognition of their propagandistic function reveals the ambivalence at the heart of Cuban post-Soviet nostalgia. For this reason, *muñequitos rusos* are not merely a sentimental reference but a strategic empirical entry point for examining how nostalgia operates as both a cultural bridge and a space of critical reflection. They encapsulate a complex emotional, political, and cultural phenomenon that continues to shape collective identity, particularly in digital and diasporic arenas where these memories are actively reactivated, reframed, and contested.

This empirical focus on the *muñequitos rusos* is justified not only by their ubiquity in the Cuban cultural memory of the socialist era, but also by their contemporary reactivation in both state-controlled and independent media, as well as in informal digital spaces. Their persistence offers a rare opportunity to examine how inherited cultural symbols from a foreign socialist power have been reappropriated, re-signified, and contested in the shaping of post-Soviet Cuban identity. This makes them an exemplary case for analyzing nostalgia as both a cultural resource and a site of memory politics.

Beyond these general conclusions, a series of reflections emerging from the empirical process help to expand and nuance the understanding of the Cuban Soviet imaginary and the *muñequitos rusos*. These reflections highlight historical, cultural, and generational aspects that, while not always explicit in the main sources, are crucial for contextualizing and interpreting the phenomenon.

## Chapter 4: Research methods

### 4.1 Methodological foundations and research positioning

In the following chapter, we present the methodological foundations of our research. In it, we describe the objectives and research questions, the methodological approach and constructivist–interpretivist epistemological positioning, the contextualization of the object of study, the researcher's reflexivity and positioning, data collection and definition of the empirical corpus, the analysis methods, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

Through analyzing newspaper articles and Facebook comments, our research explores the assimilation and rejection of the Soviet legacy in the Cuban identity construction in a contemporary post-Soviet Cuban context through the lens of nostalgia for Soviet animation, a process examined through the guiding research question: How is contemporary Cuban identity articulated through nostalgic cultural memory, using the case of *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons)? To address this question, three interrelated sub-questions guide the analysis: (1) How do Cuban media use nostalgic references to *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) to negotiate the meaning of contemporary Cuban identity? (2) What identity narratives emerge from contemporary Cuban cultural products (e.g. clothing) that employ imagery from Soviet cartoons? (3) How do discourses around *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) articulate the assimilation and rejection of Soviet heritage in the identity of post-Soviet Cuban generation?

For analytical purposes, I define *post-Soviet generation* as Cubans whose formative years took place after 1991. This category is used not as a strict demographic marker but as a cultural position that shapes how nostalgia, irony, and memory practices are expressed in the corpus.

Our research adopted a qualitative interpretive approach, favoring our analysis with an inductive orientation. The main question about contemporary Cuban identity through nostalgic narrative for Soviet cartoons requires us to approach different discursive practices. Following the guidelines within a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm adopted in our research, we sought not to seek generalities or numerical patterns but to explore the themes, nostalgic narratives, and discursive practices within our object of study. As suggested in several works on interpretive paradigms opposed to positivist ones, interpretive research values researcher involvement, emotional resonance, and the exploration of the human experience in its depth and complexity. This is relevant for a study that addresses nostalgia and identity, phenomena that cannot be reduced to variables or quantified outcomes. The nature of our dissertation, based on a specific

sociocultural and historical context, requires, among other aspects, that the researcher's position be a source of enrichment in the interpretive process.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, the inductive perspective implies that theoretical categories and prior analyses should not be imposed to encourage the progressive emergence of interpretive insights due to interpretive work with the corpus.

The object of study of this research is the narratives and discourses for Soviet cartoons, known in Cuba as *muñequitos rusos*, which shaped the childhood memories of Cuban generations born between 1960 and the 90s. This phenomenon is contextualized in contemporary post-Soviet Cuba (post-1991), followed by the dissolution of the USSR and marked by a new context of digitalization and economic and cultural openings, the Soviet legacy is symbolically reconfigured in contemporary popular culture.

As part of the reflexive approach of this research, it is worth considering the extent to which the researcher's position influences her approach to the topic and object of study. As an individual born in Cuba in 1995, who shares childhood memories of Soviet cartoons, an emotional connection with the phenomenon analyzed emerges. However, by not actively participating in the digital communities that today express nostalgia for these cartoons, the researcher positions herself between the insider and the outsider, which allows her to adopt a critical yet empathetic perspective. Furthermore, accessing and analyzing independent media represents an exercise in denaturalization, as they represent critical voices that she had not previously encountered or embraced, but that remain part of the contemporary Cuban cultural field. This insider-outsider position aligns with the interpretivist emphasis on reflexivity, recognizing the researcher's role in the co-construction of meaning.

#### **4.2 Methodological approach and data**

In our study, we selected discourse as the central unit of our analysis because it holds a relevant place within social practices. For this research, discourse is seen as a system that shapes the reality of individuals and contributes to reproducing a certain regularity in social relations through statements and practices that are institutionalized and presented as something natural and as frameworks for producing meanings that establish meanings and allow actors to understand

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<sup>153</sup> Alharahsheh and Pius, A Review of Key Paradigms: Positivism VS Interpretivism,(2019), p. 42.

the world and navigate within it.,<sup>154</sup> aligning with a constructivist–interpretivist epistemology, where meaning is seen as socially produced and context-dependent.

The methodological approach of our study is inspired by the work of Kalinina and Menke<sup>155</sup>, who observe the circulation of memories in hyperconnected memory cultures, where continuous interaction between hegemonic and alternative narratives occurs. While our work does not adopt the concept of hyperconnectivity, it aligns with the analytical perspective by considering nostalgia as a discursive operator in the construction of identity and by addressing the tension between centralized official narratives and popular forms of nostalgia, allowing us to map the tension between "top-down" and "bottom-up" discourses<sup>156</sup>. To our methodological approach, we add the position taken in the work of Tammpuu, Juzefovičs & Seppel<sup>157</sup>, which uses the positioning theory of Moghaddam and Harré<sup>158</sup>, "*which focuses on how people use discourse to locate themselves and others in social interactions, and explores the ways in which rights and duties are distributed among actors, i.e. are allocated, ascribed, claimed, disputed, and fought over in the course of such discursive interactions.*"<sup>159</sup> By adopting this perspective, we aim to strengthen our analysis of the discourses surrounding Soviet cartoons in the Cuban media, which construct positions for the speaker, interlocutor, and symbolic actors. This will allow us to understand better how claims to identity are built, legitimized, or challenged in the narratives analyzed.

As a result, our empirical corpus comprises discursive materials that reflect references to Soviet animation within the Cuban digital space, essential for understanding the ongoing identity construction in the post-Soviet Cuban context. For this reason, our research corpus comprises digital media materials that explicitly reference the Soviet cartoons, in the form of references to *muñequitos rusos*, in Cuba and their nostalgic significance in the contemporary context. It consists of three types of data: 1) press articles published in official Cuban media, 2) press

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<sup>154</sup> Kevin C. Dunn and Iver B. Neumann, 'Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research' (2016), p.4

<sup>155</sup> Kalinina and Menke, 'Negotiating the Past in Hyperconnected Memory Cultures', p.59

<sup>156</sup> Ibid

<sup>157</sup> Tammpuu et al., "Claiming the 'Right to a Happy Soviet Childhood,'" 249.

<sup>158</sup> Reference to Moghaddam and Harré, *Words of Conflict, Words of War* in the work of Tammpuu et al., "Claiming the 'Right to a Happy Soviet Childhood.'"

<sup>159</sup> Tammpuu et al., "Claiming the 'Right to a Happy Soviet Childhood,'" 249.

articles published in independent Cuban media, and 3) user comments on Facebook posts within public groups dedicated to reminiscing about television programs broadcast in Cuba.

When selecting our sources, we chose those with a digital presence to facilitate access and compilation from abroad. Then, using search tools from an extensive list of Cuban magazines and newspapers, we conducted targeted searches that included keywords such as *muñequitos rusos*, "Soviet cartoons," "nostalgia," "childhood," or "Cuban television". and articles published in a recent period that engaged with the contemporary post-Soviet Cuban context. Finally, we selected accredited state Cuban media outlets, which reproduce the official discourse of the Cuban government and reflect the ideological frameworks of institutionalized memory<sup>160</sup>; independent Cuban media, which in many cases are in platforms created outside the Cuban island and are not accredited for offering plural, critical, and transnational perspectives, challenging official Cuban narratives, and amplifying diverse voices from inside and outside Cuba;<sup>161</sup> Facebook groups from which the posts with comments for the analysis were extracted.<sup>162</sup>

Our original sample consisted of 95 articles from independent Cuban media outlets, 20 articles from official Cuban media outlets, and over 3,773 Facebook user comments taken from 28 posts from groups dedicated to sharing memories among the Cuban public about children's cartoons broadcast on Cuban television. These comments have been preserved and coded in Nvivo software and are part of a work archive shown in our appendices. However, during the refinement of our sample, in which the analytical value of our data was evaluated, a certain saturation was perceived, which led to the decision to reduce the sample size and complete the empirical corpus for our analysis, composed of 12 articles from official Cuban media outlets, 32 from independent media outlets, and 1,297 user comments taken from 12 Facebook posts

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<sup>160</sup> (Juventud Rebelde (<https://www.juventudrebelde.cu/>); Granma (<https://www.granma.cu/quienes-somos>); Cubahora (<https://www.cubahora.cu/about/>); CubaSí (<https://cubasi.cu/es/sobre-nosotros>); El Caimán Barbudo (<https://medium.com/el-caiman%C3%A1n-barbudo>); La Demajagua (<https://lademajagua.cu/>); La Jiribilla (<https://www.lajiribilla.cu/>); Editora 5 de Septiembre (<https://www.5septiembre.cu/quienes-somos/>); Prensa Latina (<https://radio.prensa-latina.cu/quienes-somos/>); Cuban Radio Portal (<https://www.radiocubana.cu/faqs-preguntas-mas-frecuentes/quienes-somos/un-proyecto-sin-precedentes/>); Tiempo21 (<https://www.tiempo21.cu/>); La Joven Cuba (<https://jovencuba.com/sobre-nosotros/>); EBM Marketing Solutions(<https://ebmworld.com/#quienes-somos>))

<sup>161</sup> (14ymedio ([https://www.14ymedio.com/destacamos/quienes-somos\\_1\\_1086609.html](https://www.14ymedio.com/destacamos/quienes-somos_1_1086609.html)); CiberCuba (<https://www.cibercuba.com/quienes-somos/>); CubaNet (<https://www.cubanet.org/sobre-cubanet/>); Cuballama Noticias (<https://www.cuballama.com/noticias/quienes-somos/>); Diario de Cuba(<https://diariodecuba.com/>); elTOQUE(<https://eltoque.com/sobre-nosotros/>); Hypermedia Magazine(<https://editorialhypermedia.com/quienes-somos/>); OnCuba(<https://oncubanews.com/nosotros/>); Periodico Cubano(<https://www.periodicocubano.com/quienes-somos/>); Martí Noticias(<https://www.martinoticias.com/p/393.html>)

<sup>162</sup> ( Aventuras cubanas y memoria de la television(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/665135760788636/>); Muñequitos en Cuba ( <https://www.facebook.com/munequitosencuba>))

published between 2014 and 2025. The purpose of this extensive data collection was to gather as many references to Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) as possible in the Cuban imaginary.

The selection of official and independent press articles offers a very enriching contrast for a complex analysis from two perspectives: official narratives from the perspective of the state discourse in power and critical alternative narratives outside of official censorship. Furthermore, the addition of social media comments from Facebook posts about memories of Soviet cartoons seen on the island offers us the opportunity to capture non-institutional and spontaneous voices and access more everyday and emotional forms of Cuban recollection of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*). This also allows us to detect narrative patterns, discursive tensions, or symbolic uses of the past. This diversity of sources contributes to data triangulation, increasing the credibility of the findings. This mixed corpus of sources facilitates a complex and comprehensive thematic, discursive, and narrative analysis, revealing what is said about Soviet animated films (*muñequitos rusos*).

The motivation behind choosing Spanish-language content, focusing on the Cuban press and Cuban Facebook users comments, is to compile our corpus stems from the need to study references for Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) in their original cultural and linguistic context. Considering the local origin of our phenomenon under analysis, it is framed within the specific experiences of Cuban generations who grew up on the island surrounded by elements of the Soviet legacy during the post-Soviet context. In anticipation of possible language barriers and to facilitate understanding of the data analyzed, each fragment referenced in our work was translated by the researcher (who is fluent in Spanish and English). The translations can be found in an appendix specifically prepared so that the reader can consult, if necessary, the original source and its English equivalent, providing a clearer context for the analysis.

The decision to appeal to discourses created by Cubans and for Cubans helps capture expression of nostalgia in contemporary media circuits accessible to the Cuban population, such as the digital press and social media. Particularly Facebook, a platform with a high level of usage among Cuban users (experts determined that Facebook accounted for 96.15% of web traffic in Cuba)<sup>163</sup>, serves as an ideal platform for our approach. By reaching a broad Cuban audience, it provides dynamic access to the individual voices that shape the collective memory of Soviet

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<sup>163</sup> Pérez Méndez, 'La red social que no pasa de moda en el marketing cubano', <https://negolution.com/la-red-social-que-no-pasa-de-moda-en-el-marketing-cubano/>

cartoons among Cubans. This combination of press media and citizen voices allows us to observe how shared memories are constructed in the present, beyond official or academic accounts, revealing tensions and ambivalences from a linguistically rich perspective.

Despite their differences in format, tone, and medium of circulation, all the sources share a central discursive link: the explicit evocation of *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons). This standard reference allows for comparing different forms of narrative, positioning, and meaning, across diverse genres but connected by a common field of meaning: the socialist past mediated by the necessary references to this childhood memory.

The historical period focused on content published between 2013 and 2025, a context that marks an increase in Cuban users on the Internet caused by the opening of free Internet access on the island<sup>164</sup>, economic openings that influenced the emergence of private businesses in the island,<sup>165</sup> such as clothing brands that began to use Soviet cartoons, and renewed cultural collaboration between Cuba and Russia.

This research uses a multi-method qualitative design, grounded in a constructivist–interpretivist epistemology, combining thematic, discourse, and narrative analysis to examine how nostalgia for Soviet cartoons shapes contemporary Cuban identity in digital and media discourses. This combination of methods allow us to obtain a first layer of organization through thematic analysis, enabling the identification of codes, themes, and recurring discursive patterns in the corpus. Some researchers have suggested that thematic discourse analysis pays attention to the constructive role of language and multiple and shifting meanings, and allows for the generation of crucial semantic codes for exploring the affective and symbolic dimensions of memory narratives.<sup>166</sup> Discourse analysis then deepens this exploration by interrogating how positioning might operate within language. In parallel with thematic discourse analysis, we would identify themes and how they function within broader systems of meaning and representation.<sup>167</sup> We would focus on what is said and how, by whom, and with what effects. Narrative analysis, in turn, provides sensitivity to the symbolism and affective resonance of the

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<sup>164</sup> Reyes Ayala, “Those Who Are Left Behind.”, 610

<sup>165</sup> Fernández Estrada, ‘EL SECTOR PRIVADO EN CUBA: ENTRE EL DOGMA Y LA REFORMA’, FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG, p.3

<sup>166</sup> Clarke and Braun, “Thematic Analysis,” p.3.

<sup>167</sup> Taylor and Ussher, “Making Sense of S&M,” 297.

stories told related to the themes of Soviet cartoons. It has been argued that discourse analysis and narrative analysis intersect at the textual level by paying attention to metaphors, tropes, myths, and legitimation strategies.<sup>168</sup> In this sense, narrative plots serve as carriers of meaning in articulating post-Soviet Cuban identity. Together, these three analytical levels provide a coherent interpretive framework that captures the nuanced ways in which nostalgic memory operates in discourse and circulates through cultural media, shaped by both personal and collective positioning.

#### **4.2.3 Thematic analysis**

The thematic analysis aspects we considered for our work come primarily from those developed by Braun and Clarke (2006)<sup>169</sup>, and are applied here within a constructivist–interpretivist epistemology. They propose stages of work to identify, organize and interpret the data: immersion in the corpus to familiarize oneself with the content; initial generation of codes, inductively or deductively, depending on the research questions; searching for themes by grouping codes into networks of related ideas; reviewing, refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up the findings based on a coherent interpretive narrative that addresses the meaning, assumptions and implications of each theme.<sup>170</sup> Thematic analysis, furthermore, offers us the possibility of "*giving voice to "the other,"*" that is, of allowing those traditionally unrepresented or underrepresented in research to present their viewpoints in their own words, unhindered by predetermined response categories".<sup>171</sup> Thematic analysis also stands out for its applicability to different contexts and data types. It is particularly useful in research that handles large and heterogeneous corpora with large volumes of data, without losing interpretive depth, like it was our case.<sup>172</sup>

#### **4.2.4 Narrative analysis**

Narrative analysis, also relevant to this research, allows us to observe the construction of stories by authors to represent experiences, since some specialists consider telling a story in public space to be a performative act that can assign responsibilities, legitimize meanings, or exclude voices. In this sense, narrative analysis focuses on how users and the media select and connect events, characters, and settings, generating plots that shape the sense of continuity,

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<sup>168</sup> Van Hulst et al., "Discourse, Framing and Narrative," p.90.

<sup>169</sup> Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology."

<sup>170</sup> Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." in Riger and Sigurvinsdottir, "Thematic Analysis," p.35.

<sup>171</sup> Riger and Sigurvinsdottir, "Thematic Analysis," p.35.

<sup>172</sup> Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria," p. 1.

rupture, or loss. It also allows us to identify which stories circulate most strongly, which are silenced, and how certain forms of remembering are legitimized while others are marginalized.<sup>173</sup> The narrative approach is also based on a constructivist conception of the story, understanding that narratives construct realities for specific audiences and contexts.<sup>174</sup> From this perspective, the stories about Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) represent individual memories and socially shared ways of organizing the past to give meaning to socialist childhood and to articulate identity positions in the post-Soviet Cuban present, which is the central focus of this study.

#### 4.2.5 Critical discourse analysis

Finally, in this research, we apply a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to understand how narratives about the Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) in Cuba participate in producing or contesting ideologies associated with the Soviet legacy and national identity. Following some approaches, such as that proposed by van Dijk, CDA is oriented toward "a detailed description, explanation, and critique of the ways dominant discourses (indirectly) influence such socially shared knowledge." This approach allows us to analyze, for example, how discourses produced by the media might reveal the reproduction of power through rhetorical structures and the negotiation and resistance of narratives from below. In this way, we assume an interpretive and critical position that seeks to understand the role of discourse in a context where various discourses coexist in tension.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, the discourse analysis adopted in this research is based on a constructivist epistemology, which understands social reality as an active construction that emerges from discursive practices to understand the meanings that arise from the analyzed discourse. References appearing in official articles, alternative media, or social media comments represent expressions of individual memories, but also discursive forms that visualize the symbolic existence of the past, collective identities, and values. Another aspect to consider is the role of the researcher as part of the meaning-making process to reinforce the reflective commitment of this study.<sup>176</sup> Discourse analysis becomes especially relevant for studying strategies of legitimization or silencing in the media, and how Cuba's socialist past is articulated or contested, to understand the persistence of specific power frameworks and the discursive openings that allow for new ways of imagining post-Soviet Cuban identity<sup>177</sup>. In this

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<sup>173</sup> Van Hulst et al., "Discourse, Framing and Narrative," p.86–87, 90–91.

<sup>174</sup> Marvasti, "Qualitative Content Analysis."

<sup>175</sup> Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," 250,253, 259.

<sup>176</sup> Hardy et al., "Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis," p.20–21.

<sup>177</sup> Van Hulst et al., "Discourse, Framing and Narrative," p.91.

study, CDA complements thematic and narrative analysis by revealing the power relations embedded in language, adding a critical dimension to the interpretation of nostalgic memory.

### 4.2.3 Data analysis

After collecting our data through search engines and applying the selection criteria that shaped our corpus, we moved on to the stage of analysis. We began with a theme-driven format in which, following the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), we familiarized ourselves with the data inductively and created themes based on the grouping of codes. After several steps in which we reviewed, refined, and defined the themes with the help of the NVivo software, we were able to identify our three main themes that would help us answer our three specific research questions and, subsequently, address the general research question of this thesis. The themes derived from our thematic analysis are: “Media, memory and politics,” “cultural artifacts and visual identity,” and “nostalgia as a cultural narrative.”

The development of these themes was the result of a long and iterative process of coding and annotation. While the large dataset provided a wide perspective on nostalgia, we progressively narrowed the focus by concentrating on those fragments that I had not only coded but also enriched with analytical notes. This practice allowed us to deepen the interpretation of data that was both recurrent and conceptually significant. In this sense, the broader corpus offered an overview of the phenomenon, but the analytical emphasis was ultimately placed on sub-phenomena such as the *muñequitos rusos* (Soviet cartoons) and their assimilation and rejection within Cuban post-Soviet generational identities. At the same time, these discourses were examined in connection with broader contemporary notions of identity, belonging, and cultural memory. In this way, the themes presented here are both grounded in the diversity of the corpus and refined through selective engagement with the most analytically fruitful fragments.

In line with the theme-driven format, each theme was further explored through complementary layers of analysis. First, we incorporated narrative analysis by zooming in on selected stories or quotes from the corpus, paying attention to how individuals recounted their experiences and memories. This step highlighted the narrative structures, metaphors, and affective tones through which participants or media sources framed the *muñequitos rusos* and their place in Cuban post-Soviet identity.

Second, we applied discourse analysis to interpret how these same comments reflected, reproduced, or resisted dominant discourses. This stage moved beyond individual stories to examine broader ideological and cultural patterns: the ways in which official media framed nostalgia, how independent outlets contested such framings, and how everyday social media users positioned themselves through irony, humor, or resistance. By combining thematic coding with narrative and discourse analysis, the findings not only identify recurring cultural patterns but also reveal how these patterns are performed and re-signified in language.

Finally, to ensure transparency and traceability of the data, each fragment used as evidence in the Findings chapter is identified through an abbreviation system that indicates its source. Official media excerpts are labeled as Ofi-01, Ofi-02, etc.; independent media excerpts as Ind-01, Ind-02; and Facebook comments as FB-01, FB-02, and so forth. Each label corresponds to a numbered entry in the Annex I, where the original fragment is provided alongside my own English translation. In addition, the links to the full texts of the analyzed articles are included in the Annex II for reference. This system allows the reader to follow how the analysis was developed while maintaining clarity in the presentation of evidence.

### **4.3 Ethical considerations and research limitations**

Regarding the ethical considerations of our work, priority was given to selecting content sources that do not require authentication or belong to platforms with restricted access. Following the ethical guidelines established by the academic centers we represent, we requested ethical approval, as required by the University of Glasgow when working with data containing personal user information, as was the case with Facebook comments. In the case of journalistic articles, author attributions are respected and cited according to academic standards. In line with best practices for qualitative research, all data have been anonymized where appropriate, and no identifying information from individual social media users is reproduced in a way that could compromise privacy.

Furthermore, despite the strengths of the chosen methodological approach, several limitations must be considered. First, the corpus selection is limited to digital materials produced and/or commented on in Spanish; thus, we do not intend to generalize the findings to other post-socialist or Latin American contexts by focusing on the Cuban case. Furthermore, our analysis does not aim to offer an exhaustive representation of all discourses on Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*),

but rather a situated interpretation based on a representative but partial corpus. Additionally, although diverse voices have been considered, it is likely that some narratives have been excluded or underrepresented, especially those less visible in the digital environment. In addition, we do not aim to exhaust the theoretical frameworks or fully apply each analytical perspective, instead, we propose a limited case study that seeks to contribute, from a specific perspective, to understanding broader processes related to the redefinition of the socialist past and the construction of identity in post-Soviet contexts. Another limitation was that, due to time constraints and the difficulty of coordinating access to interview participants, surveys and interviews could not be conducted—a valuable type of data that could be considered for qualitative interviews in future research. As a result, the study may lack demographic detail about the audiences engaging with the analyzed materials, such as the age, location, or socio-economic background of Facebook users or media consumers, which limits the possibility of drawing generational comparisons. This is particularly relevant for understanding differences in the interaction with nostalgic memories between generations born before and after 1991 in Cuba.

Finally, the inclusion of diverse source formats in our corpus seeks to enrich the interpretive possibilities with the goal of better understanding this specific cultural phenomenon, enhancing credibility through data triangulation. Still, it does not support a comparative framework with other contexts. As with all qualitative research, reliability and validity in this study are approached through transparency of methods, reflexivity of the researcher, and grounding of interpretations in the data.

## Chapter 5: Findings & Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the research through a thematic and discursive analysis of the corpus of official media articles, independent press, and Facebook comments collected between 2013 and 2025. The chapter is structured around three interrelated themes that emerged from the data: *Media, memory and politics*, which explores how nostalgia is framed, contested, and re-signified across different media spheres; *Cultural Artifacts and Visual Identity*, which examines how Soviet cartoons are re-appropriated as symbolic resources in contemporary cultural production; and *Nostalgia as a Cultural Narrative*, which considers how affective and generational memories articulate ambivalent forms of belonging and critique. Fragments cited in this chapter are coded by source: *Ofi* (official media), *Ind* (independent media), and *FB* (Facebook), each followed by a number (e.g., Ofi-01). All references listed are found in Annex I in their original language and the English translation, and the reference to the original source listed in the bibliography is also reflected in the body of the text. The titles of cartoons and the names of characters are given in English in this chapter. Their original versions and Cuban translations are detailed in section 3.2.

### 5.1 Media, memory and politics

The first theme of our research, “Media, memory and politics”, addresses how Cuban media and everyday discourse engage with Soviet cultural legacies—particularly the *muñequitos rusos*—to negotiate the meaning of contemporary Cuban identity. It represents the politics of memory, where nostalgia coexists with critique, irony, and resistance. The theme is characterized by ambivalence: affectionate references to Soviet cartoons often appear alongside mockery, rejection, or reinterpretation as symbols of dependency and censorship. Dominant codes such as Soviet-era references, Everyday Sovietness, National narrative, Cuban memory of Soviet culture, Rejection of the Soviet legacy, and Soviet influence with negative connotations show the weight of this theme across the corpus, while less frequent but significant codes like tourism and memory, post-socialist entrepreneurship, and digital reappropriation of state narratives add analytical depth. Its components include media framing, generational humor, cultural resistance, and geopolitical discourses, making it both highly dominant and multifaceted. As the most dominant themes in the corpus, it directly addresses the first specific research question: How do Cuban media use nostalgic references to Soviet cartoons to negotiate the meaning of contemporary Cuban identity?

Memories of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) emerge in the corpus of our work as part of the broader cultural Sovietization of Cuban everyday life. In Ofi-01<sup>178</sup>, the author recalls with humor and affection the ingenuity of painting a Caribe-brand-TV screen with crayons to watch *muñequitos rusos* "Nu, pogodi!", "Pastuszka i truboczist", "Uncle Styopa-a militiaman", "Three from Prostokvashino" in color. This is a personal history that reconstructs an event from the past. The narrative situates Soviet cartoons within a constellation of household objects— Raketa clocks, Aurika washing machines, Krim-218 tv—and even the fashion of giving children Russian names, illustrating how the Soviet presence became rooted in domestic intimacy. A link between personal and collective memory emerges in the history of everyday life. Here, nostalgia operates as a material and affective memory, where scarcity is transformed into resilience and Soviet marks become cultural. In contrast, the discourse of the fragment Ind-01<sup>179</sup> presents the memory of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) as cultural products with universal themes, challenging the dominant political approach in the Island, acknowledging their technical limitations compared to Disney, emphasizing their moral lessons and playful dimension, presenting them as part of everyday childhood rather than as ideological tools, and reflecting an interpretation of the rhetorical strategy: defense through comparison and moral value.

However, nostalgia also transforms into parody and criticism. In the Ind-02<sup>180</sup>, a new Cuban Russian co-production is mocked by suggesting satirical titles and using ironic language and satire as a cultural strategy. By combining Soviet imagery with shortages, online humor redefines nostalgia as a bottom-up counter-discourse, demonstrating resistance at the level of discourse, rethinking state-promoted memory. Similarly, on Ofi-02<sup>181</sup>, reference is made to the case of Cuban comedian Enrique Arredondo, who, during a live broadcast of the program "Detrás de la fachada" in the early 1970s, joked about punishing his grandson by forcing him to

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• <sup>178</sup>Frometa Aguero, L. C.(2020), 'Mi ventilador ruso', *La Demajagua*, <https://lademajagua.cu/mi-ventilador-ruso/>, consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>179</sup> Lorenzo Omair (2016), 'Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos', *El toque*, <https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos> consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>180</sup> *Periodico cubano* (2025), 'Cuba y Rusia firman acuerdo para producir muñequitos', <https://www.periodicocubano.com/cuba-y-rusia-firman-acuerdo-para-producir-munequitos/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>181</sup> Couceiro Rodriguez, A. V. (2023), 'Enrique Arredondo de Virutica al Tío de Paco', *PORTAL DE LA RADIO CUBANA*, <https://www.radiocubana.cu/historia-de-la-radio-cubana/100-anos-de-radio-en-cuba/enrique-arredondo-de-virutica-al-tio-de-paco/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

watch Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*). The anecdote, intelligible only to those with a generational memory, highlights his ambivalent afterlife, as something both cherished and ridiculed. Finally, on Ind-03<sup>182</sup>, the author of the chronicle, born in Cuba in the 1990s, recalls how during 90s Cuban children consumed a hybrid media landscape—Soviet (“Bolek and Lolek”, “Nu pogodi”), Cuban (“Elpidio Valdés”, “Guaso y Carburo” y “Chuncha”), and limited Western cartoons (“Tom and Jerry”)—already aware of cultural differences. Together, these stories reveal nostalgia as affectionate, ironic, and critical, and support Soviet cartoons as enduring layer of Cuban identity.

Moreover, references to Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) are rooted in everyday Cuban culture through artistic, linguistic, and generational practices. In Ofi-03<sup>183</sup>, reference to an artistic installation of an old television showing Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) is described alongside a modern flat screen, framing these animations as a shared generational anchor. This narrative reflects a visual image of old and new technologies that situates cartoons in memory, while symbolically staging the tension between memory and modernization.

The simplification of Soviet identity is explained in Ofi-04<sup>184</sup>, which reflects how all products from the USSR were colloquially labeled as "Russian" in Cuba, from washing machines to cartoons, and even imported Polish products such as Lolek and Bolek. This linguistic reduction, which erases the multinational character of the USSR, reveals a vernacular strategy of appropriation: foreignness was domesticated by language. The generational dimension is highlighted in Ind-04<sup>185</sup>, where in an exhibition titled "More than Russians," artists recall how Soviet cartoons "differentiated" them in contrast to Hollywood's dominance in Latin America. The works displayed in the exhibition discussed in the critique reinterpret Soviet icons as hybrid Cuban symbols, portraying the rupture of the 1990s as both a cultural loss and an artistic

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<sup>182</sup> Cibercuba(2015) ‘Las 9 cosas que marcaron mi infancia en Cuba’, <https://www.cibercuba.com/lecturas/las-9-cosas-que-marcaron-mi-infancia-en-cuba> , consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>183</sup> Sotolongo Puig C. L.(2015), ‘Arte por la resistencia’, Escambray, <https://www.escambray.cu/2015/arte-por-la-resistencia/> , consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>184</sup> Chang Leon, F. A. (2014), ‘Gentilicios a lo cubano’, Cuba Ahora, <https://www.cubahora.cu/sociedad/gentilicios-a-lo-cubano> , consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>185</sup> Periodico cubano (2018), ‘Se expone en Cuba, la muestra colectiva: “Más que rusos”’, <https://www.periodicocubano.com/se-expone-en-cuba-la-muestra-colectiva-mas-que-rusos/> , consulted on 01.05.2025.

stimulus. Finally, Ofi-05<sup>186</sup> discusses the visit of the director of Soyuzmultfilm to Cuba in 2024, who expresses his surprise at the broad Cuban audience that enjoyed Soviet cartoons despite the distance. This intercultural recognition highlights the broad reach of Soviet cultural memory and its role in creating cross-border symbolic ties.

These fragments reveal that references to Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) permeate Cuban daily life not only as childhood memories but also as linguistic habits, artistic motifs, and transnational recognitions.

Furthermore, references to childhood memories of Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) often appear uncritical, joyful experiences, where ideological weight was absent. In Ind-05<sup>187</sup>, the recollection of entering a dark cinema after school and watching *muñequitos rusos* on a giant screen conveys a collective sensory and emotional immersion ritual. The cartoons are framed not for their artistic sophistication but for their emotional anchoring in early life. This affective bond resurfaces in Ind-06<sup>188</sup> testimony, where the author insists that Cold War politics should not judge characters like the Hare and the Wolf<sup>189</sup>, "The Bremen Town Musicians", "Three from Prostokvashino"<sup>190</sup>, and the Guena Crocodile.

Humor also frames memory as a coping tool. In Ind-07<sup>191</sup>, references to *muñequitos rusos* appear alongside Soviet canned meat and the reintroduction of the ruble, within what is described as a "monetary farce." This humorous linking of past and present demonstrates how nostalgia is mobilized to criticize contemporary hardship. At the same time, the allure of the North remains a persistent counterpoint. *Ind-07* highlights the existence of a cultural hierarchy that privileges the mythical figure of the North or the Yuma (as the United States is colloquially

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<sup>186</sup> [Prensa latina](https://www.prensa-latina.cu/2024/11/13/animacion-de-cine-en-dias-de-la-cultura-espiritual-rusa-en-cuba/) (2024), 'Animación de cine en Días de la Cultura Espiritual Rusa en Cuba', <https://www.prensa-latina.cu/2024/11/13/animacion-de-cine-en-dias-de-la-cultura-espiritual-rusa-en-cuba/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>187</sup> Lorenzo Omairy (2016), 'Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos', [El toque](https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos), <https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos> consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>188</sup> Lorenzo Omairy (2016), 'Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos', [El toque](https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos), <https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos> consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>189</sup> Hare and Wolf from *¡Nu, pogodí!*

<sup>190</sup> Post men from *Three from Prostokvashino*

<sup>191</sup> Pons Giralt M.(2022), 'Yuma: mi no lugar de distancias y afectos', On Cuba, <https://oncubanews.com/cuba/yuma-mi-no-lugar-de-distancias-y-afectos/>, consulted on 01.05.2025

known), which contrasts with memories of the Berlin Wall, canned meat, and Soviet cartoons, even as it nostalgically recalls socialist icons.

Meanwhile, the author of the reference made in *Ind-08*<sup>192</sup> constructs a generational label—"the generation of Bolek and Lolek"—to describe those who grew up with Soviet animation. This nostalgic gesture affirms belonging and overlooks younger generations who consumed this media in the 1990s. Another fragment, *Ind-09*<sup>193</sup>, places Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) in a Noah's Ark of childhood memory, alongside school rituals and first crushes. The insistence on saving them from the "flood of forgetting" highlights their emotional resilience. These fragments show how Cuban nostalgia for Soviet animation is framed through naïve enjoyment, ironic humor, cultural hierarchies, and personal memory.

One recurring theme in Cuban recollections of Soviet animation is the tension between art and ideology. In *Ind-10*<sup>194</sup>, the author reflects that "some will only see darkness" in the cartoons, while others recognize a spectrum of darkness. This framing acknowledges ambiguity: cartoons were not simply ideological tools but part of the textures of daily life. In sharp contrast, the author in *Ind-11*<sup>195</sup> warns that Cuba may be slipping back into a new cycle of "sovietization," with Russian films, language lessons, and cartoons once again filling state-controlled media.

Other fragments highlight how Soviet cultural penetration occurred through cinema as a medium of both pleasure and pedagogy. In *Ofi-06*<sup>196</sup>, film educator Ana Ibis recounts showing Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) to contemporary schoolchildren. Their initial surprise turns into enjoyment, opening a space to teach audiovisual literacy and cinema etiquette. Here, the

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<sup>192</sup> [Cubanet](https://www.cubanet.org/recuerdas-estos-animados-sovieticos/) (2024), '¿Recuerdas estos animados soviéticos?', <https://www.cubanet.org/recuerdas-estos-animados-sovieticos/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>193</sup> Lorenzo Omairi (2016), 'Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos', [El toque](https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos), <https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos> consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>194</sup> Lorenzo Omairi (2016), 'Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos', [El toque](https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos), <https://eltoque.com/nostalgia-por-munequitos-rusos> consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>195</sup> Freire Santana O. (2024), '¿Acaso hay una colonización cultural mala y otra buena?', [DIARIO DE CUBA](https://www.diariodecuba.com/2024/01/30/ana-ibis-la-sala-oscura-los-personajes-el-cine/), [¿Acaso hay una colonización cultural mala y otra buena?](https://www.diariodecuba.com/2024/01/30/ana-ibis-la-sala-oscura-los-personajes-el-cine/) | [DIARIO DE CUBA](https://www.diariodecuba.com/2024/01/30/ana-ibis-la-sala-oscura-los-personajes-el-cine/) consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>196</sup> Barrientos Matos, N.(2020), 'Ana Ibis, la sala oscura, los personajes...el cine', [Tiempo 21](https://www.tiempo21.cu/2020/01/30/ana-ibis-la-sala-oscura-los-personajes-el-cine/), <https://www.tiempo21.cu/2020/01/30/ana-ibis-la-sala-oscura-los-personajes-el-cine/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

cartoons serve not as propaganda but as tools of education and continuity. At the same time, bottom-up practices like Ind- 12<sup>197</sup> demonstrate how ordinary Cubans preserve and remix cultural memory outside state institutions. As reported in Ind- 12, the digital archive holds “nine hours of *muñequitos rusos*” alongside revolutionary music, poetry, and digitized magazines. This narrative shows cartoons not as imposed symbols, but as beloved fragments actively kept alive. Together, these accounts illustrate how Soviet media in Cuba has oscillated between state-driven imposition and grassroots reappropriation. Narratives range from personal defense of cartoons’ artistic value to warnings about renewed ideological control, to stories of teaching and archiving.

In the same line, Facebook comments reveal how Soviet cartoons continue to shape Cuban cultural memory in ambivalent and often humorous ways. Some users, like in the comment FB-01<sup>198</sup> and FB-02<sup>199</sup> defend Soviet cartoons as integrated into Cuban culture, evoking shared songs and characters like “The Bremen Town Musicians” or “Bolek and Lolek” and recall watching the cartoons and gradually enjoying their soundtrack rhythm through repetition, even though they did not understand the lyrics of songs, mostly in Russian, or dialogues that were not translated or dubbed into Spanish. The humor acknowledges linguistic barriers but frames them as part of the collective experience of growing up with Soviet media. This creates a communal memory in which even Russian-language phrases become part of Cuban identity.

Others, like in comment like FB-03<sup>200</sup>, contrast Soviet cartoons with Disney, lamenting the “betrayal” of their sudden disappearance while praising the North American studio’s enduring presence across Cuban generations. Here memory becomes entangled with geopolitics: Disney’s continuity is praised as loyalty, while the USSR’s collapse is remembered as abandonment. Yet

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<sup>197</sup> *Cibercuba* (2014), ‘El paquete semanal encarna la mutación en la era digital de viejos modos de funcionamiento de la economía sumergida cubana’, <https://www.cibercuba.com/noticias/2014/10/15/el-paquete-semanal-encarna-la-mutacion-en-la-era-digital-de-viejos-modos-de>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>198</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiy1/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>199</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiy1/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>200</sup> *CiberCuba Noticias* (2018), Facebook, <https://fb.watch/BIf5d7cVWI/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

not all recollections are affectionate. <sup>201</sup>depressing (FB-04<sup>202</sup>), while others in FB-05 <sup>203</sup> call them “clavos”(boring and tedious). These critiques highlight how memory is not uniformly nostalgic but marked by generational disputes and personal taste. Generational divides also emerge like in FB-06<sup>204</sup>, where it is suggested that Soviet cartoons were primarily meaningful to children, becoming a memory space separate from adult ideological suspicion.

Finally, commenters compare past scarcity with present oversaturation. One recalls, in FB-07<sup>205</sup>, that missing the broadcast meant losing access to entertainment until next day, while others (FB-08<sup>206</sup>) criticize modern cartoons characters as simplistic and result of lack of creative or moral depth. These reflections position the past as disciplined and meaningful, in contrast to a present perceived as shallow and a cultural disconnection between generations.

Many commenters explicitly frame their memories of Soviet cartoons through political references, emphasizing how choices were shaped by censorship. One user in FB-09<sup>207</sup> critiques the limited media options imposed during childhood, highlighting ideological censorship suggesting that enjoyment was constrained by ideological labels. The speaker challenges nostalgia by arguing that people remember childhood itself, not the quality of the cartoons.

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<sup>201</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiy1/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>202</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiy1/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>203</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memoria de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16qSsx8V3q/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>204</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19ZQSEEcY9/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>205</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19ZQSEEcY9/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>206</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19E9t3DZHS/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>207</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiy1/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

Other comments, FB-10<sup>208</sup>, employ irony to capture the sense of constraint and comment the lack of media choice under the Cuban system, implying that Soviet cartoons were not enjoyed freely but imposed. This humor transforms personal frustration into collective critique. Sarcasm also surfaces in FB-11<sup>209</sup>, where This comment dismisses Soviet cartoons entirely by sarcastically stating that the only enjoyable Soviet import was canned meat—a symbol of the era's material culture, collapsing cultural imports into food scarcity. At the same time, routines of childhood are narrated with warmth. One user, on FB-12<sup>210</sup>, recall eating meals while watching cartoons, despite acknowledging the lack of media alternatives.

The memory of censorship reappears with the case of Enrique Arredondo, where a user, in FB-13<sup>211</sup>, criticizes some Soviet cartoons -- ("Zolotaja antilopa", "Daughter of the Sun", "Nu, pogodi!") jokingly humorously self-corrects when mentioning Disney characters alluding to Cold War-era ideological labels. It exemplifies how personal memory, humor, and ideological tension converge in the reception of Soviet media in Cuba.

Repetition and lack of variety are another recurring theme: one comment, FB-14<sup>212</sup>, laments watching “the same one five times a week”. This comment doesn't criticize the Soviet cartoons themselves, but rather the lack of variety and excessive repetition in Cuban state programming, shaping emotional responses. Some voices, like in FB-15<sup>213</sup>, radicalize the critique, equating cartoons with totalitarian indoctrination. This highly charged comment frames the presence of Soviet cartoons as a symptom of totalitarian control, expressing resentment over the cultural

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<sup>208</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiyl/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>209</sup> Aventura cubana y memoria de la television(2022). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16LxeXwiyl/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>210</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19ZQSEEcY9/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>211</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19ZQSEEcY9/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>212</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19ZQSEEcY9/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>213</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2024), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19TWsW241A/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

isolation imposed by the Cuban regime. Still, a counter-discourse appears, FB-16<sup>214</sup>: one lengthy defense reframes the Revolution and Fidel Castro as sources of moral upbringing, gratitude, and Cuban pride.

Overall, these political references reveal how Facebook memory discourse oscillates between affectionate nostalgia and sharp political critique. Narratives highlight both childhood intimacy and cultural deprivation, while discourse strategies—irony, sarcasm, humor, testimonies—allow Cubans to negotiate the ambivalence of remembering Soviet cartoons within the broader context of censorship, scarcity, and ideological indoctrination. Together, the Facebook corpus illustrates the plurality of post-Soviet memory in Cuba. Narratives are playful, bitter, affectionate, or critical, but they all reaffirm the cartoons' role as generational markers.

The recollections of Soviet cartoons in Cuba reveal a layered terrain where cultural intimacy, humor, irony, and critique intersect. What began as state-driven cultural imports became embedded in the textures of everyday life, leaving emotional traces that are remembered with both affection and ambivalence. The cartoons resurface in domestic anecdotes, artistic practices, and online humor, operating not only as remnants of childhood but also as cultural artifacts that Cubans continue to reinterpret in changing political and social contexts. At the same time, memory discourse highlights persistent tensions between art and ideology, scarcity and abundance, nostalgia and critique. By circulating across official media, independent narratives, and digital platforms, Soviet cartoons have transcended their original ideological framing, becoming symbols of both generational belonging and contested memory. This ambivalence—where affection coexists with parody and resentment—demonstrates how Soviet cultural legacies are neither fixed nor forgotten but continually re-signified within Cuban identity.

Cuban media deploy nostalgic references to Soviet cartoons as a symbolic terrain where memory, identity, and politics intersect. Official outlets tend to frame these animations as a sentimental heritage, highlighting their role in everyday family life and avoiding explicit ideological debates. In this register, the cartoons are recalled through household intimacy, pedagogical anecdotes, and artistic homages that affirm cultural continuity and position Cuba within a narrative of historic friendship with Russia. In contrast, independent media adopt a more

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<sup>214</sup> CiberCuba Noticias(2016), Facebook, <https://fb.watch/BIqrYnKo6D/> ,\_consulted on 01.05.2025.

ambivalent or critical stance: they re-signify Soviet cartoons through irony, parody, or comparative defense against Western animation, thereby questioning both state narratives and Cold War binaries. By humorously linking the cartoons to shortages or by mocking new Cuban–Russian productions, independent accounts transform nostalgia into a form of cultural critique and bottom-up resistance.

Digital platforms further diversify this negotiation. On Facebook, users recall Soviet cartoons with warmth, irony, or resentment, weaving them into broader commentaries on censorship, scarcity, and cultural hierarchies. For some, the cartoons embody moral lessons and communal childhood rituals; for others, they symbolize monotony, ideological imposition, or loss compared to Disney’s enduring presence. Humor, sarcasm, and affectionate remembrance coexist, revealing nostalgia as both coping strategy and political commentary. Together, these discourses demonstrate that nostalgia for Soviet cartoons is not a homogeneous affect but a discursive resource mobilized across media spheres to articulate belonging, critique authority, and negotiate the contours of contemporary Cuban identity.

## **5.2 Cultural Artifacts and Visual Identity**

Our next theme explores how Soviet cultural artifacts—particularly cartoons—are reappropriated in contemporary Cuba as markers of identity and memory. It represents the aesthetic and material dimension of nostalgia, where memory is not only told but also embodied in objects, images, and cultural practices. The theme is characterized by the interplay between creativity under scarcity, symbolic reconfiguration, and the commercialization of nostalgia. Dominant codes such as Soviet objects in Cuban everyday life, Reappropriation of Soviet symbols, Cartoon logic in adult narrative, Soviet animation as symbolic repertoire, and Desacralization of Soviet myths show how visual elements of the Soviet legacy continue to shape identity through both affectionate reuse and critical reinterpretation. Meanwhile, unique codes such as gender ambiguity and strength, imagined Cuban republic, or post-traumatic reflection contribute less frequently but enrich the theme by opening new perspectives on how memory is lived and represented. The components of this theme include aesthetic nostalgia, symbolic reinterpretation, creativity in material scarcity, and the transnational circulation of cultural forms. As one of the most significant themes in the corpus, it provides insight into the ways Cubans visually and materially reconfigure Soviet cultural traces to produce new identity narratives,

directly addressing the second specific research question on how contemporary cultural products shape Cuban identity.

In our corpus, Cuban identity narratives are reimagined and projected through cultural products and visual artifacts that incorporate imagery, symbols, and memories of Soviet cartoons. Rather than functioning only as relics of political propaganda, Soviet animation and material culture are reinserted into contemporary Cuban life as sources of nostalgia, creativity, and identity reconstruction.

In *Ind- 13*<sup>215</sup>, nostalgia is framed not around the socialist decades but around the Republican-era (pre-1959 Cuban Revolution) aesthetics of Havana's past. Entrepreneurs are depicted as deliberately avoiding Soviet symbols—"no hay matrioskas, balalaikas ni personajes de los *muñequitos rusos*"<sup>216</sup>—in favor of U.S.-influenced imagery from a period of perceived prosperity. The discursive strategy here is exclusion: silence about the Soviet period is as meaningful as the celebration of pre-revolutionary symbols. This suggests a market-driven reconfiguration of nostalgia, where memory becomes a decorative commodity aligned with capitalist aspirations.

By contrast, the *Fresko* project, in *Ind-14*<sup>217</sup>, shows how Soviet objects and cartoons are reclaimed rather than erased. T-shirts with *muñequitos rusos* and bags labeled "*Plan Jaba*" insert memories of scarcity and socialist everyday life into wearable fashion. Discursively, humor and Cubanisms are central: by turning hardship into playful slogans, they depoliticize the past and invite recognition over consumption. The project demonstrates how commodified nostalgia can simultaneously function as cultural commentary and subtle resistance.

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<sup>215</sup> Celaya, M., (2017), 'La Habana, capital de la añoranza', *14 y Medio*, [https://www.14ymedio.com/cuba/habana-capital-anoranza-republica-cuba-republicana-cuba-revolucion-castro-raul-castro-batalla-ideologica\\_1\\_1057164.html](https://www.14ymedio.com/cuba/habana-capital-anoranza-republica-cuba-republicana-cuba-revolucion-castro-raul-castro-batalla-ideologica_1_1057164.html), consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>216</sup> "There are no matryoshkas, balalaikas, or muñequitos rusos characters."

<sup>217</sup> Garcia Y.(2017), 'Diseño a lo cubano, con nostalgia y choteo incluidos', *Marketing Solution*, <https://ebmworld.com/blog/disen-lo-cubano-nostalgia-choteo-incluidos/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

Similarly, the *Chamakovish project*, in Ofi-07<sup>218</sup>, transforms Soviet characters from ¡Nu, pogodí! and Cheburashka into marketable design items for adults who grew up with them. Yet the article’s silence on political meanings reveals a discursive pattern of depoliticization: nostalgia is presented as purely aesthetic and commercial. Here, commodified nostalgia highlights the tension between memory as emotional resource and memory as commercial product.

In Ind-15<sup>219</sup>, the “Special Generation” is narrated through autobiographical reflection on the 1990s crisis. The speaker explores how scarcity, loss, and improvisation shaped childhood and family life in the 1990s. Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) emerge as a nostalgic constant, offering continuity amid collapse. Discursively, the language oscillates between euphemistic state terms like *Período Especial* and the popular re-naming the “F\*cked-Up Period” to underscore its severity and emotional impact revealing how irony and colloquialism resist official framing. This narrative of post-traumatic reflection situates cartoons, scarcity, and migration as intertwined in the shaping of post-Soviet Cuban identity.

In Ind-16<sup>220</sup>, cartoons are recalled through an aesthetic dichotomy: Disney’s agility and color versus Eastern Europe’s “flat and soporific” style. The use of the metaphor of a “giant communist” exposes shame and captures the intrusion of ideology into children’s entertainment. Here, Soviet animation becomes a marker of difference, remembered less for its content than for the cultural awkwardness it represented. Another memory, in Ind-17<sup>221</sup>, from the same source reimagines this relationship differently: Soviet jeans decorated with the wolf from *Nu, pogodi!* are remembered as prized possessions. The presence of a cartoon character on a pair of jeans

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<sup>218</sup> Cuba si (2013), ‘Chamakovish, una idea cubana de nostalgia y Muñequitos Rusos’, <https://cubasi.cu/es/cubasi-noticias-cuba-mundo-ultima-hora/item/20579-chamakovish-una-idea-cubana-de-nostalgia-y-munequitos-rusos> , consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>219</sup>Cardenas Lema H.(2014), ‘La generación especial’, OnCuba, <https://oncubanews.com/cuba/economia/la-generacion-especial/> , consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>220</sup> Del LLano E. (2023), ‘Gustavo y sus secuaces’, La Joven Cuba, <https://jovencuba.com/gustavo-y-sus-secuaces/> , consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>221</sup> Del LLano E. (2023), ‘Gustavo y sus secuaces’, La Joven Cuba, <https://jovencuba.com/gustavo-y-sus-secuaces/> , consulted on 01.05.2025.

narrates how Soviet products were domesticated into Cuban youth culture. This demonstrates how cultural imports were re-signified in ways that exceeded state intentions.

Finally, discourse in Ofi-08<sup>222</sup> traces the Soviet–Cuban bond, portraying cartoons like *Zolotaja antilopa*, and *Zolotoe Peryshko* as formative elements of a “sentimental community.” Discursively, the text uses celebratory tone and detailed references to Soyuzmultfilm productions to assert legitimacy and durability. In this representation, cartoons become symbols of friendship and affective diplomacy, embedding international politics into childhood memory. In Ofi-09<sup>223</sup>, the reference to an artist(Cuty) piece or work situates Soviet imagery within a postmodern, ironic aesthetic. The figure of Lenin, spared from being painted in a bathroom, still becomes part of a narrative of parody and transgression. The artist turns to *muñequitos rusos* such as *Mashenka i Medved* to allegorize prohibition and desire. The fragment foregrounds how memory and aesthetic rebellion merge to critique authoritarian prohibitions. In Ind-18<sup>224</sup>, the question “¿Vuelven los bolos?”<sup>225</sup> initiates a humorous meditation on the persistence of Soviet material culture. Fans, washing machines, refrigerators, and especially the Lada-brand cars are narrated as paradoxical markers of endurance, now luxury symbols in Cuba’s market economy. The cartoons function discursively as a metaphor of first exposure to foreignness, binding material survival with cultural absorption, encapsulating the first intimate contact with Soviet influence for many Cubans, especially children. These cartoons symbolize how Soviet presence penetrated the personal and emotional layers of Cuban identity.

In Ind-19<sup>226</sup>, Soviet presence is narrated through Havana’s urban and cultural scars: the Orthodox cathedral as a “sword in the ribs,” Alamar’s decaying housing blocks, and the failed attempt to substitute Betty Boop and Woody Woodpecker with Soviet cartoons, *muñequitos*

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<sup>222</sup> Barrera Jerez, L.(2018), ‘Cuba y Rusia: lo que no se puede borrar’, Cuba Ahora, <https://www.cubahora.cu/cultura/cuba-y-rusia-lo-que-no-se-puede-borrar> , consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>223</sup> Cruz V., (2021), ‘Where the magic happens’, La jiribilla, <https://www.lajiribilla.cu/gibara-where-the-magic-happens/>, consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>224</sup> Triana Cordovi J. (2019), ‘¿Vuelven los bolos’, On Cuba, <https://oncubanews.com/opinion/columnas/contrapesos/vuelven-los-bolos/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>225</sup> Are bolos coming back? ”

<sup>226</sup> Cabrera Perez, C. (2023), ‘¡Que vuelven los rusos. Ay, que miedo!’, Cibercuba, <https://www.cibercuba.com/noticias/2023-05-24-u191143-e191143-s27068-vuelven-rusos-ay-miedo> consulted on 01.05.2025.

*rusos*. The contrast between Western icons and Soviet cartoons reinforces a discourse of loss and resistance, where Soviet legacies persist not as cherished memory but as critical commentary on political failure.

In Ind-20<sup>227</sup>, the reflection revisits socialist-era animations with a balanced tone, acknowledging both their leaden rhetoric and their lasting artistic merit. The narrative situates these cartoons within contemporary practices of preservation, inviting a reconsideration of what constitutes valuable heritage, arguing for the inclusion of socialist-era media as part of Cuba's diverse cultural legacy.

Among the Facebook testimonies that follow the thematic of cultural artifacts and visual identity, one user, in FB-17<sup>228</sup>, highlights the moral dimension of Soviet cartoons, emphasizing their lessons on humility, friendship, and family values. The repeated declaration “Me encantaban”<sup>229</sup> shows an emotional sincerity and ethical attachment. Another comment, FB-18<sup>230</sup>, transforms nostalgia into satire, reimagining iconic characters such as Uncle Styopa or the Wolf and Hare as participants in contemporary Cuban realities—working in state companies, selling gasoline, or running agro-markets. Together, these Facebook testimonies illustrate how everyday Cubans narrate their attachment to Soviet cartoons in ways that are simultaneously humorous, moral, and inventive. The cartoons become more than childhood entertainment: they are cultural anchors that can be defended, ridiculed, or re-appropriated, depending on the narrative strategy and the discursive context.

The circulation of Soviet cartoons and symbols within Cuba’s visual culture illustrates how memory operates as both aesthetic resource and contested identity marker. While some narratives emphasize erasure or avoidance of Soviet imagery in favor of pre-revolutionary or Western icons, others creatively reclaim cartoons and everyday objects as fashion items,

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<sup>227</sup> LLano, “Gustavo y sus secuaces - La Joven Cuba.”

<sup>228</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2021), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/199JAJGgN2/>consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>229</sup> ” I loved them”

<sup>230</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2024), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19TWsW241A/>consulted on 01.05.2025.

artworks, or ironic commentaries. This oscillation between silence, commodification, and reinvention reflects broader struggles over how the past is remembered and mobilized in the present. In these practices, Soviet cartoons cease to function solely as propaganda relics; they are reimagined as wearable humor, artistic rebellion, moral reference, or ironic critique. The resulting cultural artifacts reveal not only how Cubans negotiate nostalgia in conditions of scarcity and globalization, but also how visual identity is reconstructed through playful, ambivalent, and commercialized appropriations of Soviet heritage. Ultimately, these narratives highlight the dual role of Soviet cartoons as both intimate cultural anchors and flexible symbols of Cuban creativity, bridging memory, identity, and market logics.

Contemporary Cuban cultural products that incorporate imagery from Soviet cartoons articulate identity narratives that oscillate between erasure, reclamation, and reinvention. Some projects emphasize silence, deliberately excluding Soviet symbols in favor of pre-revolutionary or U.S.-inspired aesthetics, thus aligning memory with capitalist aspirations and distancing identity from socialist legacies. Others, such as the Fresko and Chamakovish initiatives, actively reclaim Soviet cartoons and objects, transforming them into wearable designs or collectible items where humor and Cubanisms depoliticize the past while simultaneously invoking recognition and belonging. These practices reveal how commodified nostalgia functions both as playful commentary on scarcity and as subtle resistance to official memory frames. Artistic reinterpretations further inscribe Soviet imagery into postmodern and ironic registers, turning cartoons and political icons into sites of parody, critique, and aesthetic rebellion. Meanwhile, autobiographical and popular testimonies highlight cartoons as moral references, affective anchors, or vehicles of satire that capture everyday Cuban realities. Together, these cultural artifacts reframe Soviet cartoons as hybrid markers of Cuban identity: no longer confined to propaganda, they circulate as flexible symbols that negotiate nostalgia, creativity, and generational pride in a context shaped by scarcity, globalization, and shifting cultural hierarchies. This theme directly addresses the second specific research question: What identity narratives emerge from contemporary Cuban cultural products (e.g. clothing) that employ imagery from Soviet cartoons?

### **5.3 Nostalgia as a cultural narrative**

The last theme examines how nostalgia functions as a narrative framework through which Cubans articulate identity, memory, and belonging in relation to Soviet cartoons. It represents

both affective attachment and ideological ambivalence, where childhood memories coexist with critical reflections on dependency, loss, or rupture. The theme is characterized by emotional depth and generational layering: affectionate recollections of *muñequitos rusos* as childhood entertainment are intertwined with selective nostalgia, inherited memory, and transgenerational symbolic inheritance. Dominant codes such as Childhood memory, Childhood nostalgia, Generational identity, Shared childhood memory, Ambivalent nostalgia, Assimilation of the Soviet legacy, and Soviet cultural legacy highlight the centrality of childhood recollections and collective experiences. At the same time, unique codes such as Post-Soviet generational reference, diaspora connection, or race and identity appear less frequently but open valuable perspectives on diversity and identity negotiation. The properties of this theme lie in its ambivalence, its capacity to hold together emotional truth and ideological critique, and its emphasis on generational contrast. As one of the most dominant themes in the corpus, it directly addresses the third specific research question: *How do discourses around Soviet cartoons (muñequitos rusos) articulate the assimilation and rejection of Soviet heritage in the identity of post-Soviet Cuban generations?*

Nostalgia emerges as a central cultural narrative through which Cubans negotiate both affective attachments and critical distance toward the Soviet legacy. Nostalgia in Cuban memory discourse often appears as a cultural narrative where Soviet cartoons are recalled not as propaganda, but as emotional anchors of childhood. For instance, in Ind-21<sup>231</sup>, the author notes that “what brings us joy in childhood continues to move us as adults, regardless of aesthetic standards”, stressing that nostalgia is not tied to the artistic quality of Soviet cartoons but to the affective resonance of early life. A different perspective is offered by Ind-22<sup>232</sup>, where the Cuban hero *Elpidio Valdés* is described as “a refreshing balm” compared to Soviet cartoons, highlighting that Elpidio embodied national traits—humor, mischief, resilience—serving as a local counterpoint to the foreign symbolic universe of Russian animation. Nostalgia is also inherited, as shown in Ofi-10<sup>233</sup>, where the author recalls how “even those of us under thirty have

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<sup>231</sup> Lorenzo, “Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos.”

<sup>232</sup> Mata Z.(2015), ‘Elpidio Valdés no puede con Spiderman’, *14 y Medio*, [https://www.14ymedio.com/cultura/elpidio-valdes-puede-spiderman\\_1\\_1066193.html](https://www.14ymedio.com/cultura/elpidio-valdes-puede-spiderman_1_1066193.html), consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>233</sup> Barrera Jerez, L.(2018), ‘Cuba y Rusia: lo que no se puede borrar’, *Cuba Ahora*, <https://www.cubahora.cu/cultura/cuba-y-rusia-lo-que-no-se-puede-borrar>, consulted on 01.05.2025

assumed our parents' nostalgia" for Soyuzmultfilm animations and Soviet household artifacts, emphasizing the persistence of "everyday Sovietness" through objects and cartoons. Finally, the fragment Ind-23<sup>234</sup> provides a vivid recollection: a weekly ritual where children, neatly dressed and carrying a coin, walked in line to the cinema to watch Soviet cartoons, highlighting how this experience encoded community, anticipation, and sensory immersion.

Nostalgia for Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) also circulates beyond Cuba, shaping cultural production in Cuban diaspora contexts. In Ind-24<sup>235</sup>, the designer Alexander Pozo explains that projects like *Petits Habitants* inevitably carry "the imprint of the *muñequitos rusos*" because the generation that grew up with Czech, Polish, Hungarian, and especially Soviet animation "absorbed the language of that school almost involuntarily." This fragment highlights how Soviet animation persists not only as a childhood memory but as an artistic grammar that resurfaces in contemporary Cuban creative work abroad.

A more ambivalent account emerges in Ind-25<sup>236</sup>, catalogising the remnants of Soviet presence—cars, appliances, canned food, Orthodox churches—most of which have faded into decay, while cartoons are remembered as the most enduring symbol. The fragment in Ind-25 points out that even though these cartoons were once judged as "ugly, dull, and boring" compared to American counterparts, Cubans born in the 1970s now evoke them with nostalgia, earning the generational label "the generation of Bolek and Lolek." At the other extreme, nostalgia is actively contested in Ind-26<sup>237</sup>. The reference offers a catalog of Soviet legacies—from architecture to literature to animation—described as "atrocious" and "contrary to our aesthetic sensibility.", emphasizing how cartoons are remembered as part of a broader aesthetic imposition, grouped alongside brutalist buildings and socialist realist art.

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<sup>234</sup> Lorenzo, "Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos."

<sup>235</sup> Carrazana C. (2019), 'Petits Habitants', un proyecto dedicado a la pequeña mayoría', *Diario de Cuba*, [https://diariodecuba.com/cultura/1556921271\\_46153.html](https://diariodecuba.com/cultura/1556921271_46153.html), consulted on 01.05.2025

<sup>236</sup> Cino L.(2021), 'Las huellas de los rusos en Cuba', *Cubanet*, <https://www.cubanet.org/las-huellas-de-los-rusos-en-cuba/>, consulted on 01.05.2025.

<sup>237</sup> Diaz de Villegas N., (2022), 'Bolo, ¡quédate en Rusia!' *DIARIO DE CUBA*, [https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1642854567\\_36984.html](https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1642854567_36984.html), consulted on 01.05.2025

In the sphere of everyday memory, Facebook comments provide intimate testimony of how Soviet cartoons remain benchmarks of “true childhood.” In a desire for rebroadcast, one user in FB-19<sup>238</sup> laments the disappearance of these shows from Cuban screens. This comment idealizes past animated content while strongly criticizing contemporary children's media and over-broadcasting of less appreciated shows. It expresses a desire for the return of classic Soviet cartoons, linking them to meaningful childhood experiences. The contrast with today's “everything is cellphone” culture highlights a perceived loss of imaginative, collective childhood. The tone is nostalgic, tender, and subtly critical.

Nostalgia for Soviet cartoons emerges as a narrative lens through which Cubans articulate belonging, critique, and generational continuity. Far from being remembered merely as tools of propaganda, these animations are re-signified as emotional anchors of childhood, vehicles of artistic inheritance, and symbolic markers of identity. Yet nostalgia is not monolithic: while some voices frame Soviet cartoons as tender emblems of community, morality, and creative influence, others recall them as monotonous or imposed, embedding them within broader critiques of socialist aesthetics. In diaspora contexts, nostalgia is transformed into artistic language, shaping contemporary Cuban cultural production abroad, while in everyday discourse it becomes a way to contrast the perceived depth of past media with the oversaturation of today's digital culture. The resulting plurality—ranging from affectionate recollections to outright rejection—demonstrates how nostalgia functions as both cultural glue and site of contestation. In this sense, Soviet cartoons operate less as static relics of the Cold War than as flexible narrative resources through which Cubans continue to negotiate memory, identity, and the meanings of childhood across generations and geographies.

Discourses around Soviet cartoons reveal that the post-Soviet Cuban generation negotiates Soviet heritage through a spectrum of assimilation, ambivalence, and rejection. For many, cartoons are assimilated as affective anchors of childhood and intergenerational identity, remembered not for ideological content but for their emotional resonance, communal rituals, and sensory immersion. In this vein, nostalgia often operates reflexively: Cubans recall the characters, songs, and routines as fragments of a shared past that provide continuity and

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<sup>238</sup> Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television(2024), Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19TWsW241A/> consulted on 01.05.2025.

belonging without seeking to restore socialism. This assimilation also extends beyond the island, as diaspora artists rework the visual grammar of Soviet animation into contemporary creative practices, reaffirming its role as a transnational cultural archive.

At the same time, Soviet heritage is contested and rejected in other narratives. Some recall the cartoons as monotonous, ideologically intrusive, or aesthetically inferior to Western productions, grouping them with broader critiques of socialist cultural imposition. For these voices, nostalgia is resisted, and cartoons are remembered less as intimate emblems than as markers of cultural awkwardness or failed substitution. Everyday discourses further highlight this ambivalence: while certain Facebook testimonies defend the cartoons as “true childhood” or call for their rebroadcast, others dismiss them as symbols of boredom, censorship, or scarcity.

Together, these discourses show that the assimilation of Soviet heritage in Cuban identity is never total nor uniform. Instead, cartoons become flexible narrative resources: they may be cherished, parodied, re-appropriated, or rejected outright. Their endurance in Cuban cultural memory illustrates how the post-Soviet generation articulates identity through selective nostalgia, where Soviet cartoons can function simultaneously as sites of affection and as reminders of ideological imposition. In this negotiation, Soviet heritage is neither erased nor fully embraced, but re-signified in ways that reflect Cuba’s plural and contested post-Soviet identity.

#### **5.4 Final reflection and theoretical discussion**

The findings of this research confirm that nostalgia is not merely a sentimental recall of the past but a dynamic narrative and performative practice, in line with Antze and Lambek’s understanding of identity as constituted through remembering and forgetting. The recollections of Soviet cartoons reveal how Cubans actively reconfigure their relationship with the past by weaving together affective memory, humor, parody, and creative reappropriation. This confirms Boym’s (2001) notion of reflective nostalgia: rather than aiming to restore socialism, Cubans evoke fragments of childhood media as playful, ironic, or emotional anchors that mediate identity in the present.

The evidence also highlights Grünberg’s argument that nostalgia is intergenerational. Parents transmit memories of Soyuzmultfilm productions and Soviet objects to their children, who adopt these recollections as part of their cultural repertoire even without having experienced them

directly. The result is a mediated nostalgia that bridges generations, embedding Soviet cartoons in a Cuban narrative of shared routine and family memory. This inheritance resonates with Tammpuu, Juzefovičs and Seppel's insight into the digital circulation of affective testimonies: Facebook comments, memes, and online jokes operate as transversal testimonies where everyday Cubans enact identity beyond the state.

At the same time, the findings nuance Polese's claim that identity is not monopolized by state discourses but emerges in everyday practices. In Cuba, official media reinscribe Soviet cartoons as sentimental heritage and diplomatic continuity, while independent media reframe them through irony, critique, or deliberate omission. This discursive negotiation reflects positioning theory (Moghaddam & Harré), where actors adopt flexible stances vis-à-vis the Soviet legacy, oscillating between belonging, distance, and parody.

The Cuban case also engages directly with debates on commodified and aesthetic nostalgia (Berdahl; Wojtkowski & Jeziński; Kalinina & Menke). Projects such as Fresko or Chamakovish show how cartoons are recycled as fashion and design icons, where the ideological background is displaced by visual stylization. This practice illustrates a "nostalgia simulacrum" in which consumers often remain unaware of the original political context, remembering instead a stylized aura of the past. Here Ortiz's metaphor of the *ajiaco* and Duany's reading of Jorge Mañach's *choteo* provide conceptual anchors: Soviet legacies are absorbed, Cubanized, and often parodied, transformed into ironic symbols of both identity and difference.

Finally, when read through the Cuban literature on post-Soviet identity (Águila, Alpízar, Duany, Gronbeck-Tedesco), the findings show that Soviet cartoons serve as prisms of ambivalent belonging. They operate as both symbols of stability lost with the collapse of the USSR and as reminders of scarcity and censorship during the Special Period. In this sense, the cartoons exemplify the hybridity of Cuban identity in the post-Soviet era: a field negotiated between official memory, market logics, humor, and transnational diasporic circulation. Far from disappearing, the Soviet media archive persists as a cultural layer that Cubans continue to rework as part of their plural and contested identity.

Beyond the thematic analysis and theoretical discussion, several reflexive insights emerged during this research process. First, I interpret the recollection of Soviet cartoons in Cuba as an *apolitical* phenomenon. For many Cubans, remembering *muñequitos rusos* is less about ideology

than about affective childhood memories. However, this apolitical nostalgia coexists with the possibility of becoming politicized. As seen in the Russian case, nostalgia may be strategically mobilized as a political tool, raising the question of whether similar processes could emerge in Cuba.

Second, remembering Soviet cartoons must also be understood in the context of scarcity and limited consumer choice. Nostalgia may partly reflect the fact that these were often the *only* available media options. Yet, this lack of diversity was not necessarily traumatic in itself: much depended on the product and its reception. Although the Soviet model imposed monoconsumption and centralization, cartoons shown in Cuba did contain diversity in style, theme, and origin—from Czech and Polish productions like *Bolek y Lolek* to Soviet adaptations of global folktales.

Third, the Cuban reception of Soviet culture was never a passive transfer. Even when values and practices were imported, they were often “Cubanized” or resisted. This dynamic complicates the celebration of Soviet cartoons: why is it that Cubans nostalgically embrace these memories while other aspects of Soviet influence remain rejected?

Generational differences also invite reflection. What do younger Cubans, who know the phrase *muñequitos rusos* without having grown up with them, imagine about this phenomenon? How do parents who did watch them transmit those memories to their children? In this sense, nostalgia is less a desire to return to Soviet times than a longing to recover the innocence of childhood and the absence of economic concerns.

Finally, the research suggests that nostalgia in Cuba is marked by humor, irony, and sarcasm. These discursive strategies—deeply embedded in Cuban cultural identity—help transform painful or imposed legacies into objects of playful recollection. This raises important questions about the superficiality or disconnection of nostalgia from its original ideological context, and about the broader role of the Soviet legacy in Cuban identity: one that oscillates between assimilation and rejection, memory and forgetting.

Contemporary Cuban identity is articulated through nostalgic cultural memory in ways that oscillate between affection, irony, erasure, and critique, with Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) serving as one of the most visible prisms of this negotiation. What began as Cold War cultural

imports has been re-signified across generations, becoming intimate anchors of childhood, sources of humor and irony, and flexible artifacts of identity in post-Soviet Cuba.

The findings show that nostalgia for Soviet cartoons is not monolithic. In official media, cartoons are reframed as sentimental heritage, emphasizing domestic intimacy and cultural diplomacy while carefully avoiding ideological debate. Independent media, by contrast, mobilize nostalgia through parody, irony, or deliberate omission, transforming the cartoons into vehicles of cultural critique and subtle resistance. In digital spaces, particularly on Facebook, everyday Cubans express nostalgia with tenderness, humor, or resentment, situating cartoons within broader reflections on scarcity, censorship, and cultural loss. Together, these narratives demonstrate how memory circulates differently across discursive arenas, but consistently positions Soviet cartoons as generational markers.

The articulation of identity through this nostalgic memory is deeply ambivalent. On one hand, cartoons are remembered as moral references, affective rituals, and aesthetic influences, affirming belonging and continuity across generations and even into the diaspora. On the other, they are also recalled as monotonous, ideologically intrusive, or inferior to Western productions, embedding them within broader critiques of socialist cultural imposition. Nostalgia, therefore, functions simultaneously as cultural glue and as a site of contestation, reflecting the plurality of Cuban post-Soviet identity.

Theoretical engagement helps to frame this ambivalence. Following Boym (2001), Cuban nostalgia for Soviet cartoons can be read as reflective rather than restorative: it does not seek a return to socialism, but reworks fragments of the past as playful, ironic, or emotional anchors in the present. Kalinina and Menke's (2016) insights on aesthetic nostalgia are confirmed in the commodification of Soviet imagery in fashion and art projects, where ideological context is displaced by stylized visual memory. Positioning theory (Moghaddam & Harré) illuminates how Cubans adopt shifting stances toward this legacy—sometimes embracing, sometimes resisting, often parodying—demonstrating that identity emerges from everyday negotiations rather than state monopolies.

Reflexive insights also nuance the findings. Remembering Soviet cartoons in Cuba is often an *apolitical* phenomenon: nostalgia here is about affective childhood experiences more than ideological content. Yet this very apoliticism leaves room for politicization, should nostalgia be

instrumentalized by the state. Furthermore, recollection must be situated in the context of scarcity: these cartoons were often the only available cultural option, which shaped their affective resonance without necessarily implying trauma. Cubanization and resistance were always present, ensuring that imported values were never adopted uncritically. Generational transmission further complicates the picture: parents transmit their memories to children who never watched the cartoons, generating a mediated nostalgia that extends the cultural afterlife of Soviet media.

Ultimately, the Cuban case demonstrates that nostalgic cultural memory is not a static return to the past but an active resource in the construction of identity. Soviet cartoons are not remembered solely as propaganda or dismissed as relics; they are reimagined as humor, irony, fashion, artistic rebellion, or moral anchor. In doing so, they articulate a Cuban identity that is at once playful and critical, rooted in scarcity yet inventive, ambivalent yet cohesive. This negotiation between affection and critique, assimilation and rejection, demonstrates that the Soviet legacy in Cuba endures less as ideology than as cultural memory, continually re-signified in the everyday practices through which Cubans make sense of their past and present.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The nostalgic discourse around the *muñequitos rusos* in our analysis shows how nostalgia in Cuba is a performative cultural practice that aligns with Boym's notion of reflexive nostalgia and Antze and Lambek's view of memory as constitutive of identity. It also demonstrates how, for Cubans, memories of their childhood media are a tool for negotiating belonging in the present through humor and affective recollection.

At the same time, the findings nuance existing theories. In line with Grünberg and Tammpuu et al., the Cuban cases show how memories of Soviet cartoons circulate between generations through digital platforms, producing testimonies that escape state control and highlighting the capacity of ordinary Cubans to shape their identity.

In our research, our case study also addresses commodified nostalgia (Kalinina and Menke; Berdahl), where Soviet cartoons (*muñequitos rusos*) are reappropriated by fashion, and their ideological meanings are obviated and given way to stylized visual markers. Reading of Jorge Mañach's choteo captures this process: the Soviet legacy is Cubanized and parodied, illustrating identity as a hybrid field. The findings demonstrate that nostalgic discourse about *muñequitos rusos* goes beyond simple rejection or assimilation of the Soviet legacy in Cuba. In most cases, references to these cartoons are framed through humor, irony, and sarcasm, softening criticisms of their aesthetics or the ideological agendas following their broadcast on Cuban television. Even when criticism arises, playful jokes emphasize how childhood innocence and affective memory prevail in shaping the cultural impact of these cartoons. Humor and irony operate as mediators, transforming potential negativity into ambivalent memories while allowing Cubans to critique and appreciate these cultural imprints.

Finally, the findings highlight that the overlapping of multiple pasts shapes Cuban identity. Along with the Soviet presence, Cubans also negotiate the Spanish colonial legacy and US influence during the Republican period (1900–1958). This triple legacy underscores the specificity of the Cuban case: post-Soviet nostalgia interacts with deeper historical layers of colonial and neocolonial memory. In this sense, Soviet cartoons are playful cultural references and prisms through which Cubans articulate their position within overlapping trajectories of colonialism and cultural hybridization.

By focusing on the recurrent use of the term *muñequitos rusos*, the research has demonstrated how language also encodes cultural distance and affective affiliation. The colloquial reference of "Russian" instead of "Soviet" also illustrates how Cubans reappropriate foreign cultural artifacts

as part of their cultural fabric, softening their ideological connotations. Furthermore, the findings suggest that, while acknowledging the ideological instrumental undertones of the cartoons, for most Cubans, they became memorable sources of entertainment and cultural pillars of identity, remembered through humor and irony.

In this way, the role of the past in shaping the present emerges as ambivalent. This ambivalence reflects how nostalgia operates less as a dichotomy of assimilation versus rejection, and more as a space of negotiation where irony, sarcasm, and joking mitigate the weight of ideology.

Generational dynamics further nuance our understanding of the research questions. The evidence confirms that nostalgia is stronger among those who directly experienced the Soviet-Cuban alliance. However, it also shows the partial absence of younger voices, which we call the post-Soviet generation in our work. Although this post-Soviet generation also grew up watching these animated films and other vestiges of Soviet material culture, their narratives are less visible in digital spaces, suggesting that nostalgia circulates unevenly. This silence is accepted in our work as an analytically significant finding that indicates how memory is selectively transmitted and how some generational perspectives remain marginalized. The findings reveal how nostalgia is fragmented and transformed without new voices that rearticulate it in contemporary Cuba.

With our analysis completed, several arising concerns can be addressed in future research. First, a more comprehensive understanding of post-Soviet Cuban generational identity could be achieved through alternative methodological approaches, such as interviews, to capture better the voices that remain silenced in digital spaces. Second, a question arises on how Cuba's historical present should be characterized: post-Soviet, post-socialist, or even postmodern, since formally a socialist state, the findings suggest a cultural and generational condition that resembles post-socialist contexts, a conceptual question that merits further theoretical exploration in the Cuban case. Third, future research could also compare the Cuban case with other non-Soviet countries, yet USSR-aligned, examining whether similar nostalgic dynamics emerge where socialist media and material culture were imported. Fourth, the ex-Soviet diaspora in Cuba, whose identity-building and heritage preservation strategies remain largely unexplored in the literature, should be studied. Fifth, more specific studies could examine commodified post-Soviet nostalgia in the Cuban context and address the concept of *dissonant heritage* to see whether these nostalgic discourses are experienced as dissonant, as in other contexts where heritage is both remembered and contested. Finally, another promising direction would be to investigate transnational

collaborations with institutions that manage animation heritage, such as Studio Filmów Rysunkowych in Poland, the producer of *Bolek i Lolek*. These exchanges could strengthen the preservation of shared cultural memory, open up new commercialization opportunities, and simultaneously shed light on the specificity of the Cuban case within the global circulation of post-Soviet nostalgia.

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## Appendix I: Original fragments and translations

1. Ofi-01: <Files\\La demajagua 2020 Mi ventilador ruso - La Demajagua> - § 1 reference coded [1.83% Coverage]

Hurgué mentalmente en el baúl de otros recuerdos y llegaron la olla de presión INPUD, la lavadora Aurika, ¡Qué felicidad!, el reloj Raketa, el televisor Caribe, cuya pantalla pinté en tres tonalidades -rojo, amarillo y azul-, para disfrutar “a color” la puesta diaria de los muñequitos rusos ¡Deja que te coja!, La pastora y el deshollinador, Tío Estiopa, El cartero Fogón... Era el tiempo de la carne rusa, de los cursos de *идиома русо пор радио* (idioma ruso por radio), el florecimiento de los Krim 218, cuando los niños dejaron de llamarse Williams, Charles, Henry, para nombrarse Mijail, Igor, Serguéi, Raisa, Liudmila, Vladimir...

English version: *I rummaged mentally through the trunk of other memories and out came the INPUD pressure cooker, the Aurika washing machine, what happiness!, the Raketa watch, the Caribe television set, whose screen I painted in three shades—red, yellow, and blue—so I could enjoy “in color” the daily showing of the Russian cartoons Just You Wait!, The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep, Uncle Styopa, The Postman Fogón... It was the time of Russian meat, of the courses in idioma ruso por radio (Russian language on the radio), the flourishing of the Krim 218, when children stopped being called Williams, Charles, Henry, to be named Mikhail, Igor, Sergei, Raisa, Lyudmila, Vladimir...*

2. Ofi-02 4 ) <Files\\Radio Cubana 2023 Enrique Arredondo de Virutica al Tío de Paco – PORTAL DE LA RADIO CUBANA> - § 1 reference coded [1.90% Coverage]

Detrás de la Fachada, de cuyas frases se apropió la cultura popular cubana, que aún recuerda su “Atrevidoooo...”, “No puésee...”, “No, mentira, tú mestángañando...”, y cuando amenazó al nieto que si no se portaba bien, lo castigaría poniéndolo a ver los muñequitos rusos, por lo que fue reprendido; además de sus inolvidables “morcillas” (chistes improvisados tácitamente prohibidos, censura que logró burlar) con otros artistas de tan estelar elenco

English version: *Detrás de la Fachada*, from which Cuban popular culture appropriated many phrases—still remembered are its “Atrevidoooo...”, “No puésee...”, “No, mentira, you’re fooling me...”, and the moment when a grandfather threatened his grandson that if he didn’t behave, he would punish him by making him watch the Russian cartoons, for which he was scolded; in addition to its unforgettable *morcillas* (improvised jokes, tacitly forbidden but able to outwit censorship) shared with other artists of such a stellar cast

3. Ofi-03 6) 15) <Files\\Arte por la resistencia – Escambray> - § 1 reference coded [2.57% Coverage]

A pocos pasos, un televisor de antaño trata de imponer la pantalla sin señal al moderno Atec-Panda, que exhibe los muñequitos rusos que criaron a más de una generación. Metros más adelante, una máquina de moler tritura bombillos ahorradores para reciclar su energía, o lo que queda de ella.

English version: Just a few steps away, an old-fashioned television tries to impose its blank screen over the modern Atec-Panda, which plays the muñequitos rusos that raised more than one generation. A few meters further on, a grinding machine crushes energy-saving light bulbs to recycle their energy—or what remains of it.

4. Ofi-4 7) 16) <Files\Cuba Ahora 2014 Gentilicios a lo cubano> - § 2 references coded [1.32% Coverage]

Por mucho esfuerzo que alguien pudo haber hecho en Cuba en torno al nombre con qué llamar a los equipos fabricados en la extinta Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas, URSS o CCCP (sigla en ruso), nadie les decía soviéticos, sino rusos. Muy comunes hasta la década de los 90 del siglo XX: los muñequitos rusos (aunque fueran polacos como Lolek y Bolk), las lavadoras rusas, las batidoras rusas, los refrigeradores rusos, los ventiladores rusos...

English version: No matter how much effort someone in Cuba might have made to decide on a proper name for the equipment manufactured in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR or CCCP (its Russian acronym), nobody called them “Soviet,” but simply “Russian.” Very common until the 1990s were the muñequito ruso (even if they were Polish, like *Lolek y Bolek*), the Russian washing machines, the Russian blenders, the Russian refrigerators, the Russian fans...

5. Ofi-5 9) 34) <Files\Prensa latina 2024 Animación de cine en Días de la Cultura Espiritual Rusa en Cuba (+Fotos) - Noticias Prensa Latina> - § 1 reference coded [3.06% Coverage]

(el director de los estudios de cine Soyuzmultfilm Boris Mashkovtsev) Acerca de la historia de los “muñequitos rusos” en la nación caribeña –como eran llamados aquí los animados soviéticos en otra época-, destacó que, a pesar de existir una distancia tan larga entre ambos países, fue muy grato conocer que tuvieran tantos espectadores en Cuba.

English version: Regarding the history of the muñequito ruso in the Caribbean nation—as Soviet cartoons were once called here—he emphasized that, despite the long distance between both countries, it was very gratifying to know that they had so many viewers in Cuba.

6. Ofi-06 17) 35) Files\Tiempo 21 2020 Ana Ibis, la sala oscura, los personajes...el cine - Tiempo21> - § 1 reference coded [3.21% Coverage]

«Una pequeña anécdota, hace poco fuimos a una escuela y llevamos uno muñequitos rusos y los niños se quedaron así...!imágnate!; pero les gustó finalmente lo que vieron. Entonces lo que

hacemos es enseñarle como ha ido evolucionando la industria y que no podemos negar el pasado para entender el presente. Les vamos enseñando cómo comportarse en una sala de cine, la importancia y qué significan los colores en un audiovisual, los planos...y así vamos haciendo un trabajo educativo

English version: “A little anecdote: not long ago we went to a school and brought along some muñequitos rusos, and the children were like this... just imagine! But in the end, they liked what they saw. So what we do is teach them how the industry has evolved and that we cannot deny the past if we want to understand the present. We show them how to behave in a movie theater, the importance and meaning of colors in an audiovisual piece, the different shots... and in this way we carry out educational work.”

7. Ofi-07 11) <Files\Cuba si 2013 Chamakovish, una idea cubana de nostalgia y Muñequitos Rusos ~ Cuba Si> - § 7 references coded [15.19% Coverage]

¿Y cómo no habría de triunfar un stand cuyos protagonistas son los vilipendiados y ahora añorados Muñequitos Rusos? La idea del diseñador Darwin Fornés fue quizás la más original de todas...Efectivo neologismo que combina el cubanísimo "chamaco" (niño) con el patronímico ruso "kovish". El nombre mismo del proyecto propone un viaje sentimental a la niñez de varias generaciones.

Volk y Záyats (El lobo y la liebre), el perro Rex, la insufrible Orejitas a Cuadros, y Bólek y Lólek saltan de los viejos televisores Krimm a las camisetas y jabas artesanales que vende Chamakovic. "Me pareció que esa nostalgia podía funcionar, porque funcionó en mí. Es un fenómeno social y generacional, hay blogs, comunidades, íconos, hasta los huevos sorpresas tienen una línea dedicada a esos animados", contó el autor a Prensa Latina. Para Darwin la idea no es descabellada, y tampoco para el Taller Portocarrero, conscientes ambos de que la nostalgia vende. Y muy bien.

English version: And how could a stand whose protagonists are the once vilified and now longed-for muñequitos rusos not succeed? Designer Darwin Fornés's idea was perhaps the most original of all... An effective neologism that combines the very Cuban *chamaco* (child) with the Russian patronymic *-kovish*. The project's very name proposes a sentimental journey back to the childhood of several generations.

Volk and Záyats (the Wolf and the Hare), the dog Rex, the insufferable Little Square-Ears, and Bolek and Lolek leap from old Krim televisions onto the artisanal T-shirts and shopping bags sold by *Chamakovic*. “I thought that this nostalgia could work, because it worked in me. It's a social and generational phenomenon—there are blogs, communities, icons, even surprise eggs have a line dedicated to those cartoons,” the creator told *Prensa Latina*. For Darwin, the idea is far from absurd—and for the Taller Portocarrero as well, both aware that nostalgia sells. And very well.

8. Ofi-08 54) <Files\Cuba Ahora 2018 Cuba y Rusia~ lo que no se puede borrar (+Video) (+Fotos)> - § 1 reference coded [2.63% Coverage]

Realmente este fenómeno se potenció a partir del triunfo de la Revolución el 1 de enero de 1959 y la consolidación de las relaciones bilaterales. A partir de entonces, hombres y mujeres de ambos países estarían en constante vínculo y ello conllevó a la asunción de costumbres y tradiciones recíprocamente, la vinculación de ambos países en esferas como la educación, la economía y la ciencia y, por supuesto, se potenció la influencia de aquella cultura en el desarrollo y desempeño de las manifestaciones artísticas en Cuba. En este sentido, uno de los mejores ejemplos fueron los conocidos “muñequitos rusos”, saga de dibujos animados que calaron hondo en el imaginario infantil cubano durante más de treinta años. Entre ellos estaban “El antílope dorado” (Золотая Антилопа, Lev Atamanov, Soyuzmultfilm, 1954), “Plumita de oro” (Золотое Перышко, Renata Mirenkova, Soyuzmultfilm, 1960) o “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” (Рикки-Тикки-Тави, Alexandra Snezhko-Blotskaya, Soyuzmultfilm, 1965).

English version: This phenomenon truly gained strength after the triumph of the Revolution on January 1, 1959, and the consolidation of bilateral relations. From that moment on, men and women from both countries would remain in constant contact, which led to the mutual adoption of customs and traditions, the connection of both nations in areas such as education, economy, and science, and, of course, the growing influence of Soviet culture on the development and performance of artistic expression in Cuba. In this sense, one of the best examples was the well-known muñequitos rusos, a saga of animated cartoons that left a deep mark on the Cuban children’s imagination for more than thirty years. Among them were *The Golden Antelope* (Золотая Антилопа, Lev Atamanov, Soyuzmultfilm, 1954), *The Golden Feather* (Золотое Перышко, Renata Mirenkova, Soyuzmultfilm, 1960), and *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* (Рикки-Тикки-Тави, Alexandra Snezhko-Blotskaya, Soyuzmultfilm, 1965).

9. Ofi-09 30) <Files\La jiribilla 2021 Gibara~ where the magic happens – La Jiribilla> - § 4 references coded [8.55% Coverage]

Cuty había tenido la delicadeza de no colocar a Lenin en un baño, como la gran mayoría de sus personajes, pero seguía haciendo gala del mismo modus operandi gamberro, procaz, posmoderno naif y profundamente enraizado en el bad painting, que lo ha convertido en “nuestro pintor más temerario y desarmado”, en palabras de Rufo Caballero. Solo pensar en Rufo, el más crítico de nuestros críticos —curioso que Cuty no lo hubiera mencionado entre sus exégetas— me hizo ponerme intenso, y por un momento me vi con horror en la oscura taberna de los teóricos incomprendidos, acompañado por Arturo Sotto y Reinaldo Montero, emborrachándonos y lamentándonos por no haber sido lo suficientemente precisos para definir al maestro, mientras Bárbaro Marín y Néstor Jiménez se reían de nosotros. Ante esta imagen de bodegón surrealista decidí volver al camino fácil de los muñequitos rusos. En el cuento soviético la crueldad de la niña ponía la miel al alcance del oso para luego prohibirle comérsela, con la amenaza de que lo estaría vigilando, aunque su actitud tal vez solo era resultado de la ingenuidad o la ignorancia,

porque no hay nada que pueda gustar más a un oso, o a cualquier ser vivo —haciendo énfasis en cada una de las palabras por separado— que lo prohibido (aunque increíblemente esto nunca es tenido en cuenta por los que se dedican a prohibir)

English version: Cuty had had the delicacy not to place Lenin in a bathroom, as he did with most of his characters, but he continued to flaunt the same rowdy, bawdy, naïve postmodern modus operandi, deeply rooted in bad painting, which has made him “our most reckless and disarmed painter,” in the words of Rufo Caballero. Just thinking of Rufo—the most cryptic of our critics (curious that Cuty had not mentioned him among his exegetes)—made me grow intense, and for a moment I saw myself with horror in the dark tavern of the misunderstood theorists, accompanied by Arturo Sotto and Reinaldo Montero, getting drunk and lamenting that we had not been precise enough to define the master, while Bárbaro Marín and Néstor Jiménez laughed at us. Faced with this surreal still-life image, I decided to return to the easier path of the muñequitos rusos.

In the Soviet tale, the girl’s cruelty placed the honey within the bear’s reach only to forbid him from eating it, under the threat that she would be watching him. Yet perhaps her attitude was simply the result of naivety or ignorance—because there is nothing that a bear, or any living being (with emphasis on each word separately), likes more than what is forbidden (although, incredibly, this is never taken into account by those who dedicate themselves to forbidding).

10. Ofi-10 64 <Files\Cuba Ahora 2018 Cuba y Rusia~ lo que no se puede borrar (+Video) (+Fotos)> - § 1 reference coded [0.79% Coverage]

Muchos cubanos crecieron con los animados de Soyuzmultfilm, incluso, los que aún no llegamos a los treinta años, asumimos esas nostalgias de nuestros padres

English version: Many Cubans grew up with the cartoons from Soyuzmultfilm. Even those of us who have not yet reached thirty have inherited those nostalgias from our parents.

11. Ind-01 <Files\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [2.77% Coverage]

Otras perspectivas también son reales, la pasión no nos puede cegar. Los muñequitos rusos no tenían la misma factura visual que los creados en consorcios norteamericanos. Quizás no hacían derroche de los argumentos reestudiados para generar fascinación en diversos grupos etarios. Pero abordaban temáticas universales y les sobraba espacio para lecciones y moralejas. Al final entretenían, gracias a un básico sentido lúdico.

English version: Other perspectives are also real; passion cannot blind us. The muñequitos rusos did not have the same visual craftsmanship as those created by North American studios. Perhaps they did not indulge in reworked storylines designed to generate fascination across

different age groups. But they addressed universal themes and always had room for lessons and morals. In the end, they entertained, thanks to a basic sense of playfulness.

12. *Ind-02* <Files\\Periodico cubano 2025 Cuba y Rusia firman acuerdo para producir muñequitos> - § 1 reference coded [7.68% Coverage]

La noticia de la coproducción de animados desató una ola de reacciones irónicas en redes sociales, donde los cubanos propusieron títulos satíricos para futuros “muñequitos” adaptados a la cruda realidad nacional. Entre las ocurrencias destacaron “Elpidio Valdés contra rublo y Donaltrón”, “Fernanda y Chaburazka viajan a la Felton”, “Los músicos de RaúlBremen”, “Wasosky y Carburosky” y “La mipyme del tío Stiopa”, reflejando la escasez, los apagones y la crisis energética que golpean a la isla. Otros usuarios propusieron nombres como “El Capitán Apagón ataca de nuevo”, “La perestroika a oscuras”, “Mashenka y el Limón”, y “Las travesuras de la Feltonski”, haciendo alusión al colapso del sistema eléctrico cubano

English version: *The news of the animated coproduction unleashed a wave of ironic reactions on social media, where Cubans proposed satirical titles for future cartoons adapted to the harsh national reality. Among the witticisms were Elpidio Valdés versus Rublo and Donaltrón, Fernanda and Chaburazka travel to Felton, RaúlBremen’s Musicians, Wasosky and Carburosky, and Uncle Styopa’s MIPYME, reflecting the shortages, blackouts, and energy crisis hitting the island. Other users suggested names such as Captain Blackout Strikes Again, Perestroika in the Dark, Mashenka and the Lemon, and The Mischief of Feltonski, alluding to the collapse of Cuba’s electrical system.*

13. *Ind-03 5)* <Files\\Cibercuba 2015 Las 9 cosas que marcaron mi infancia en Cuba> - § 1 reference coded [4.61% Coverage]5

Muñequitos rusos: “Lolek y Bolek” o “Conejo me las pagarás” se transmitían todos los días, incluso los mismos capítulos. Hasta para un niño resultan raros los animados rusos, y es que simplemente somos culturas muy diferentes. Las emisiones de dibujos soviéticos fueron alternándose con producciones nacionales como “Elpidio Valdés”, “Guaso y Carburo” y “Chuncha”, entre otros. No faltaban los americanos “Tom y Jerry”, pero esos en menor medida, claro está.

English version: *Muñequitos rusos such as Lolek and Bolek or Nu, Pogodi! were broadcast every day, often repeating the same episodes. Even for a child, the muñequitos rusos felt strange—it’s simply that our cultures are very different. The screenings of Soviet animations alternated with national productions like Elpidio Valdés, Guaso y Carburo, and Chuncha, among others. The American Tom and Jerry was also present, though to a much lesser extent, of course.*

14. *Ind-04 8) 33)* <Files\\Periodico cubano 2018 Se expone en Cuba, la muestra colectiva~ “Más que rusos”> - § 1 reference coded [13.18% Coverage]

La exposición, tiene otro significado para Villalvilla Soto, “hizo diferente a mi generación. Fuimos niños permeados por el cine y los animados soviéticos, mientras que en el resto de América Latina se veía Hollywood. Crecimos afectados por la visión distinta de los países de Europa del Este, por demás la visión del socialismo real” señaló. En ésta cuarta ocasión, se puede observar en la muestra, las reinterpretaciones de los íconos y códigos soviéticos, que conectan con las vivencias de sus creadores, pues Alain Martínez, explicó que “esa influencia fue más que ruso, porque la asumimos parte de lo cubano y la mezclamos, como hacemos con todo. Durante 30 años, nos alimentamos con productos de la URSS, los muñequitos y películas que consumíamos eran soviéticos, y de pronto, esos nexos se rompen. Sobre ello también va mi obra: el impacto de la ruptura”, así como también refleja los sueños que se pensaba que jamás cumplirían, pero algo que los motivó, fue el primer cosmonauta cubano Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez

English version: The exhibition holds another meaning for Villalvilla Soto: “It made my generation different. We were children permeated by Soviet cinema and cartoons, while the rest of Latin America was watching Hollywood. We grew up shaped by the distinct vision of the Eastern European countries, moreover, the vision of real socialism,” he noted. On this fourth occasion, the show presents reinterpretations of Soviet icons and codices that connect with the experiences of their creators. As Alain Martínez explained, “that influence was more than Russian, because we embraced it as part of what is Cuban and we mixed it, as we do with everything. For 30 years, we lived on products from the USSR; the muñequito ruso and films we consumed were Soviet, and suddenly those ties were broken. My work also deals with that: the impact of the rupture.” It also reflects the dreams that were once thought impossible, but something that inspired them was Cuba’s first cosmonaut, Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez.

15. *Ind-05 10) 37)* <Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [2.17% Coverage]

Penetrábamos alegres la penumbra de la sala por tres presumibles razones. La primera conjugaba aquel ciclo vespertino con la liberación de las clases. La segunda nos convertía a hembras y varones en pequeños bufos de oscuridad. La tercera también estaba clarísima: los muñequitos rusos lucían inmensos en la pantalla cinematográfica

English version: We joyfully entered the dimness of the theater for three likely reasons. The first was that the afternoon screenings coincided with our release from classes. The second turned us, boys and girls alike, into little buffoons of the dark. The third was also crystal clear: the *muñequito ruso* looked immense on the movie screen

16. *Ind-06 11) 40)* <Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [4.12% Coverage]

Yo seguía, sigo sin concebir cómo al Conejo y al Lobo, a Los músicos de Bremen, al Cartero fogón, al Cocodrilo Guena y a tantos personajes infantiles, se les medían con la vara de tales tropiezos. No conozco a ningún cubano que aborrezca a Mickey Mouse, el Rey León o Shrek por ser oriundos de donde proviene el bloqueo. A fin de cuentas no todos eran rusos. Llegaban a las pantallas de la Isla animados húngaros, polacos, checoslovacos, rumanos y búlgaros. Sin embargo, esa constatación tal vez no resulte significativa a sus detractores. Puede que me respondan que “no es lo mismo pero es igual”, como la copla de una canción

English Version: I could never, and still cannot, understand how the Rabbit and the Wolf, the Musicians of Bremen, the Postman Fogón, Crocodile Gena, and so many other children’s characters were judged by the yardstick of such shortcomings. I don’t know a single Cuban who despises Mickey Mouse, The Lion King, or Shrek for originating in the same place as the blockade. After all, not all of them were Russian. Hungarian, Polish, Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Bulgarian cartoons also made their way onto the island’s screens. Nevertheless, that fact may not matter to their detractors. They might respond to me that “it’s not the same but it’s the same,” like the line from a song.

17. *Ind-07 12) 41)*<Files\\OnCuba 2022 Yuma~ mi no lugar de distancias y afectos - OnCubaNews> - § 1 reference coded [3.02% Coverage]

Para algunos la Yuma, el Yuma, hace mucho tiempo tiene una connotación casi mística, porque implica la aspiración de tener algo que no se tiene. Puedo recordar la leyenda de ir para la Yuma hace más de 30 años, cuando tenía la edad de mi hijo, y aún existían Muro de Berlín, carne en lata y muñequitos rusos. La atracción por el Norte revuelto y brutal ha sido tan constante en la historia social cubana, que hasta el mismo joven Martí se sintió tentado a establecer como parangón civilizatorio la sociedad estadounidense

English version:

For some, *la Yuma, el Yuma*, has long carried an almost mystical connotation, because it implies the aspiration to have something one does not possess. I can recall the legend of “going to la Yuma” more than 30 years ago, when I was my son’s age, and the Berlin Wall, canned meat, and the muñequitos rusos still existed. The attraction to the turbulent and brutal North has been so constant in Cuban social history that even the young Martí felt tempted to establish U.S. society as a civilizational benchmark.

18. *Ind-08 13) 42)* <Files\\Cubanet 2024 ¿Recuerdas estos animados soviéticos~> - § 1 reference coded [4.97% Coverage]

SAN LUIS POTOSÍ, México.- La avalancha de animados soviéticos y de otros países de Europa Oriental (principalmente Checoslovaquia y Hungría) marcó a toda una generación de cubanos que a tenido bien nombrarse “la generación de Bolek y Lolek.” Aunque actualmente han desaparecido de las pantallas cubanas, durante décadas los “muñequitos rusos” se transmitieron

en la televisión y dejaron para el imaginario cubano personajes populares como el tío Stiopa o aquel lobo con camiseta a rayas. A falta de otra oferta televisiva propia e inundados por la cercanía con los “bolos”, muchos cubanos nacidos en la década de los 60, 70, 80 crecieron viendo estas opciones animadas. Aquí te dejamos, en un gesto de nostalgia, algunos de esos animados, quizás los más populares

English version: SAN LUIS POTOSÍ, Mexico.—The avalanche of Soviet cartoons and others from Eastern European countries (mainly Czechoslovakia and Hungary) marked an entire generation of Cubans who have fittingly called themselves “the Bolek and Lolek generation.” Although they have now disappeared from Cuban screens, for decades the muñequitos rusos were broadcast on television and left the Cuban imagination with popular characters such as Uncle Styopa or that wolf in a striped shirt. In the absence of other domestic television offerings and flooded by the presence of the *bolos* (a colloquial term for Soviets), many Cubans born in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s grew up watching these animated options. Here we leave you, as a gesture of nostalgia, with some of those cartoons—perhaps the most popular ones.

19. *Ind-09* 14) 48) <Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [3.26% Coverage]

En complicidad con estos dibujos, escruté por primera vez el perfil de un enamorado. La negrura del cine y el retumbar del sonido disfrazaban cualquier vestigio de timidez. Las tandas de los jueves de primaria, quedarán para siempre en mis anaqueles de recuerdos con sonrisas. Muchos me tildarán de loca, pero si tuviera que salvar elementos de la niñez ante el diluvio del olvido, los muñequitos rusos navegarían a salvo en mi arca de Noé. Delante de mis nostalgias, se hunden las convenciones.

English version: In complicity with those cartoons, I first discerned the profile of someone in love. The darkness of the cinema and the thunder of the sound disguised any trace of shyness. The Thursday afternoon screenings in primary school will forever remain in the shelves of my memories with a smile. Many will call me crazy, but if I had to save elements of childhood from the flood of oblivion, the muñequitos rusos would sail safely in my Noah’s Ark. Before my nostalgias, conventions sink.

20. *Ind- 10* 15) 49) <Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [1.57% Coverage]

Habrá quien solo vea tinieblas en estos muñes, cuando en verdad ostentan un abanico de clarosucos. Habrá quien imagine al mismo pincel rellenando de día a El Antílope dorado, y esbozando de noche decenas de pancartas del bloque socialista.

English version: There will be those who see only darkness in these *muñes*—the muñequitos rusos—when in fact they display a whole spectrum of light and shadow. There will be those who

imagine the same brush painting *The Golden Antelope* by day, and sketching dozens of banners for the socialist bloc by night.

21. *Ind- 11 16) 20) <Files\\DiarioDeCuba 2024 ¿Acaso hay una colonización cultural mala y otra buena~ ~ DIARIO DE CUBA> - § 1 reference coded [2.33% Coverage]*

Al paso que vamos, solo falta la enseñanza del idioma ruso por nuestras emisoras de radio, así como el gradual incremento de las películas y los muñequitos rusos en nuestros canales de televisión. De esa manera estaríamos acercándonos a lo sucedido durante la etapa de soviétización que padeció Cuba durante los años 70 y 80 de la pasada centuria

English version: At the pace we are going, the only thing missing is the teaching of the Russian language on our radio stations, along with the gradual increase of films and muñequitos rusos on our television channels. In this way, we would be approaching what happened during the sovietization stage that Cuba experienced in the 1970s and 80s of the past century.

22. *Ind- 12 18) 51) <Files\\Cibercuba 2014 El paquete semanal encarna la mutación en la era digital de viejos modos de funcionamiento de la economía sumergida cubana> - § 1 reference coded [1.94% Coverage]*

En el océano del intercambio cultural cubano del presente cohabitan desde la discografía completa de Irakere y los Van Van, hasta la poesía de José Ángel Buesa, pasando por la filmografía de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, una selección de nueve horas de muñequitos rusos o la colección de la revista *Lunes de Revolución* que alguien se encargó de fotografiar página por página. Este panorama, más que implicar un reto para el sistema institucional de la cultura en Cuba,

English version: In today's ocean of Cuban cultural exchange, one finds everything from the complete discography of Irakere and Los Van Van, to the poetry of José Ángel Buesa, passing through the filmography of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, a nine-hour selection of muñequitos rusos, or the collection of the magazine *Lunes de Revolución* that someone took the trouble to photograph page by page. This panorama, rather than posing a challenge for Cuba's institutional cultural system...

23. *Ind- 13 10) <Files\\14 y Medio La Habana, capital de la añoranza> - § 2 references coded [4.66% Coverage]*

Pero no se trata de un pasado cualquiera. No. Porque, curiosamente, ninguno de estos entusiastas emprendedores privados muestra interés alguno en apelar a la estética socialista de aliento soviético que ocupó treinta años de la vida nacional cubana sin calar el espíritu nativo. No hay matrioskas, balalaikas ni personajes de los “muñequitos rusos” decorando vidrieras o interiores de estos negocios o adornando las piñatas y los salones privados dedicados a fiestas infantiles. Nada evoca la indestructible amistad cubano-soviética de una época bajo la cual

nacieron casi todos los miembros de ese proto-empresariado cubano que hoy prefiere revivir la prosperidad republicana de fuerte influencia yanqui y olvidar los duros años de dominio bolo en la Isla

English version: But this is not just any past. No. Because, curiously, none of these enthusiastic private entrepreneurs shows any interest in appealing to the socialist aesthetics of Soviet inspiration that occupied thirty years of Cuban national life without ever penetrating the native spirit. There are no matryoshkas, no balalaikas, nor characters from the muñequitos rusos decorating shop windows or interiors of these businesses, nor adorning piñatas and private halls dedicated to children's parties. Nothing evokes the indestructible Cuban-Soviet friendship of an era under which almost all the members of this proto-entrepreneurial class were born—today they prefer to revive the Republican prosperity strongly influenced by the Yankees and to forget the harsh years of *bolo* domination on the island.

24. Ind-14 5) <Files\\MarketingSolution 2017 Diseño a lo cubano, con nostalgia y choteo incluidos - EBM World> - § 1 reference coded [8.45% Coverage]

Mariela Hurtado (i) y Giselle Reygada (d), del proyecto Fresko En sus camisetas abundan los dibujos animados soviéticos, conocidos en Cuba como «muñequitos», y los electrodomésticos de los antiguos países socialistas europeos de los que se surtía la isla en aquellas décadas y que «forman parte de la idiosincrasia cubana». Fresko también incluye ropa para bebé con mensajes como «Aún vivo con mis padres», o grandes carteras con el letrero «Plan Jaba» (cubanismo para bolsa), una estrategia del Gobierno cubano para facilitar las compras de alimentos subsidiados a los trabajadores. «En Cuba hay muchos deseos de hacer, mucha gente inteligente, con creatividad, y el Estado ha desarrollado posibilidades legales (para los autónomos). Eso es algo que aprovechamos desde que decidimos hacer este proyecto», cuentan Reigada y Hurtado. Para las jóvenes diseñadoras no hay «mayor disfrute que la gente pase y aunque no compre, identifique el contenido» detrás de sus productos, disponibles en la tienda «Conga. Arte y diseño» en el barrio habanero de Miramar

English version: Mariela Hurtado (left) and Giselle Reygada (right), from the project *Fresko*. Their T-shirts are filled with Soviet cartoon characters, known in Cuba as muñequitos rusos, and with images of household appliances from the former socialist countries of Europe that supplied the island during those decades and that “form part of Cuban idiosyncrasy.” *Fresko* also includes baby clothes with messages such as “I still live with my parents,” or large handbags with the slogan “Plan Jaba” (a Cubanism meaning “bag”), a Cuban government strategy to facilitate the purchase of subsidized food for workers.

“In Cuba there is a great desire to create, many intelligent and creative people, and the State has developed legal opportunities (for the self-employed). That is something we have taken advantage of since we decided to start this project,” say Reygada and Hurtado. For the young designers, there is “no greater satisfaction than for people to pass by and, even if they don't buy

anything, to identify with the content” behind their products, which are available at the store *Conga. Arte y diseño* in Havana’s Miramar neighborhood.

25. Ind-15 4) Files\\OnCuba 2014 La generación especial - OnCubaNews> - § 1  
reference coded [0.93% Coverage]

Hay cosas de las que no se habla, que la memoria terca intenta eliminar por todos los medios o nos devuelve envueltas en un manto de añoranza. El Período Especial clasifica como una de esas “cosas”, porque aunque tiene nombre este no dice nada, ni fue un período superado ni fue tan especial. Más que edulcorarlo con ese eufemismo debemos llamarlo por su nombre: el Período Jodido.

No me extraña que en la familia tengamos tan pocas fotos de esos años, es como si a finales de los 80 hubieran ocurrido muchas cosas y luego durante la mayor parte de los noventa, solo algunos vergonzosos sucesos plasmados tímidamente en fotos. En las imágenes se ven padres y abuelos flacos como si Valeriano Weyler hubiera regresado al país, se ven rostros de media sonrisa y la inocencia de quien quizás no tiene total conciencia de lo que sucede. Aclaro que los cubanos no somos particularmente especiales, de lo contrario seríamos argentinos, pero sí vivimos en una circunstancia muy atípica.

En casa no teníamos cómo prepararnos para el Período Jodido, pero lo hicimos. Mi padre solía viajar al extranjero por razones de trabajo, luego de su penúltimo viaje sentó a la familia en la mesa y con toda solemnidad dijo que el Campo Socialista se iría abajo, ya había visto las señales en Bulgaria. Un año más tarde haría su último viaje, unos días antes de regresar de Angola una mina lo dejaría morir en un hospital de Luanda. La reacción de mi madre en los meses siguientes fue impulsiva pero acertada: comprar toda la comida y artículos básicos para el largo invierno económico que su esposo había previsto, gracias a eso sobrevivimos un poco mejor los 90. Cuando comenzó la escasez no quedó ni una onza de oro en casa, desaparecieron los juguetes y aprendí a divertirme con lo que tuviera a mano, percheros usados y bloques de construcción provocaron mi imaginación durante años. Algo sí permaneció, los muñequitos rusos nos acompañaron estoicamente y lo que les faltaba en belleza lo compensaban con la nostalgia que sentían nuestros padres respecto a la década anterior.

English version: There are things we don’t talk about, that stubborn memory tries to erase by all means or returns to us wrapped in a cloak of longing. The Special Period falls into one of those “things,” because although it has a name, it doesn’t say anything: it was neither a period we overcame nor was it very special. Rather than sugarcoating it with that euphemism, we should call it by its real name: the Screwed Period.

It doesn’t surprise me that in my family we have so few photos from those years. It’s as if at the end of the 1980s many things had happened, and then during most of the 1990s, only a few shameful events were timidly captured in pictures. In those images you see fathers and

grandfathers thin, as if Valeriano Weyler had returned to the country; you see faces with half-smiles and the innocence of those who perhaps had no full awareness of what was happening. Let me clarify: Cubans are not particularly special—otherwise we'd be Argentine—but we did live in a very atypical circumstance.

At home we had no way to prepare for the Screwed Period, but we did. My father used to travel abroad for work. After his second-to-last trip, he sat the family down at the table and, with all solemnity, said that the Socialist Bloc was going to collapse—he had already seen the signs in Bulgaria. A year later he would make his last trip; a few days before returning from Angola, a mine left him to die in a hospital in Luanda. My mother's reaction in the months that followed was impulsive but wise: she bought all the food and basic goods she could for the long economic winter her husband had foreseen. Thanks to that, we survived the 1990s a little better.

When the shortages began, there wasn't a single ounce of gold left at home, the toys disappeared, and I learned to entertain myself with whatever I had at hand. Old coat racks and building blocks fueled my imagination for years. One thing, however, remained: the muñequitos rusos accompanied us stoically, and what they lacked in beauty they made up for with the nostalgia our parents felt for the previous decade.

26. Ind-16 53) <Files\\La Joven Cuba 2023 Gustavo y sus secuaces - La Joven Cuba>  
- § 1 reference coded [4.20% Coverage]

Más por comodidad que por razones políticas, quienes estuvimos expuestos al fenómeno — escribo esto y tengo la imagen de un furtivo gigante comunista con un gabán rojo, que entreabre a la vista de los escolares inocentes para revelar sus vergüenzas—, llamamos muñequitos rusos a cuantos, provenientes de Europa del Este, exhibían la televisión y el cine cubanos en los setenta y ochenta, fueran polacos, alemanes, checos, húngaros o efectivamente soviéticos. Nadie que viviera esa época habrá olvidado cómo desde el espacio Los Muñe, o bien en la sala oscura precediendo a un largometraje cualquiera, nos saludaban (¿invadían?) esos cortometrajes con estética propia y lenguajes raros. Estaban los muñequitos a secas, esto es, la producción de la factoría Disney y similares, y los Otros. Los primeros estaban bien dibujados, eran ágiles y divertidos; los segundos, planos y soporífero

English version: More out of convenience than for political reasons, those of us who were exposed to the phenomenon—I write this and I picture a furtive communist giant in a red overcoat, slightly opening it before innocent schoolchildren to reveal its shame—called muñequitos rusos all those that, coming from Eastern Europe, Cuban television and cinema showed in the 1970s and 80s, whether they were Polish, German, Czech, Hungarian, or actually Soviet. No one who lived through that era will have forgotten how, from the program *Los Muñe* or in the dark theater before any feature film, those short films with their own aesthetic and strange languages would greet us (or invade us?).

There were the *muñequitos* plain and simple, meaning the output of Disney and similar studios, and then there were the Others. The first were well drawn, agile, and entertaining; the second, flat and soporific.

27. Ind-17 31) <Files\\La Joven Cuba 2023 Gustavo y sus secuaces - La Joven Cuba>  
- § 1 reference coded [1.81% Coverage]

Y aquí vale una nota personal: recuerdo que mis primeros jeans me los trajo mi padre (EPD) de la URSS cuando yo cursaba creo que octavo grado, allá por 1975 o 76; eran de campana (la moda por entonces) y la etiqueta trasera no revelaba ninguna marca conocida, sino una imagen del Lobo que persigue a una liebre incómodamente sexy. Con esos vaqueros iba a las fiestas los sábados por

English version: And here a personal note is worth adding: I remember that my first pair of jeans was brought to me by my father (RIP) from the USSR when I was in, I think, eighth grade, around 1975 or 76. They were bell-bottoms (the fashion at the time), and the back label did not reveal any known brand, but instead an image of the Wolf chasing an uncomfortably sexy hare. I would wear those jeans to parties on Saturdays...

28. Ind-18 32) <Files\\OnCuba 2019 ¿Vuelven los bolos~ - OnCubaNews> - § 1  
reference coded [5.28% Coverage]

¿Que tú crees mi herma? ¿Vuelven los bolos? Ha sido la gran pregunta de mi buen amigo. La pregunta hizo que me diera cuenta de cuánto queda aún en la mente de una parte de nuestra población sobre la relación entre Cuba y la que en su momento fue la Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas, en especial en aquellos que tienen mis años o un poquito más. Hay figuras icónicas, desde lógicamente la “carne rusa” hasta el más duradero y resistente de todos los ventiladores jamás conocido en nuestra Isla, el “Órbita”, con ese diseño minimalista que lo hacía tan fácil de limpiar y aquel motor tan potente que resistía el “jan” que los cubanos le daban, la lavadora Aurika que tanto ayudo a las amas de casa cubanas y los refrigeradores rusos, esos mismos que después desmantelamos masivamente allá por el 2004. La estrella de todos los objetos de consumo rusos es el Lada, devenido ahora en “auto de lujo” gracias al hecho de haber sobrevivido y a la “industria de piezas” y aditamentos de Lada, a cuya sombra ha florecido el comercio de piezas y partes directamente importadas desde Moscú y Miami, por ese segundo equipo de nuestro sistema de comercio exterior que son los cubanicios (cubanos+fenicios). Paradojas de la historia. Nunca me había puesto a pensar cuán raro es ir a Miami a comprar piezas de Lada; es como aquella primera experiencia con los “muñequitos rusos”

English version: What do you think, brother? Are the *bolos* coming back?” That was my good friend’s big question. The question made me realize how much still lingers in the minds of part of our population about the relationship between Cuba and what was once the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, especially among those my age or a little older. There are iconic figures— from, of course, “carne rusa” to the most durable and resistant fan ever known on our Island, the

“Órbita,” with its minimalist design that made it so easy to clean and that powerful motor that resisted the *jan* Cubans gave it; the Aurika washing machine that helped so many Cuban housewives; and the Russian refrigerators, the very ones we later dismantled en masse around 2004.

The star of all Russian consumer goods is the Lada, which has now become a “luxury car” thanks to the fact that it survived and to the “industry of Lada parts and accessories,” under whose shadow has flourished the trade in parts directly imported from Moscow and Miami, by that second team of our foreign trade system: the *cubanicos* (Cubans + Phoenicians). Paradoxes of history. I had never stopped to think how strange it is to go to Miami to buy Lada parts; it’s like that first experience with the muñequitos rusos.

29. Ind-19 57) <Files\Cibercuba 2019 500 años~ La Habana magullada> - § 1  
reference coded [2.03% Coverage]

Pastorita Núñez y Eusebio Leal hicieron esfuerzos desiguales por construir en medio de la desidia y el general deterioro que pronosticó Ramón Grau San Martín. Los repartos “Pastorita” fueron la última apuesta racional para construir en Cuba. El historiador ha hecho su trabajo ciclópeo con delicados equilibrios y hasta tuvo que tragar con esa catedral ortodoxa rusa, que cual embajada de la URSS-Rusia, son espadas clavadas a traición en las costillas de La Habana como para que nunca consigamos olvidar al tío Estiopa y a los muñequitos rusos que se estrellaron en sus intento de suplantar al jodedor Pájaro Loco y a la coqueta Betty Boop.

Y también nos quedará Alamar, ese reguero de edificios yugoslavos con techos coladores, escaleras empinadas y direcciones postales indescifrables para Hércules Poirot, que no alcanzó la virtud del plus trabajo; solo entendible para carteros experimentados en ese barrio hormigonado y de espaldas al mar.

Para el 500 cumpleaños, el partido comunista creó una comisión gubernamental que se ocupó de intentar reanimar La Habana por enésima vez, invitó a los Reyes de España como representación del pasado fundacional y a los compañeros Putin, Ortega, Morales y Maduro. El ruso simboliza el sueño de muchos burócratas tardocastrietas de renunciar al marxismo-leninismo de Afanasiev para vivir como multimillonarios. El trío restante son aliados residuales de la casta verde oliva que sigue pisoteando La Habana con la importación de dirigentes de la región oriental de la Isla y manteniendo en llega y pon insalubres a emigrantes del campo a la ciudad, custodiada por policías con perros, como aquellos guardias del *Apartheid*.

*English version:* Pastorita Núñez and Eusebio Leal made unequal efforts to build amid the neglect and general deterioration foreseen by Ramón Grau San Martín. The “Pastorita” housing developments were the last rational bet for construction in Cuba. The historian carried out his cyclopean work with delicate balances and even had to swallow that Russian Orthodox cathedral which, like an embassy of the USSR–Russia, stands as a sword treacherously stabbed into Havana’s ribs, as if to ensure that we never forget Uncle Styopa and the muñequitos rusos, who

crashed in their attempt to replace the mischievous Woody Woodpecker and the flirtatious Betty Boop.

And we will also be left with Alamar, that sprawl of Yugoslav buildings with leaky roofs, steep staircases, and postal addresses indecipherable even to Hercule Poirot—buildings that never achieved the virtue of “extra work”; understandable only to seasoned mailmen in that concrete neighborhood turned away from the sea.

For Havana’s 500th anniversary, the Communist Party created a governmental commission that once again tried to revive the city, inviting the Kings of Spain as a representation of the foundational past and comrades Putin, Ortega, Morales, and Maduro. The Russian symbolizes the dream of many late-Castrist bureaucrats of renouncing Afanasiev’s Marxism-Leninism in order to live like multimillionaires. The remaining trio are the residual allies of the olive-green caste that continues to trample Havana—importing leaders from the eastern region of the island and keeping rural-to-urban migrants penned in unhealthy *llega y pon* settlements, guarded by policemen with dogs, like the wardens of Apartheid.

30. Ind-20 58) <Files\\La Joven Cuba 2023 Gustavo y sus secuaces - La Joven Cuba>  
- § 1 reference coded [3.94% Coverage]

Como en todo, había mucha plúmbea hojarasca en los animados socialistas, mucha basura y guanajería didáctica, pero no poco que merece salvarse. Hoy abundan las páginas web y los coleccionistas al rescate, la mayoría por puro regodeo ante las armas del vencido, por auténtico disfrute los otros. No son pocos los textos al respecto que comienzan con frases al estilo de a pesar de ser producidos tras la Cortina de Hierro, estos cortometrajes animados no carecen en absoluto de calidad, inteligencia y sentido crítico, como si esto fuese algo para sorprenderse. Sin ignorar la austeridad del socialismo real, sus disparates y crímenes, es un hecho que aquellos países nos dejaron joyas culturales, avances científicos, hazañas deportivas y militares, etcétera, que la narrativa mainstream pretende ocultar o, cuando menos, difuminar.

English version: As with everything, there was plenty of leaden chaff in the socialist cartoons—lots of trash and didactic nonsense—but not a few things worth saving. Today, websites and collectors abound in their rescue, most out of sheer delight at the weapons of the defeated, others out of genuine enjoyment. Many texts on the subject begin with phrases along the lines of: *despite being produced behind the Iron Curtain, these animated shorts are by no means lacking in quality, intelligence, or critical sense*—as if this were something surprising. Without ignoring the austerity of real socialism, its absurdities and its crimes, the fact remains that those countries left us cultural treasures, scientific advances, sporting and military feats, and so on—things the mainstream narrative seeks to conceal or, at the very least, blur.

31. Ind-21 59) Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - §  
1 reference coded [1.41% Coverage]

La añoranza no entiende de estéticas. Aquello que nos despierta gozo cuando somos niños, es difícil que de adultos no nos cause conmoción. El culto a un limitado canon de exquisitez inhibe, por suerte, a la infancia.

English version: Longing knows nothing of aesthetics. That which brings us joy as children will almost inevitably move us as adults. The cult of a limited canon of exquisiteness, fortunately, does not restrain childhood.

32. Ind-22 61) <Files\\14ymedio 2015 Elpidio Valdés no puede con Spiderman> - § 1 reference coded [1.54% Coverage]

Comparado con los "muñequitos rusos" que debían consumir los infantes en la década de los 70 y 80, las aventuras de Elpidio Valdés eran un bálsamo refrescante. "Tienen mucho de humor cubano, de nuestra picardía y también de esa capacidad nacional para superar los obstáculos con una sonrisa", detalla Duarte. Pero en estos tiempos no basta con unas frases simpáticas y una canción de Silvio Rodríguez que acompañe al héroe

English version: Compared with the muñequitos rusos that children had to consume in the 1970s and 80s, the adventures of *Elpidio Valdés* were a refreshing balm. "They have a lot of Cuban humor, our mischievousness, and also that national capacity to overcome obstacles with a smile," Duarte explains. But nowadays a few witty phrases and a Silvio Rodríguez song to accompany the hero are not enough.

33. Ind-23 65) <Files\\El toque 2016 Nostalgia por muñequitos rusos ~ elTOQUE> - § 1 reference coded [1.70% Coverage]

El jueves traía cada semana la felicidad. Después de almuerzo, la maestra formaba en fila india una veintena de alumnos. Entonces nosotros -uniforme arreglado, peseta en mano- caminábamos con pasos de liebre, el trecho de la escuela primaria al cine del pueblo.

English version: Thursday brought happiness every week. After lunch, the teacher lined up about twenty students in single file. Then we—uniforms neat, a coin in hand—walked with hare-like steps the stretch from the primary school to the town cinema.

34. Ind-24 66) <Files\\DiarioDeCuba 2019 'Petits Habitants', un proyecto dedicado a la pequeña mayoría ~ DIARIO DE CUBA> - § 1 reference coded [4.06% Coverage]

Pozo destaca que una de las ideas del surgimiento de estos dibujos animados es ofrecer una alternativa a la gran oferta que hay en el mercado. "Además, tiene esa impronta de muñequitos rusos que vienen de las vivencias de uno", señala. "El haber sido una generación que creció consumiendo dibujos animados checoslovacos, polacos, húngaros pero, sobre todo rusos, nos llevó de manera casi involuntaria a absorber el lenguaje de dicha escuela", explican en su web

English version: Pozo highlights that one of the ideas behind the emergence of these cartoons is to offer an alternative to the vast supply already in the market. “In addition, it carries that imprint of muñequitos rusos that comes from our own experiences,” he points out. “Belonging to a generation that grew up consuming Czechoslovak, Polish, Hungarian, but above all Russian cartoons, almost involuntarily led us to absorb the language of that school,” they explain on their website.

35. Ind-25 18) <Files\Cubnet 2021 Las huellas de los rusos en Cuba> - § 1 reference coded [5.49% Coverage]

Lo que quedó en Cuba de los soviéticos, a pesar de las tres décadas que estuvimos unidos umbilicalmente, fue poco: los recuerdos de los toscos, pero resistentes aparatos rusos; las películas de guerra de Mosfilm; los automóviles Moskvitch, el vodka Stolichnaya, las latas de carne y col rellena; las hoy fantasmagóricas “zonas de los rusos” en Alamar y Cienfuegos; una catedral ortodoxa con contados feligreses en la Habana Vieja; y chatarra, mucha chatarra. Curiosamente, los dibujos animados fue lo más perdurable que quedó de los soviéticos. Los acostumbrados a Pluto, el Pájaro Loco y el Pato Donald los considerábamos feos, insulsos y aburridos. El comediante Enrique Arredondo fue castigado por decir que “los muñequitos rusos” eran el castigo adecuado para los niños majaderos. Pero los cubanos nacidos en los años setenta todavía los añoran y se refieren a ellos con nostalgia. No en vano a esos nostálgicos cincuentones o que están a punto de serlo los han bautizado como “la generación de Bolek y Lolek”

English version: What remained in Cuba from the Soviets, despite the three decades we were bound umbilically, was little: the memories of the rough but durable Russian appliances; Mosfilm war movies; Moskvitch cars; Stolichnaya vodka; canned meat and stuffed cabbage; the now ghostly “Russian zones” in Alamar and Cienfuegos; an Orthodox cathedral with only a handful of parishioners in Old Havana; and scrap metal—lots of scrap metal. Curiously, the animated cartoons were the most enduring legacy left by the Soviets. For those accustomed to Pluto, Woody Woodpecker, and Donald Duck, they seemed ugly, bland, and boring. Comedian Enrique Arredondo was punished for saying that the muñequitos rusos were the proper punishment for misbehaving children. Yet Cubans born in the 1970s still yearn for them and refer to them with nostalgia. Not for nothing have these nostalgic fifty-somethings—or those about to be—been dubbed “the Bolek and Lolek generation.”

36. Ind-26 19) <Files\DiarioDeCuba 2022 Bolo, ¡quédate en Rusia! ~ DIARIO DE CUBA> - § 1 reference coded [0.69% Coverage]

La barbaridad de la cúpula de oro del Capitolio; los cebollones de Nuestra Señora de Kazán en La Habana Vieja; el brutalismo de la embajada soviética en Miramar; los atroces muñequitos rusos, tan contrarios a nuestra sensibilidad estética. La Escuela Vocacional Lenin y el extranjerizante parque del mismo nombre. El realismo socialista en la literatura y el arte; la influencia uzbeka en el decorado interior de los palacios de gobierno. El payaso Popov, la perra Laica, la carne enlatada, el gulag, las botas rusas, los radios VEF...

English version: The monstrosity of the Capitol's golden dome; the onion domes of Our Lady of Kazan in Old Havana; the brutalism of the Soviet embassy in Miramar; the atrocious muñequitos rusos, so contrary to our aesthetic sensibility. The Lenin Vocational School and the foreignizing park of the same name. Socialist realism in literature and art; Uzbek influence in the interior décor of government palaces. The clown Popov, the dog Laika, canned meat, the gulag, Russian boots, VEF radios...

37. FB-01 71) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> - § 7 references coded [1.99% Coverage]

Los músicos de Bremen, un Animado musical excepcional, ¿quien no tarareó (sin saber ruso) las canciones? ¿quien no voceó como el gallo cuando llama al muchacho algo así como: Kochecoooó?, Eso también ya es parte de nuestra cultura.

English version: *The Musicians of Bremen*, an exceptional musical cartoon—who didn't hum the songs (without knowing Russian)? Who didn't shout like the rooster when he calls the boy with something like: *Kochecoooó*? That, too, is now part of our culture.

38. FB-02 72) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> - § 7 references coded [1.99% Coverage]

De niños no entendíamos ni ostia lo que decían puesto que eran en ruso, pero si lo disfrutamos muchísimo, sobre todo las canciones

English version: As kids, we didn't understand a damn thing they were saying since it was in Russian, but we still enjoyed it a lot—especially the songs.

39. FB-03 70) <Files\\Facebook comments CiberCuba Noticias · 5 de febrero del 2018> - § 1 reference coded [0.31% Coverage]

Mickey, Donald y todos los dibujos animados de Disney .... esa gente si no traiciona hasta hoy nuestros hijos los sigue viendo

English version: Mickey, Donald, and all the Disney cartoons... those guys have never let us down, even today our children are still watching them.

40. FB-04 74) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> - § 7 references coded [1.99% Coverage]

Esos muñes rusos deprimían, ojalá hubieran en aquel tiempo mas como jana Montana o Ulices 31

English version: Those *muñes rusos* were depressing; I wish back then there had been more shows like *Hannah Montana* or *Ulysses 31*.

41. FB-05 77) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras cubanas y memoria de la television 24 de abril del 2021> -

no siempre aveces metían cada clavos que parecían de palos y ni hablar de los chapuceros esos muñequitos que todavía los ponen

English version: Not always—sometimes they slipped in real junk that looked like wooden sticks, and let’s not even mention those "Pat & Mat" **muñequitos rusos** they still show.

42. FB-06 78) <Files\\Facebook comments AVENTURAS CUBANAS Y MEMORIAS DE LA TELEVISION 17 DE AGOSTO DEL 2021> - § 4 references coded [2.67% Coverage]

Los padres nuestros no soportaban los muñequitos rusos pero los niños si los veíamos. La muestra es que nos acordamos de casi todos

English version: Our parents couldn’t stand the **muñequitos rusos**, but we children did watch them. Proof of that is that we remember almost all of them.

43. FB-07 80) <Files\\Facebook comments AVENTURAS CUBANAS Y MEMORIAS DE LA TELEVISION 17 DE AGOSTO DEL 2021> - § 4 references coded [2.67% Coverage]

En esa época casi no teníamos opciones si se te pasaba la hora de los muñe ya no había más nada hasta el otro día.

English version: At that time, we hardly had any options—if you missed the hour of the *muñe*, there was nothing else until the next day.

44. FB-08 81) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television 2 de octubre del 2021> - § 4 references coded [2.57% Coverage]

El problema es que ya la televisión la dirigen personas de otra generación y ellos resuelven con las tecnologías y muchos celulares muñecos que parecen robot nada de imaginación.nada el facilismo

English version: The problem is that television is now run by people from another generation, and they make do with technology and lots of cellphones—cartoons that look like robots, with no imagination at all. Nothing but easy shortcuts.

45. FB-09 83) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> - § 5 references coded [0.58% Coverage]

Claro eran los únicos que te dejaron ver, los de Disney eran pecado, resagos del pasado o burgueses. Creo que lo recuerdas es tu infancia no la calidad de lo que veías

English version: Of course, they were the only ones they let you watch. Disney was a sin, remnants of the past, or bourgeois. I think what you remember is your childhood, not the quality of what you watched.

46. FB-10 84) <Files\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> - § 5 references coded [0.58% Coverage]

No había otra opción... Te gustaban o te gustaban

English version: There was no other option... You liked them or you liked them.

47. FB-11 85) <Files\Facebook comments Aventura cubana y memoria de la television 26 de agosto del 2022> -

Lo único que me gustaba eran las latas de carne rusa

English version: The only thing I liked was the cans of Russian meat.

48. FB-12 86) <Files\Facebook comments AVENTURAS CUBANAS Y MEMORIAS DE LA TELEVISION 17 DE AGOSTO DEL 2021> - § 6 references coded [6.23% Coverage]

pero si no había más naaaa jjj.o jugar con los chikillos.y a kien no le encataba comer o almorzar viendo el tv?

English version: But there was nothing else, hahaha... or playing with the kids. And who didn't love eating lunch or dinner while watching TV?

49. FB-13 89) <Files\Facebook comments AVENTURAS CUBANAS Y MEMORIAS DE LA TELEVISION 17 DE AGOSTO DEL 2021> -

Lo de Enrique arredondo si fue verdad pk yo si lo vi. En Detrás de la fachada. Y por eso lo censuraron también jjj.no es menos cierto k habían unos muñecos rusos k no había kien de los pasara. Pero eso cambió cuando empezaron hacer dibujos animados al estilo Disney.y los habían muy lindo como el pato Dinald. Mike mouose.; a nooo.me fui de frecuencia; me salio lo de Gusano;jj.el antilope dorado.la Primavera hija del Sol.Deja k t coja.( suena raro he ?) Y muchos.pero coñoos los de los finales de los 70 eran un purgante

English version: What happened with Enrique Arredondo was true because I saw it myself, in *Detrás de la Fachada*. And that's why they censored him too, hahaha. It's also true that there were some muñequitos rusos that nobody could get through. But that changed when they started

making cartoons in the Disney style. And there were some really nice ones, like Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse... ah nooo, I got carried away, that sounded like a "gusano" slip, haha. "Zolotaja antilopa", "Daughter of the Sun", "Nu, pogodi!"(sounds strange, right?), and many others. But damn, those from the late 70s were pure punishment.

50. FB-14 90) <Files\\Facebook comments AVENTURAS CUBANAS Y MEMORIAS DE LA TELEVISION 17 DE AGOSTO DEL 2021> -

El problema no eran los muñes, sino que te lo repetían el mismo cinco veces a la semana y eran media hora nada más al día, quiero decir no había mucha variedad, mejor dicho no les daba la cuenta. Por eso uno odiaba los mismos muñe. Yo en particular no quiero saber si el gato pudo conseguir la leche para Maya

English version: The problem wasn't the *muñes*, but that they repeated the same one five times a week, and it was only half an hour a day. I mean, there wasn't much variety—in other words, they just didn't have enough. That's why people ended up hating the same *muñe*. I, for one, don't even want to know if the cat ever managed to get the milk for Maya.

51. FB-15 91) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras Cubanas y memorias de la television 6 de febrero del 2024> - § 1 reference coded [0.23% Coverage]

Comunismo en venas! Los muñequitos Rusos q por poco tiran a Enrique Arredondo a Villa Marista! Yo los recuerdo, pero , nos perdimos los otros, los del mundo libre, q no nos dejaron ver, por la estupidez de una Dictadura!

English version: Communism in our veins! The muñequitos rusos that almost got Enrique Arredondo thrown into Villa Marista! I remember them, but we missed out on the others, the ones from the free world, the ones they didn't let us see because of the stupidity of a Dictatorship!

52. FB-16 93) <Files\\Facebook comments CiberCuba Noticias · 5 de febrero del 2018> -

Créeme ?? Que me da tremenda risas algunos de los comentarios absurdo de dichas personas ..... Muchos de nosotros oh mejor dicho loque tuvimos el privilegio de haber nacido en esa época. Tenemos que darle gracia a ésa revolución como tanto a fidel y esto no se trata de comunismo, Como fuimos criados por nuestros padres mediante ese régimen castrista como muchos ahora llaman. Y eso trajo como consecuencia de haber sido bien educado, respetuoso, humilde, noble y dentro de esa burbuja ..... Ganar no el cariño de toda persona dentro y fuera de Cuba, No miren lo malo solamente sean sinceros honestos en el mundo enteró que yo sepa nunca a habido ni existido un presidente bueno. Ni mucho menos con la capacidad de esa misma dictadura que muchos llaman de haber sido forjado mas para bien que para mal !!!!!!!!!!!!! Que muchos no quieren reconocer entré comillas ni dar sus brazos torcer. De lo malo todo el mundo

se acuerda por que no tienen el valor de pararse y desir con dignidad "Si" habían muchas cosas mala que no estaban al alcancé de nosotros o de nuestros padres pero en comparación habían mas cosas buena que mala, En la vida todo no es lo material como pobre tú te acercas asia mi y me puedes dar un buen consejo y sano yo te voy a escuchar. Me da la mano cuando yo mas lo necesite esa acción siempre van a estar grabadas en mi corazón, Y todo eso sea perdido no culpemos mas al régimen si en este país un millonario te ve tirado en una acera o uno de nosotros mismo para no llevarlo muy lejos si te ve se hace el que noté vio !!!!!!! Y si andá en carro sube la ventanilla y si te tiene que pasar por arriba lo hace, No sean mas hipócritas ni se hagan mas los americanos y que si me dieron la ciudadanía usted son cubano quieran o no quieran !!!!!!! Y reconozcan sus raíces y de donde vinieron aqui cuando te vallan a deportar no van a creer en ti ..... Tú eres un inmigrante mas no se engañen mas nadie quiere morir en este país todos o la mayoría de nosotros. Quieren que nos entierren en Cuba juntos con lo nuestro y por que si aqui te pueden enterrar y tú espíritu puede pedir trasladó o visa para allá, Lo malo es que te pongas fatal y éste de presidente fidel sea en el infierno o no por que a la verdad ni nosotros mismo sabemos en el lugar que Díos nova a poner ..... Porqué ningunos hemos sidos santos.

English version: Believe me, some of the absurd comments people make really make me laugh... Many of us—or rather, those of us who had the privilege of being born in that era—have to give thanks to that Revolution, and to Fidel as well. This isn't about communism. It's about how we were raised by our parents under that so-called Castro regime, and as many now call it, a dictatorship. But the consequence of that upbringing was that we grew up well educated, respectful, humble, noble—and within that “bubble” we earned the affection of people both inside and outside of Cuba. Don't look only at the bad; be honest. As far as I know, there has never been, anywhere in the world, a “good” president, let alone one with the capacity of that same dictatorship which, many argue, shaped us more for good than for bad! Many don't want to recognize that, even in quotation marks, or admit it.

Everyone remembers the bad, because they don't have the courage to stand up and say with dignity: “Yes, there were many bad things, things that were not within our reach or our parents' reach—but in comparison, there were more good things than bad.” In life, it's not all about material things. As a poor man, if you come to me and give me good and honest advice, I will listen to you. If you give me a hand when I need it most, that action will always stay in my heart. All of that has been lost. Let's not keep blaming the regime. Because here, in this country, if a millionaire sees you lying on the sidewalk—or even one of us, to not go too far—if they see you, they pretend not to. And if they're in their car, they'll roll up the window, and if they have to run you over, they will. Don't be hypocrites, don't act like you're Americans now just because they gave you citizenship. You are Cuban, whether you like it or not! Recognize your roots and where you came from. Because here, when they go to deport you, they won't care about your story. You are just another immigrant. Don't fool yourselves. Nobody wants to die in this country. All—or most—of us want to be buried in Cuba, with our own.

Because if they bury you here, and your spirit wants to ask for a transfer or a visa to go there... The sad part is, what if you end up in a bad place and Fidel is still “president,” whether in hell or not, because honestly, we ourselves don’t know where God will place us. After all, none of us have been saints.

FB-17 102) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras cubanas y memorias de la television 27 de octubre del 2021> - § 1 reference coded [0.87% Coverage]

Me encantaban los muñe rusos!Algunos los criticaban o se burlaban,pero todos tenían alguna enseñanza, siempre realzando valores como la humildad,la amistad,el amor a la familia y a amigos...Me encantaban!!!

English version: I loved the *muñe rusos*! Some people criticized them or made fun of them, but they all had some kind of teaching, always highlighting values such as humility, friendship, love for family and friends... I really loved them!!!

FB-18 103) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras Cubanas y memorias de la television 6 de febrero del 2024> - § 2 references coded [0.67% Coverage]

YO, CON MUCHO ORGULLO LO DIGO QUE LINDA INFANCIA TUVE NO ME PERDÍA LOS MUÑEQUITOS RUSO , TÍO ESTIOPA YA NO ES MILICIANO,EN UN GRUPO DE SALSA ESTA TOCANDO EL PIANO,EL DESHOLLINADOR QUE EN CHIMENEAS TRABAJABA AHORA ESTÁ EN ETECSA ALLI LE DAN SU JABA.AL OSO MICHA LO VIERON POR LA ESQUINA,ME DIJO UNA CHIMOSA VENDIENDO GASOLINA EL LOBO Y LA LIEBRE YA.CASI SON MILLONARIOS,ESTÁN ADMINISTRANDO UN MERCADO AGROPECUARIO

English version: I say it with great pride: what a beautiful childhood I had—I never missed the muñequitos rusos. Uncle Styopa is no longer a militiaman, he’s now in a salsa band playing the piano. The Chimney Sweep, who once worked in chimneys, is now at ETECSA, where they give him his *jaba*. They saw Misha the Bear on the corner—so a gossip told me—selling gasoline. The Wolf and the Hare are now almost millionaires, running an agricultural market.

FB-19 104) <Files\\Facebook comments Aventuras Cubanas y memorias de la television 6 de febrero del 2024> -

Eso si eran muñes no lo que ponen ahora y tantas cosas que trasmiten dos y tres veces después de ser vistas no se porque esos muñecos infantiles tan bonitos no los vuelven a poner, en ese tiempo tuvimos infancia ,ahora todo es celular a mi me gustaban mucho, bonitos recuerdos

English version: Those really were *muñes*, not like what they show now, and so many things that they broadcast two or three times after already being seen. I don’t know why they don’t

bring back those beautiful children’s cartoons. Back then, we had a real childhood—now everything is cellphones. I liked them a lot, such beautiful memories.

## Appendix II: Links to the original analyzed sources.

### Official Cuban press outlet

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**Application Details**

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application  Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application

**Applicant’s name:** Isis Adriana Aguirre Espinosa

**Project Title:** Post Soviet Cuban Generations and Their nostalgia for Soviet Cartoons

**Ethics Application Number:** PGT/SPS/2025/147/IMCEERES

**Application Status:** Fully Approved

Date of Review: 05/06/2025

Start Date of Approval 05/06/2025 End Date of Approval 30/09/2025

**NB: Only if the applicant has been given approval can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.**

**Recommendations** (where changes are required)

Where changes are required by reviewers all applicants must respond in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and provide this as the Resubmission Document to explain the changes you have made to the application as well as amending the documents. **Changes to the application form or supporting documents should be highlighted either in block highlight or in red coloured text to assist the reviewers.**

All resubmitted application documents should then be provided.

**Approval Subject to Amendments** means that the applicant can proceed with data collection with effect from the date of approval, but amendments must be fulfilled.

**Amendments Subject to SEF** should be submitted to ethics administrator.

**If your application is rejected** a new application must be submitted to the ethics administrator. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document provided as part of the new application. A new reference number will be generated.

REVIEWER MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

REVIEWER MINOR RECOMMENDATIONS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

ADDITIONAL REVIEWER COMMENTS	APPLICANT RESPONSE

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