

Life as a Reluctant Immigrant: An Autoethnographic Inquiry

by

Dionel Cotanda

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Communication
College of Arts and Letters
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Arthur P. Bochner, Ph. D.
Carolyn Ellis, Ph. D.
Eric Eisenberg, Ph. D.
Madeline Cámara, Ph. D.

Date of Approval:
July 22, 2019

Keywords: autoethnography, displacement, exile, identity, memory, narrative, survivor, ambiguous loss, unfulfilled dreams.

Copyright ©2019, Dionel Cotanda

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Throughout this dissertation I give thanks to many of my professors and fellow students whose knowledge and support helped me in the process of writing it. Now I want to dedicate this dissertation to the members of my committee and my family for the continued and unwavering support they provided during this long process.

My mentor, teacher, and friend Dr. Arthur P. Bochner rekindled my passion for learning, never doubted I would finish, and stood by my side every step of the way. Dr. Carolyn Ellis gave me permission and encouragement to bring my emotions forward using autoethnography as a method. Dr. Eric Eisenberg exposed me to issues of identity and displacement and encouraged my desire to pursue infinity in all directions. Dr. Madeline Cámara not only provided support for my endeavor, but also insights on Cuban culture and literature.

I also want to include my maternal grandfather, father, and mother who left Cuba to be with me; my wife Marina who has been an integral part of my life for sixty years; our daughters Ileana, María, and Lourdes who brought a light of hope to our life as exiles; our granddaughters Alexis and Sarah whose love and admiration we cherish; and our sons-in-law Amador and Sixto who play an important role in our lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Introduction.....	1
Cuban Consciousness.....	2
Exile	3
Chapter One: Life in Cuba.....	7
My Early Memories	7
Rise of Castro.....	10
La Revolución.....	12
Pledge of Allegiance.....	17
Lust at First Sight.....	20
Bearing Witness	24
A coupe d'état to Democracy	28
Departure.....	40
Chapter Two: Life Outside of Cuba	43
Arrival.....	43
An Interlude: An Unrealized Future	44
The Wedding.....	45
The Fiasco.....	46
Hope.....	48
Training to Help Bring Democracy Back	50
Kennedy's Sons	52
A Promise Made	53
An Interlude: A Reflection.....	55
Training Ends: A Request to Fight Communism.....	56
The Reluctant Immigrant	58
A Puzzling Question	59
The Entrepreneur	61
Chapter Three: Back to School	64
The Making of a Bostrom Young Scholar.....	67
The Presentation.....	69
Rhetorical Artifacts: Method, Purposes.....	70
Cuba, Castro, Exile	70
Castro: Rhetoric of the Actual–The Present	72
Cuban Exiles: Rhetoric of the Possible – The Future	81

Conclusion	86
Chapter Four: Identity, Displacement and memory	90
Chapter Five: ¡Déjame ir! “Let me go”: Father’s Death, Lingering Memories.....	97
An Epilogue	116
Chapter Six: Remembering, Forgetting, Forgiving: On Losing Mother	119
Chapter Seven: A Reluctant Immigrant.....	137
A Meaningful Life	140
An Ambiguous Loss: An exile’s memory work	141
Legacy.....	146
Epilogue: My Unfulfilled Dream.....	149
References.....	152
Appendix A: Methodological Research Process for Dissertation.....	163
Table of Recordings	165
Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire	166

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I draw on memories inspired and heightened by compassionate interviews in order to produce a unifying narrative of interactions with family and friends prior to and following my exile from Cuba in 1960. I use autoethnography and narrative inquiry to understand how I made the decision to leave Cuba and the life I have lived in exile for almost sixty years. My dissertation focuses on what it means to live as a reluctant immigrant and how historically constituted power relations define the identity of many Cuban exiles. I discuss and contrast the politics of passion and the politics of affection. The politics of affection undermine the goals of the politics of passion; the moral imperative of *what ought to be* is not achieved and becomes an antecedent of the necessity to exile. The story I tell draws attention to memory, identity, displacement, the experience of ambiguous loss, the sadness of unfulfilled dreams of return, and the decision to live in exile as a survivor not a victim regardless of my disenchantment and resistance to the Castro Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

*A literature born of exile is a literature that by force
has to rely on memory and imagination more than any
other since the cultural reality of an exile writer is no
longer available to fuel his or her creativity*

(Alvarez Borland 1998, p. 157). ¹

In this dissertation I will attempt to understand the experiences leading to and following my departure from Cuba. I want to make sense of the events leading to my decision to leave Cuba and how that decision shaped my life, especially family relationships and my conception of what life in exile would be. I will use autoethnography and narrative as a form of inquiry (Bochner 1997, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2017; Bochner & Riggs 2014; Ellis 2004, 2009; Ellis & Bochner 1992; Richardson, 1994). I draw on memory to relive my interactions with my mother, father, wife, and brother together with my experiences before my arrival to the U.S. I use autoethnography and narrative not only to make sense of my experiences then, but also now as well as my fears and expectations for the future. I want my children and grandchildren to know how I became a *reluctant immigrant* (Grenier & Pérez, 2003, p. 16)² and how that may have affected my relationship with them. I narrate my academic experiences to illustrate how they provided the opportunity to reflect on my experiences on ways I was not able

¹ In this dissertation I conduct the literature review through direct references and foot notes.

² Greiner & Pérez also argue that during the 1800's many emigrants from the island of Cuba arrived in the U.S. as "reluctant immigrants" due to the autocratic nature of Spanish rule and defined themselves as exiles. Felix Varela is mentioned as arriving in 1823; Jose Marti, in 1880 (pp. 16-17).

to do before.

I left Cuba to maintain my freedom to dissent without fear of retaliation. At the time I left I felt powerless to exercise any other option that offered a viable future and made sense under the Castro regime. Hence, my reason to leave and stay away from Cuba is political.

Amaro and Portes (1972) claim the Cuban exiles' reasons for leaving changed following the Castro revolution and lists them as "those who wait" to "those who escape" to "those who searched." Pedraza (1998) adds two more: "those who hope" and "those who despair." Perez (2013) claims Cubans originally left for political reasons and, beginning with the 1980 Mariel boatlift, left mostly for economic reasons (p. 597). To Gracia, Bosch, and Borland (2008) these waves of Cubans arriving in the United States for different reasons reproduced a microcosm of Cuban society (p. xii). I left for political reason. I am one of the ones who escaped, searched, hope, and despair.

Cuban Consciousness

My experiences are both unique to me and general to a large group of Cuban exiles. They represent a collective Cuban unconsciousness influenced by historical tendencies of *exceptionalism, diversity, and secularism*—major historical tendencies I cannot escape (Grenier & Pérez, 2003, p. 16).

The three major historical tendencies, *exceptionalism, diversity, and secularism*, that are embedded in Cuban culture, shed light on how we Cubans define ourselves as exiles, that is, as *reluctant immigrants* (Grenier & Pérez, 2003, p. 16). *Exceptionalism* is a shared perception that Cubans' national experience is different from that of any other people. For Cubans, this "sense of uniqueness is elevated to the point where it is a defining national characteristic" (p. 30). *Diversity* emerges from the contribution of many "other cultures to the intricacies of the Cuban

culture mostly as the result of migration to the island during the first half of the twentieth century. . . [and] the pervasive influence of U.S. culture” (p. 40). *Secularism* and the absence of fatalism, values honed from a-centuries-old commercial port culture, lead us to believe that we can control our destiny. Our lives are in our own hands (p. 42). These three historical tendencies influence the lives of Cubans inside and outside the island nation, Cuba and its diaspora. They influence who we are and, who I am. I am a person who is accountable and responsible for the choices I made.

Exceptionalism and secularism fuel Cuban people’s struggle situated as we are between *the politics of passion* and *the politics of affection* (Fernández, 2000). *The politics of passion* is the crusade for absolute moral ends for the community at large, the moral imperative of the state to change the reality of what *is* to *what ought to be*. *The politics of affection* is “an instrumental and affective logic that justifies breaking the norms of the state to fulfill personal needs (material and otherwise) as well of those loved ones” (p. 1). Both *the politics of passion* and *the politics of affection* provide space for Cubans to articulate meaning and identity. *The politics of passion* forms the foundation for a formal relationship between the government and its citizens. *The politics of affection* fuels an informal relationship among the citizens faced with the reality of *what is*. *The politics of passion* seeks a bond between the ruler and the ruled. *The politics of affection* undermines that relationship. The tension between these two poles rallied Cubans around Fidel Castro, a charismatic and deceptive leader, and set the stage for disconnection when the grand goal of the democratic society promised by Castro never materialized (Fernandez, 2000).

Exile

You will leave everything loved most dearly;

*and this is the arrow
that the bow of exile shoots first.
Dante. The Divine Comedy*

Veiga (2016) claims “exile is a state of being that continues for most Cubans who live outside their country if they have left for political, not economic, reasons” (Veiga 2016, p. 7). Pérez, R. M. (2013, 2015) also makes a distinction between those leaving for political and economic reasons.

Exile, for political reasons, is an expression of an unfulfilled goal that became one of the means to express the disconnect surfacing when Castro’s promises of a democratic society did not take place. As a result, emigration turned into the “most visible recurring manifestation of the Cuban saga over the past four decades . . . a political tool” (Grenier & Pérez, 2003, p.22).

An exile is one who, unable to vote at the ballot box, votes with his feet. Exile means emigration: displacement, departure from geographical markers anchoring a history that tells us who we are. Exile defines our identity. Loose from my moorings, like other *reluctant immigrants*, my search for identity is an attempt to ascertain the boundaries that encompass who I am, where I belong (Cotanda, 2001b). Memory becomes the reservoir of my *Cubanismo*.³

While mental as well as bodily considerations are involved in questions of collective and individual identities, the most important single feature is *memory* (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 23). As an exile, the pain I feel, while individual, is also a collective pain, one felt by many other

³ To Arregui (1995), the search for identity—the questions “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?”—has been and still is a very important determining factor in the art of many young “American-Cuban, Cuban-American” artists. Arregui is the curator for the art exhibition “American-Cuban, Cuban-American, thirty-five,” where five Cuban artists and one first generation U.S. born artist explore “their Cuban roots and their new American identity.” He claims, “the core of their roots is their Cubanismo” (Milani 1995). Cubanismo is the core of Cuban exiles’ roots, “an inner feeling that one feels that one belongs to a group of people, a particular ethnic group” (Colmenero, 1985, p. 66). Cubanidad refers to the bond of being born in Cuba and identity as a member of the Cuban nation. Cubanismo refers to a way of being regardless of birthplace. Fernández and Cámara Betancourt use “lo cubano” to refer to “our inapprehensible sense of belonging to an island, a nation, its culture(s), and its histories” (p. 5).

Cuban exiles. I am familiar with the circumstances oppressing Cubans. Injustice becomes the collective self ever present in me. As an exile, regardless of my personal freedom and economic security, I will not be satisfied until Cuba enjoys the liberty and justice lost when Castro assumed absolute power (Aguilar León, 1991, pp. 104-105), which appears at present unlikely in my lifetime, but hopefully not in the lifetime of my children or children's children. This collective memory, like all memory, is constructive and becomes a crucial element in maintaining my sense of integrity as *an exile* (Clifford, 1992, p. 115).

In other words, I realize that as long as I define myself as *an exile*, I will remain a *reluctant immigrant*, one awaiting “the opportunity to return and recover the island from the political order that compelled” me to leave (Grenier & Pérez, 2003, p.16). On the other hand, if I define myself as *an immigrant*, I must abandon the exile status and give up my collective pain—my Cuban identity, our *Cubanismo*. To Cuban exiles like me, to exercise the immigrant's option means I will not belong to either Cuban nation, not to Cuba and not to the Cuba in exile, which is even worse (Rieff, 1993, p. 40).

I have been reflecting on my lived experiences ever since I walked somewhat unwittingly into a course on Communication Theory taught by Professor Arthur Bochner in 1989 and that is a big part of the story I want to tell. My experiences as a student in communication enabled me to reflect purposefully on the consequences of my leaving Cuba to maintain my freedom to dissent without fear. I left as a Cuban with no desire to be an American or a Cuban-American, a hyphenated American.⁴ Ultimately, my definition as being Cuban through and through failed as my story will show (Cotanda, 2001b). Still, I will continue to identify as an exile even if it turns

⁴ Pérez Firmat (1994) claims, “Cubans have always been hyphenated Americans” (p. 16).

out to be a futile act of self-definition. Relations of power historically determined constitute my identity (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 8).

I write this dissertation to make further sense of my decision to leave Cuba, to move outside what was been kept inside of me, analyze it, and then bring it back in again reflexively in some order that makes sense to me and as a gift, a narrative to other exiles who followed this path and to my children and grandchildren who want to know, to understand, to identify with my past. However, deep down inside of me, I know there will always be limits to the sense of who I am. I have lived so many years within an undefined borderland, one full of porous categories, shifting meanings, and multiple voices (Ellis, 2004, pp. 162-165). My tale is an unfinished story of a *reluctant immigrant* caught between the politics of passion and affection.

Indeed, a day does not go by in which my decision to leave Cuba does not jump in front of me and demand that I look at and examine it. Daily, I mourn the memories of friends and relatives I'll never see again. What did this decision mean for and do to us? What difference did it make in our lives and the lives of our families?

CHAPTER ONE: LIFE IN CUBA

My Early Memories

10 de marzo de 1952

Marianao, La Habana Cuba

I am ten years old. It is a hot day at the end of the summer of 1948. I stand on top of an empty *Coca Cola* wood box laying flat on the floor behind the counter of my father's auto parts store. The store's front wall faces *la Carretera Central*, the road connecting the island of Cuba from east to west. The top of the front wall displays the name *González y Cotanda* painted in a deep black color. The store is located at the end of a building west of the bus terminal station for routes 21 & 22 at *La Lisa, Marianao*.

Following father's dismissal by Prío's government, from his customs inspector position, he purchases a half interest in the store from Mr. González who lives a few doors east from our one bedroom apartment on *Santa Rosa* Street.⁵ Father is accused of saying President Prío's brother is a drug addict. His dismissal takes place even though he has over twenty years of service that supposedly protects him legally from being fired for such an "offense."

I go to the store during summers and on week ends. I stand on the empty *Coca Cola* box that makes it easier for me to wait on customers. When there are no customers and I am bored, I place my elbows on top of the counter with my hands holding up my face and look through the store's glass front. I count the cars and buses moving east, on their way to *La Habana*; and west

⁵ Batista overthrows Prío's government on March 10, 1952.

towards *Pinar del Río*. Suddenly, I tell myself,

¡Debería estar afuera montando mis patines!

“I should be outside roller skating!”

On Good Friday, April 26, 1949, my wish comes true. I am roller skating on the floor of the porch in front of the store, when I hear the voice of an elderly man,

¡Hoy es Viernes Santo! ¡Jesús Cristo está muerto! ¡Estás patinando encima de su cuerpo! ¡Hoy no es día de estar patinando!

“Today is Good Friday! Jesus Christ is dead! You are skating over his body! Today is not a day to be skating.”

¿Cómo es posible que esté patinando sobre Dios si está muerto?

¡No entiendo! ¿Podré ir al infierno?

“How is it possible for me to be roller skating over God when He is dead? I don’t understand! Will I go to Hell?” I ask myself.

I do not recall with any certainty whether I was scared, confused, or nervous. Perhaps it was an amalgamation of all of them.

In spring 1949, I graduate from sixth grade at *Escuela Pública No. 12*, a public grammar school located one block east from our one bedroom apartment building on *Calle Santa Rosa*. After graduation, I am unable to register at *la Escuela Superior de Marianao* (the local Junior High School) because the law requires a student to be at least 12 years old. After the summer, I continue to help my father while waiting for the next school year. When it arrives, I convince my father to let me register at Havana Business Academy, a private school at the SW corner of *General Lee & Stinger*.

On this day, in the early morning hours, father's voice wakes me. I notice my brother José is not in our bed and neither are our parents in theirs. Father's voice travels through the doorway that connects our apartment's bedroom to the living-dining room area. I sit up and listen closely.

. . . *suspendieron las clases José viene conmigo a la panadería.*

“. . .classes were canceled. José is coming with me to the bakery.”

I see mother standing by the entrance to the kitchen. A thick aroma races up my nostrils, arousing my senses. The strong smell comes from a coffee pot I can't see. Mother's body blocks the sight, but not the rhythmic sound of boiling coffee dancing inside the coffee pot. My brother José stands next to mother. Their eyes are fixed on father. Father's face looks solemn. His lips move so fast they chop the ending off the words escaping from his mouth. He is upset, but I do not ask why. Instead, I tell him I want to go with them to the bakery. When he agrees to let me go, I dress in a hurry.

As we reach the sidewalk at the entrance of our apartment building, I feel an unusual dryness in the air. The first signs of light press on the night sky. We move at a brisk pace. *Santa Rosa*, the street facing our apartment building, is deserted. The pungent aroma of freshly ground coffee embraces the air as we walk by *El Industrial*, the coffee mill next door. At the intersection of *Concepción*, I notice *La Farmacéutica Roca* [a drugstore], *El Paraíso* [a food stand], *el puesto Elías* [*Elías's* fruit and vegetable stand], and *la bodega del chino Neno* [a Chinaman's, Neno, grocery store] are closed. I do not see anyone on the front porches around *la manzana de Pellón* [a city block of attached houses named Pellón].

When we reach the intersection of *General Lee*, soldiers move along the high concrete wall surrounding the approach to the main entrance to *Campamento Columbia*, at the time

Cuba's largest military garrison. The solemn soldiers' faces peer out of steel helmets. They carry rifles close to their hearts. Their left hands are tightly wrapped around the bottom of the black shining barrels; right hands embrace the hammers; and index fingers, the triggers. Frightened, I grab father's left hand.

No te preocupes.

"Don't worry," he assures me.

My father's voice does not free me from fear. I move closer to him.

When we enter *la panadería Reina* [the bakery], father immediately joins the murmuring coming from the two men facing each other across the counter. I want to know what is going on. I pay attention to their words. . .

tumbaron al presidente Prío. Batista ha dado un golpe de estado.

"President Prío has been toppled. Batista forged a *coupe d'état*."

Although I had finished grammar school and enrolled in Havana Business Academy, I do not have a clue as to what these words mean but know something is not right. I feel it in my gut even now. Later, I learned Fulgencio Batista was elected President in 1940, served his term, and left office. Grau San Martín was elected and assumed the presidency in 1944. He left office following Carlos Prío's election to office in 1948. After taking office, Prío allows Batista to return to Cuba from Daytona Beach, FL. Batista plans to run for office again. However, the polls indicate he is not going to be elected. Hence, on March 10, 1952, he takes over the government by force and Prío leaves Cuba.

* * * *

Rise of Castro

23 de julio de 1953

Bayamo, Oriente, Cuba

While few mourned the passing of Prio's government, the need to restore the constitution of 1940, the highest symbol of what citizenry meant, developed into the rallying cry of the opposition movement (Perez Stable, 1993, p. 9). The constitution embodied the ideals of democracy, social justice, and honest government during the representative democracy of the 1940s which had been shattered by Batista's military takeover (p. 59).

On July 26, 1953, at 6:00AM, Fidel Castro, in response to Batista's *coupe d'état*, leads a group of 120 rebels in an attack to take over the Moncada Military garrison, which was the second largest in Cuba located in the city of *Santiago de Cuba, Provincia de Oriente*, Cuba's most easterly province.⁶ The attempt fails. Castro escapes and hides at a farm in the Sierra Maestra Mountains. One week later, after being guaranteed he will be spared torture or execution as some members of his force experienced, Castro surrenders. The guarantee comes from the Catholic archbishop of Santiago, the capital of *Oriente* Province, Monsignor Pérez Serrantes. His intervention had been secured through the efforts of Castro's wife, Mirta Díaz Balart, whose brothers and father were close friends of Batista at the time (PBS) (Portell-Vidal 1986).⁷

During his trial, Castro, who is a lawyer, defends himself. His closing arguments call for the overthrow of Batista and restoration of the 1940 Constitution of Cuba, He concludes,

Condenadme, no importa, la historia me absolverá.

“Condemn me, it does not matter, history will absolve me” (Radio Rebelde).

The judge presiding over the trial finds Castro guilty and sentences him to fifteen years in jail to be served at the prison located on *La Isla de Pinos*, an island southwest of Havana where

⁶ Before Batista's *coupe d'état*, elections were scheduled for June 1, 1952. Castro was a candidate for a parliamentary seat as a member of the *Partido Ortodoxo*. Once Batista took power, he cancelled the elections.

⁷ Castro claims he was captured by one of the army patrols that happened to come up exactly the place where they were sleeping in the woods (Castro & Ramonet 2008, p. 161).

his trial takes place (PBS).

In May 1955, Batista pardons Castro. After serving less than two years of his sentence, he travels to Mexico. On December 2, 1956, the *Gramma*, a 21-foot yacht brings Castro and 81 other rebels back from Mexico to Cuba but runs aground south of Niquero. Batista's air force discovers and attacks the landing force. Castro escapes and later, together with his brother Raúl, Che Guevara, and twenty or thirty others, finds his way to the Sierra Maestra mountains where he starts a guerilla warfare that eventually leads to Batista's departure from Cuba.

* * * *

La Revolución

31 de diciembre de 1958

La Habana, Cuba

Over the next two years, Cuba's political situation continues to deteriorate. Gutierrez Menoyo, who led an unsuccessful attempt to kill Batista at the Presidential Palace on March 13, 1957, after creating the *Frente Nacional del Escambray*, moves with his fighters into the *Montañas del Escambray*, Escambray Mountains. In the mean time, Castro sends some of his fighters east to the city of *Santiago de Cuba* and west to the city of *Santa Clara*, over 300 miles away from the *Sierra Maestra* and less than 50 miles from the *Escambray Mountains*. Castro's forces capture both cities. The U.S. Ambassador tells Batista that if he resigns, he will be allowed to move to Daytona Beach. Batista refuses. The U.S stops shipping arms to the Batista government. During the night, the sound of bombs exploding around the city of Havana is a common occurrence.

While this goes on, I spend my days working at *Goodyear de Cuba*, a wholly owned subsidiary of Goodyear Tire Co. and my nights studying at *La Escuela de Publicidad*, Marketing

School. On this night, I decide to celebrate the arrival of the New Year with my friends Arturo and Humberto.

Quiéreme mucho, dulce amor mío

que amante siempre te adoraré.

“Love me dearly, sweet love of mine

that lover forever I’ll adore you. . .”

As I walk into *Tropicana*, a night club on the outskirts of Havana, only two hours remain before the arrival of the New Year. Couples move in unison to a melodic voice singing Gustavo Roig’s song *Quiéreme Mucho* played by a full orchestra under a clear Cuban night sky. Arturito, a childhood friend, and our dates, Ana and Julia follow me. Humberto, a fellow student, waits with Gloria at a table adjacent to the dance floor. Royal palm trees surround the area. Humberto and Gloria wear big smiles on their faces. During dinner they talk about their recent engagement and their plans to attend school in the U.S. following their wedding.

I am surprised to hear about their marriage plans, but not about Humberto’s plans to attend college in the U.S. Humberto’s father, a high-ranking member of Batista’s armed forces, believes Humberto will be better off if he attends college in the U.S. When Humberto fails to tell us the reason his father feels that way, the thought that comes to my mind is,

*Tal vez su padre piensa que estará mas seguro viviendo fuera
de Cuba mientras las cosas estén tan revueltas.*

“Perhaps his father thinks Humberto will be safer outside of

Cuba as long the political situation remains so unstable.”

Moments after the arrival of the New Year, I notice Humberto’s father approaching our table. Armed soldiers follow closely behind. He embraces Humberto and whispers into his right

ear in a way we cannot hear. As his father moves back, Humberto nods.

¡Feliz Año Nuevo!

“Happy New Year!”

Humberto’s father calls out to the rest of our group. He wears a big smile, waves his right hand, turns around, and walks away. The soldiers follow him. The minute they are out of sight, I ask Humberto,

¿Que quería tu padre?

“What did your father want?”

Desearme feliz año nuevo.

“To wish me a happy new year.”

Humberto’s response is abrupt. His face is drawn. His eyes never meet mine. Instead, they travel through the royal palm trees and land on the dance floor. The band plays and couples dance and laugh, but silence permeates our table. After what must have been a few seconds-but I now remember as hours-Humberto announces,

No me siento bien.

“I don’t feel well.”

His voice is solemn; the look on his face, stern.

Me voy para casa.

“I’m going home.”

Humberto stands, turns around, and leaves. His fiancé trails closely behind. A few hours later, feeling concerned, I knock at Humberto’s door. I want to know if there is anything wrong with him. A male voice coming from inside the house asks,

¿Quién es?

“Who is there?”

I recognize the gardener’s voice. I tell him my name and ask to see Humberto.

No hay nadie de la familia en la casa.

“There is no one from the family in the house.”

His voice is tense.

¿Cuándo regresa Humberto? ¿Adónde fue? ¿Está enfermo? ¿Está en el hospital?

“When is Humberto coming back? Where is he? Is he sick? Is he at the hospital?”

Every question I ask gets the same answer.

No hay nadie de la familia en la casa.

“There is no one from the family in the house.”

The gardener never opens the door. Frustrated, I turn around and leave. Driving home, the radio in my car provides the reason for his father’s visit, and Humberto’s sudden departure: During the first hours of the New Year, Batista gives up control of the government in much the same way as he took power, *under the secrecy of darkness*. The United States refuses to let him go to Daytona Beach, so he flies to Santo Domingo. Batista realizes he must go following the refusal of many members of the Cuban government armed forces, fed up with corruption, to continue fighting. Their action was preceded nine months earlier by the U.S. government’s refusal to sell more armaments to Batista, their belief in Castro's promise for a general amnesty and return to the 1940 Constitution, and the media driven image of Castro as the Cuban *messiah* led by *New York Times* reporter Herbert Mathews who wrote,

“He has strong ideas of liberty, democracy, social justice,

the need to restore the Constitution, to hold elections”

based on Castro’s claims that

“We are fighting for a democratic Cuba and an end to the Dictatorship” (Geyer, 1991, p. 169).⁸

When I pull into the driveway, I notice both of my parents sitting on the rocking chairs in the front porch.

Mi hijo, estamos preocupados por ti!

“My son, we’re worried about you,” mother tells me as she hugs me tightly. Father stands next to her. I notice his frown and feel the somber mood. Once inside the house, mother raises concerns,

*También estamos preocupados por lo que va a suceder con estos barbudos en el poder ahora que Batista se fué, los asesinos que mataron a mi cuñado Pepe y trataron de asesinar al hijo, tu primo Pepito.*⁹

“We are also worried about what is going to happen with these bearded ones in power now that Batista is gone, the murderers who killed my brother-in-law Pepe and tried to assassinate his son, your cousin Pepito.”

Mother is referring to an incident that occurred a couple of years earlier when my cousin had completed a job interview at a car dealership. Both, my cousin and his father, who was a police officer, were waiting for a bus to go home, when a car pulled up and a *barbudo* jumped

⁸ Batista’s government announced the army killed Castro during a battle at Alegría del Pío not long after landing in Cuba from Mexico. To prove he was still alive, Castro offered Mathews an exclusive interview. The three-hour interview exalting Castro was published in a series of articles in the New York Times(English 2007).

⁹ The term “barbudo” [bearded one] was used to refer to the fighters under Castro against Batista.

out with a gun in his hand. He shot my uncle dead and turned the gun on my cousin. Fortunately, the gun misfired. The gunman jumped back into the car and sped away followed by the sound of sirens in the distance. The *barbudo* was probably attracted by my uncle's uniform, which he was wearing even though he was not on duty at the time.

Before the incident, my parents were already opposed to Castro and his revolution. The incident continued to fuel their discontent but did not persuade me to believe their claims that Castro is a communist bent on turning Cuba into a Marxist-Leninist system allied to the Soviet Union. I believed Castro would bring democracy to Cuba by reinstating the 1940 Constitution.

* * * *

Pledge of Allegiance

6 de enero de 1959

La Habana, Cuba

On the eve of every January 6, Cuban families participate in the celebration of the *Día de los Reyes Magos*, in memory of the day three wise men visited a child born in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Children leave food to feed the wise men's camels. The following morning, as if by magic, the food is gone. Gifts appear in its place

On the eve of January 6, 1959, I find myself joining in a celebration of Castro's slow march through *Santa Clara* on his way to a triumphant entry into Havana that would rival the best Roman tradition. Two days later, during his first speech in Havana, Castro, like Caesar, promises freedom. Like many others, I also pledge allegiance to the "freedom fighter" coming down from the top of the highest Cuban mountain range followed by his "twelve apostles." Many Cubans stand shoulder to shoulder at the heart of el *Campamento Columbia*, a few blocks from *la panadería Reina*, the bakery where seven years earlier I stood next to my father and

heard words that did not make sense to me.¹⁰

. . . *tumbaron al gobierno de Prío. Batista dió un golpe de estado.*

“. . . Prío’s government was toppled. Batista forged *a coupe d’état.*”

On this day, however, I understand their meaning. I am overwhelmed by nationalistic feelings. Castro makes me feel proud to be a Cuban. I perceive “him as a true charismatic figure, as the chosen leader who had, and was fulfilling, an historic mission” (Gonzalez, 1974, p. 95). We anoint him *líder máximo* of our nation. In return, Castro promises free elections within eighteen months, a return to the Constitution of 1940, and justice for every Cuban.

His fervor is angelical; his rhetoric, passionate. A crucifix hangs from his neck. A white pigeon rests on his shoulder as he asks the crowd,

¿Armas para qué?

“Arms for what?”

¿Para qué las necesitamos?

“Why do we need them?” I ask myself.

¡No las necesitamos!

“We don’t need them!” I exclaim to myself.

I believe in Fidel’s promises. Elections are expected to take place in a few months. All weapons must be turned in. The air is charged with electricity, hope, and love. Many of us are mesmerized. A spiritual calm falls over us. Soldiers from the previous regime remove their caps. Some put their right hands over their hearts, not their weapons, and stand at attention. Others fall to their knees in prayer. Now we know there is a leader devoted to our freedom—a myth is being born before our wondering eyes (Geyer, 1991, p. 207).

¹⁰ At the time Columbia was Cuba’s largest military garrison. Later, Castro renamed it *Campamento Libertad* and turned into school grounds.

Soon, however, I will discover Castro's revolution shows no compassion, no tolerance, no dissent, and no commitment to freedom. Later and throughout my life, I will question how I could have been so mistaken.

The execution by firing squads start shortly after Castro arrived at *La Sierra Maestra* and later, following Batista's departure, at *Santiago de Cuba*, the capital of *Oriente* and Cuba's most easterly province. The ones in Havana start following Castro's arrival and public trials broadcasted live over television and conducted at a huge Sports Arena, a location that matched the spectacle of a Roman circus (Budget Films 1959). ¹¹

¡Paredón! ¡Paredón! ¡Paredón!

"Firing squad! Firing squad! Firing squad!"

The crowd's rising chant rumbles through the audio of our television set. As I watch, I wonder,

¿Estoy en Roma o en Cuba? ¿Así es como era la inquisición?

"Am I in Rome or in Cuba? Is this what the inquisition was like?"

Yet, I still want to believe in Castro's promises. And, for a long time, my support for Castro does not waver. To justify what I see, I tell myself,

Son errores, simples aberraciones.

"These are just anomalies, aberrations."

The Cuban constitution of 1940 does not allow for the death penalty. Castro, in the name of justice, uses the death sentence to punish members of Batista's regime or those fighting at his side not following his orders. Television cameras capture the revolution's immediate dispensation of justice: execution by firing squad. We are not spared the visual images. A salvo

¹¹ In Havana the executions by firing squad take place for the most part at *El Castillo del Morro* [Morro Castle], a fortress located at the entrance of Havana's harbor.

of bullets tears a man's torso. A *coup de grâce* splatters brains in the air (Franqui, 1981, p. 32) (Budget Films 1959) ¹². Fear enters my body. I ask myself,

¿Es esta la justicia que podemos esperar?

“Is this the justice we are to expect?”

The victor shows no mercy. Fearful, the conquered are unable to respond in kind and remain silent. I remain silent. Silence becomes the purest manifestation of our fear.¹³

* * * *

Lust at First Sight

19 de marzo de 1959

La Habana, Cuba

Ya es hora de entrar a clases.

“It’s time to go to class,” Ramón tells me.

It is early evening. We are standing in the hall next to the door to our classroom. My best friend Ramón looks past me as he raises his eyelids. His eyeballs begin to bulge and his lower lip drops. I hear the rhythmic sound of spiked high heels as it bounces off the ceramic tile floor. A female voice calls out my name.

Dionel . . . Dionel . . .

As I turn, a hand gently lands on my right shoulder. A stunning young woman stands next to Margarita, a fellow student at *La Escuela de Publicidad de La Habana* [Havana’s Marketing School], where I study marketing,¹⁴

. . . quiero presentarte a mi amiga Marina que viene a visitar

¹² Years later, a similar picture coming out of Vietnam rekindles my memories of such an event

¹³ To Arroyo Naranjo silence is the purest manifestation of fear in Cuba (pp.60-63).

¹⁴ A few months later the government annexed it to La Universidad de La Habana [University of Havana].

nuestra clase.

“. . . I want you to meet my friend Marina who comes to visit our class....”

Margarita’s voice fades. I do not listen. Marina becomes the center of my attention. My eyes focus on her coquettish smile, sensuous lips, thick brown hair, and low-cut, tight-fitting black dress. Thin white stripes accentuate the contours of a perfectly balanced female figure. Margarita tries to get my attention by tapping my shoulder.

Dionel. . . Dionel . . . Marina quiere ser periodista, pero la embullé para que viniera a participar en la clase de esta noche.

“Dionel. . .Dionel. . .Marina wants to be a journalist, but I talked her into attending tonight’s class.”

Marina has Ramón’s attention too. His eyes are fixed on her firm bust, which appears ready to burst free. He drools. I stare. During class that night, when she sits next to me, I find it difficult to concentrate on anything but Marina. I notice my hands are sweating. Marina’s appearance sends shivers up my spine.

After class, the four of us meet at *Café Línea*, an outdoor *café* along *Avenida Línea*, a busy thoroughfare. The glare of the automobiles and streetlights hides the stars shining in the night sky. The March air is dry and clear, a vibrant setting for our discussion. Marina’s voice punctures the crisp night air as she makes a point during a lengthy discussion about chaperons.

¡No creo en chaperonas! ¡Yo me puedo cuidar sola!

“I don’t believe in chaperons! I can take care of myself!” she says with conviction, Her tone is firm. I still compete with Ramón for her attention. Unable to agree about chaperons, I decide to ask about Castro’s promise on elections.

¿Por qué Fidel se compromete a elecciones tan pronto cuando hay tanto que hacer?

“Why does Fidel commit himself to hold elections so soon when there is so much to do?”

Marina’s response is instant:

¡No sucederá! Castro no permitirá elecciones. Si sigues sus acciones no sólo podrás observar sus posiciones marxistas sino también que no permite opiniones que no encajen en las suyas.

“It won’t happen! Castro will not allow elections to take place. If you follow his actions, you’ll notice not only his Marxist positions, but also his intolerance for points of view that do not fit within his.”

Marina’s vibrant voice ripples the air one more time. Much to my surprise, I discover she does not share my support for either the idea of chaperons or Castro’s incipient revolution. She claims to be able to look after herself and does not trust Castro’s promise to restore the 1940 Constitution. I find her independence refreshing, but her distrust of Castro unfounded, but do not ask her to defend her position. My mind is not on politics. Lust has me in its grasp. Hence, a few days later I knock at Marina’s door. When she opens the door to her apartment, my voice falters.

Margarita me dijo que viniera a recoger unos papeles del colegio que te dejó.

“Margarita told me to pick up some school papers she left with you.”

Marina seems surprised to see me.

Ella no me dejó nada.

“She did not leave anything.”

Later, I confess to Marina that my visit is only an excuse to see her again. My eyes resist moving away from her hourglass figure. Her smile tells me she likes the attention. Then I ask,

¿Quieres salir conmigo? “I would like to go out with you.”

¿A dónde? “Where?” Is her response.

A cenar. “To dinner.”

When she agrees, I notice the air around me begins to glow. My legs tremble and my heart pounds.

A few days later, on our first date we go to *El Carmelo*, an outdoor *café* along *Calle 23*, a main thoroughfare leading to *La Rampa*, one of Havana’s busiest commercial and entertainment districts not too far from the University of Havana. Over dinner, my eyes remain fixed on Marina as she mentions one more time her doubts about Castro.

Mira, yo reconozco que la mayoría, incluyéndote a ti, apoya a Castro. Sin embargo, debes de reconocer que la renuncia de Miró Cardona el mes pasado fue un rejuego de Castro para ocupar el puesto de primer ministro. Castro no quiere a nadie en el gobierno que no esté de acuerdo con él y sus proyecciones políticas.

“Look, I understand that the majority, including you, support Castro. Yet, you must recognize that Miró Cardona’s resignation last month was part of a ploy by Castro to take over as prime minister. Castro does not want anyone in the government who does

not agree with him and his political ideology.”¹⁵

What she says sounds possible. However, Castro is not what interests me on this crisp night. Marina keeps my mind occupied fully.

During the next eighteen months, the two of us spend many hours together. Our passion erupts as Castro’s revolution blooms and he takes complete control of the government. He makes it clear that dissent is not to be tolerated. Internal opposition appears futile. To avoid internment or the firing squad, many of Castro’s opponents depart. They go to places such as Miami, New Jersey, Venezuela, and Spain. Before my eyes, a nation of immigrants turns into one of emigrants. The lack of tolerance for opposing views becomes virulent. My support for Castro begins to falter as I no longer can hide my eyes to his acts of tyranny. Marina’s strong skepticism about Castro’s politics influences me as well.

* * * *

Bearing Witness

4 de marzo de 1960

Puerto de La Habana, Cuba

During the day, I continue to work as *Jefe de Publicidad*, Marketing Manager, for *Goodyear de Cuba*, a wholly owned subsidiary of Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., with headquarters in Akron, Ohio. At night, I continue to attend *La Universidad de La Habana* seeking to complete a marketing degree. On March 4, 1960 at 3:10 P.M., the French cargo ship *La Coubre*, explodes at *el Puerto de La Habana*, Havana’s Harbor, while unloading 70 tons of ammunition from Belgium. A second explosion follows not long after rescuers arrive. Seventy-

¹⁵ After Batista’s departure, a provisional government took power with a “social democratic” orientation and little hint of communist influence. Miró Cardona, a former Castro’s professor at the University, became prime minister. Under pressure, on February 13, 1959 he resigned. Castro took over as prime minister (Levine, 2001, pp. 28-29). Miró Cardona disagreed with Castro over restoring the death penalty and making legal penalties retroactive (Thomas, 1998, p. 1197).

six people die, all but six are bystanders. More than 200 are injured. The Castro government alleged the explosion resulted from an act of sabotage carried out by *contra-revolucionarios*, counter revolutionary forces. This event was staged as a propaganda tool to convince many Cubans, among them my brother, to band together against *el imperialismo yankee*, Yankee imperialism. My brother José recalls these events during a conversation with me on October 22, 1993, ¹⁶

Para mi la explosión de La Coubre fue un punto muy importante en mi decisión ideológica. La explosión nos tiró a todos por el suelo y contra las paredes. Existía una confusión absoluta en aquel momento. Inmediatamente nos mandaron a evacuar el edificio.

“For me, the explosion of La Coubre was a very important point in making my ideological decision. The explosion throws us around the floor and against the walls. At that moment there was absolute confusion. Immediately, we were ordered to evacuate the building.”

At the time of the explosion, José was working at the Ward Line shipping terminal's offices situated next to the pier at which the ship was docked and being unloaded. My father works for the government at the same terminal as a chief custom inspector. José's comments about the explosion brings to my mind mother's comments: She mentioned during an earlier conversation that parts of one of the office windows had hit him on the head. During his description of the accident, José does not mention the incident.

On his way out of the building, José runs to his car parked on the street median across the street facing the building,

¹⁶ On October 22, 1993 I recorded a conversation with my brother while I was staying at La Jolla, California. Later, I provided a copy of the transcription of our conversation to my brother for his review and comments

Cuando llegué al carro...Te acuerdas, el Opel rojo, me encontré uno o dos carros, parqueados junto al mío, envueltos en llamas con una parte del barco encrustada en el techo.

“When I reached my car...Remember, the red Opel, I found one or two cars parked next to mine that were engulfed in flames a part of the ship embedded on the car’s roof.”

His car is not damaged. He starts it and starts to drive away from the area,

Sentí este ruido grandísimo, mucho peor que el anterior. Me estremeció no sólo a mi y al carro, pero todo alrededor mio, inclusive la carretera.

“Then, I felt this terrible noise, much worse than the previous one. It shook not only me and my car, but also everything around me, including the road.”

What he hears is a second explosion caused by the blow up of the ammunition being unloaded from the ship. Nevertheless, he continues to drive until he feels the car was out of the way of emergency vehicles racing by. Once out of the area, he runs back to the scene of the explosion.

Cuando llegué, recuerdo ver partes de cuerpos humanos. Tu sabes...brazos...piernas...en las manos de los que estaban ayudando. Me sentí enfermo...

“When I reached the scene, I remember seeing human body parts. You know...arms... legs...being carried in the hands of rescue workers. I felt sick...”

The grimace in his face expresses how the images, still vivid in his mind some thirty-three

years later, remind him of how fragile life is. At the time, he realized how precious those lives that had ceased to exist were to him, lives that were destroyed by what the government quickly announced were enemies of the revolution.

Figúrate, el gobierno enseguida dijo que era un sabotaje de los contrarevolucionarios.

“Imagine, the government immediately said that it was an act of sabotage done by the counter revolutionaries.”

Anger begins to fill his body, anger toward those responsible for the explosion, the enemies of the revolution. Slowly, he tells how a bonding begins to develop towards those espousing an ideology that became a rallying point for hatred against a common enemy: Yankee imperialism. The conversation with José reminds me that not long after the explosion, I asked Noriega, the account executive of *Publicidad Jennings* who handles Goodyear de Cuba’s advertising account, to talk to his friend Osmani about my father’s concern over the security of his position as a chief customs inspector under the Castro government. ¹⁷

After meeting with Osmani, over a cup of espresso, Noriega confides,

Dionel, no se puede hacer nada. Dile a tu padre que aplique para su retiro inmediatamente. Si no se retira, lo dejan afuera.

Necesitan puestos para los barbudos.

“Dionel, nothing can be done. Tell your father to apply for retirement immediately. If he does not retire, he will be dismissed.

They need jobs for the rebels.”

¹⁷ Osmani, a high-ranking member of Castro’s army responsible for customs, reveals to Norberto the need for positions.

When dismissed previously under Prio's government, father appealed to the Cuban Supreme Court and was reinstated. Now, he faced dismissal again, but without the benefit of appealing to the Supreme Court, which had been disbanded following the implementation by the new government of *la ley Fundamental* on February 7, 1959. The law abolished the Constitution of 1940, the very one Castro promised to reinstate! The courts no longer decide. The Castro government does. The government decisions are final and irreversible. The nature of the dispute does not matter.

When I give father the news he needs to retire, he complies, though he is only forty-seven years old. My concerns about Castro's regime heighten following this first-hand experience of revolutionary "justice."

* * * *

A coupe d'état to Democracy

On May 1, 1960, within two months of the election deadline and by then in full control of the provisional government, Castro attacks the democratic procedures of the past and questions the need for elections at a mass rally held at the *Plaza Cívica* in Havana.

Elecciones . . . ¿Para qué?

"Elections. . . What for?" (Fiallo, 1979, p. 29).

Castro had made restoring the Constitution of 1940 one of the main objectives in his opposition to Batista (Perez-Stable 1993, p.59), but now says there is no need to hold elections. He claims the revolutionary government is the genuine representative of the Cuban people and proclaims that those insisting on holding elections want to impede the Cuban revolution. As critics of the revolution, dissenters were "immediately suspected of trying to destroy it" (Bourne 1986, p. 197). Castro believes not only that he has the right to govern Cuba, but also that his rule

will “safeguard *la patria*” [the homeland] (Perez-Stable 1993, p. 176-77).

On June 27th, Castro claims, “He who is an anticommunist is a counterrevolutionary” (Horowitz, 1995, p. 47). From that date forward, the Cuban government under Castro officially refused to recognize the right to dissent from the revolution, socialism, and the authority of Fidel Castro (Perez-Stable 1993, p. 178). The stage was now set for what was to become at the time the largest mass exodus in the Americas. Over one million Cubans, frustrated over the perceived inability to accept or stop the massive social changes introduced by Castro, decide to leave their present situation behind to change their future and escape the tyranny of an authoritarian government (Cotanda 1995). I was one of them.

Later that summer, exhausted by the uncertainty and unrest taking place, Marina and I decide to go away for a few days on vacation. We take the ferry from *Batabanó*, a city south of Havana, to *Isla de Pinos* [Isle of Pines], later renamed by Castro *Isla de La Juventud* [Isle of Youth].¹⁸ The quiet and romantic island is an ideal spot to spend time alone together. We are back home, but still on vacation, when I receive a phone call from a co-worker.

El gobierno nacionalizó la compañía esta mañana. ¡Necesitas regresar al trabajo enseguida!

“The government nationalized the company this morning. You need to return to work immediately.”

The man’s voice is an emotionless monotone. Upset over the government’s action, I respond in a defiant tone,

¡Estoy de vacaciones! ¡Regresaré cuando terminen mis

¹⁸ El Presidio Modelo (Model Prison) is located on this island and is where Castro was incarcerated following his trial for the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953.

vacaciones!

“I am on vacation! I will be back whenever my vacation is over!”

As I hang up the phone, a multitude of thoughts cram my mind.

¿Me llamó de su propia iniciativa? ¿Trató sencillamente de ser amistoso e informarme lo que pasaba? Nunca fue amistoso antes.

¿Alguien le dijo que me llamara para ver cuál era mi reacción?

¿Qué sucede ahora? ¿Cómo puede el gobierno ser tan estúpido?

¡El gobierno sabe que esta acción romperá el acuerdo con Goodyear de intercambiar rayón por caucho!

“Did he call out of his own initiative? Was he trying to be friendly and informative? He was never friendly before. Did someone from the government tell him to call me and report my reaction? What happens now? How can the government be so stupid? The government knows that this action will end the agreement with Goodyear to exchange rayon for rubber!”

Months earlier, at Goodyear’s request, the Cuban government entered into an agreement to trade rayon made in Cuba for rubber. I was assigned to keep track of the shipments of rubber sent to Cuba by Goodyear and the ones of rayon sent to the U.S. by the Cuban government. At the time, the Cuban government, concerned about all the capital going out of the country, welcomed the exchange which eliminated the need to use hard currency to purchase raw materials such as rubber. The agreement made it possible for Cuba to receive rubber without the need to use any hard currency. And, Goodyear thought the agreement would avoid a government takeover of the company. Unable to make sense of what happened, I continue to ask myself

questions.

¿Por qué no permitir que este arreglo continúe? Esto no tiene sentido. ¿Saben lo que están haciendo? ¿Les importa? ¿Le importara a alguien? ¿Serán realmente comunistas como se rumora? No, no lo creo. ¡No entiendo!

“Why not allow this arrangement to continue? It doesn't make sense. Do they know what they are doing? Do they care? Does anyone care? Are they really communists as is being rumored? No. I don't believe that. I don't understand!”

I argue with myself. At the time, I do not know reason is never neutral. Ideology informs reason. I do not recognize the divergence of our rationalities, the government's and mine (Shweder, 1991). Castro's opposition to U.S. capitalism engenders his own brand of nationalism. Castro's ideology demands government control of all means of production and communication (Szulc, 1995). He hastily institutes his *sui generis* brand of nationalism and demands collective obedience (Cabrera Infante, 1992). As *de facto* and absolute leader of the social changes taking place in Cuba, Castro announces,

Con la Revolución todo, contra la Revolución, nada.

“Everything with the revolution, against the revolution, nothing.”

(Franqui, 1966, p. 271).

Meaning,

. . .que la Revolución era Fidel y sus gustos estéticos y literarios y sus decisiones políticas [y económicas].

“. . . that the revolution was Fidel, his aesthetic and literary tastes

and his political [and economic] decisions” (p. 271).

I was not aware of Castro’s comments,

No basta con tumbar a Batista—le dijo a uno de sus capitanes, Manuel Penabas, y a un político de la vieja escuela que se le había sumado, José Pardo Llada, a fines del otoño de 1958.— Tenemos que prepararnos para gobernar este país por lo menos durante 25 años. Primero, para lograrlo, tengo que organizar un ejército de 300,000 hombres. Así los yanquis no van a tener lo cojones de meterse conmigo

“It’s not enough to overthrow Batista—he told to one of his captains, Manuel Penabas, and to a politician from the old school who had joined him, José Pardo Llada, during the autumn of 1958.—We need to prepare ourselves to govern this country for at least 25 years. First, to be successful, I must organize a 300,000 men army so the yanquis will not have the balls to tangle with me.”

Fidel Castro as quoted by Fuentes (2017, p. 281)

I did not that Castro’s ideology informed his reason and differed dramatically from mine informed by ideals of individual liberties. As our divergent rationalities collide, my body trembles. I am afraid of the direction everything is moving. My hands perspire and my heart races. Fear penetrates my body. Saturated with fear, I could not make sense of what is happening. Within my own rationality, I can find no logic in Castro’s actions. A few days later, I

become aware of Castro's letter stating his intentions to carry on a war against the Americans (p. 338). Within this rationality, taking over Goodyear de Cuba, an American company, is logical to him. It allows him to carry on a war against the Americans. For the first time I consider the possibility I may leave Cuba.

I'd received offers of support were I to leave Cuba. One came from Dan Fleenor when he came, with his Hell Drivers, to promote Goodyear tires in Cuba. I accompanied him and his drivers as they traveled through the island. Concerned over the departure of so many Cuban nationals, Fleenor volunteered his assistance should I decide to come to the U.S. Other friends, now outside the country, also offered help. I turned them down. I was not ready to leave the country in which I was born, the country I love. While I disagreed with certain actions taken by Castro, at the time I was still optimistic about Cuba's future. Castro's lack of candor and ideological bent still were not apparent to me as I possessed a nationalistic fervor that had been rooted in me by José Martí, the Apostle of the Cuban nation, who conceived of Cuba as ideally independent, free, and democratic.

The Castro government takeover of Goodyear means an end to the ability of Cuba to receive rubber without the need of paying with hard currency, a scarce commodity. For me, it means an uncertain future. What role if any, will I now play with a government owned company? What will happen with my source of income, my livelihood, my very future? What kind of life can I have here? I feel anxious and betrayed by my country's government. Doubts fill my mind. My fear from retaliation holds me back from sharing my concerns with others. I become exceedingly cautious and secretive.

*¿Qué voy hacer? ¿Me voy? ¿Si me voy, para dónde? ¿Cómo?
¿Por qué tiempo?*

“What am I going to do? Do I leave? If so, where to? How? For how long?” I ask myself.

In the days that follow, my mind continues to race at breakneck speed. As the reality of the government’s intervention into daily life and commerce sinks in, I start to realize that Castro’s actions are not good for the country and certainly not for me personally. His actions likely will destroy Cuba's economy. I thought the 1940 Constitution would be restored, that democratic elections would take place.

I never thought I would be contemplating leaving my home, my country, the country I love and call home. I am living a nightmare. My mind has been refusing to accept the reality of the moment, refusing to take in what I am seeing. What I hear, I do not listen to. I find it difficult to understand what is taking place. The ideological shift taking place in Cuba leaves me in a state of despair. The world in which I grew up—all my hopes and dreams and assumptions are crumbling before my eyes.

Eventually, my belief in Castro’s promises shatters, but I am still afraid to express my concerns to others. Castro’s government does not tolerate dissent. He creates the first militias on July 26, 1959 at *La Universidad de La Habana* and calls them *Las Brigadas Estudiantiles Universitarias José Echevarría*, University Students Brigades José Echevarría.¹⁹ He claims the militia’s role is to defend the Cuban people against aggression coming from *el imperialismo*, the U.S government. He opens the membership to other segments of the population including farmers and workers. Within a few months they number over half a million of citizens ready to go to war to defend the Revolution. On September 28, 1960, Castro forms *Los Comites Para la*

¹⁹ José Echevarría was the President of *La Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU)* [University Students Federation] who participated in the failed attack to kill Batista at the Presidential Palace on March 13, 1957. He had seized the radio station *Radio Reloj* to announce the attack and was killed after he left the station and was on his way back to *La Universidad de La Habana*

Defensa de la Revolución (CDR's), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Every city block forms a committee made up of its residents. Every night one of them is to patrol their block and monitor suspicious activities. There is a collective task of vigilance against any act that may help destabilize the Revolution. Cuba is now a police state. Trust in the government has been transformed into fear. There will be no tolerance for expressing opposition to the Castro regime. I realize I do not want to live like this.

When I return to work, I discover the government had appointed a shoemaker to head Goodyear. Though this was our initial meeting, he greets me with a pep talk.

*¡Cotanda, tú sabes que este es el gobierno del pueblo! La
compañía ahora nos pertenece. Tenemos que trabajar más duro.*

¡Tenemos que brindarnos de voluntarios para protegerla!

“Cotanda, you know that this is the government of the people. The company now belongs to us. We must work harder. We must volunteer to protect it!”

He is a long-time member of *el Partido Socialista Popular de Cuba* [Cuba's Communist Party]. Now, I am afraid to express my thoughts and beliefs, given the prevailing climate created by Castro and his avid sympathizers who have made it clear that any expression of disagreement is a counter-revolutionary act, an act of treason.

The pressure to "volunteer" for service in *la milicia* and the CDR is now unbearable. A year earlier, when the militia was formed, the pressure to "volunteer" came from the union representing Goodyear's workers, not the managers representing the company. Now, the government manages Goodyear. The manager works for the government. Hence, the pressure now comes from management and union. It is always present. The pressure feels suffocating.

Anyone who does not volunteer is presumed to be against the government and, therefore, against the people. You are guilty until proven innocent. The company was taken from its owners without compensation. I don't believe that the company is "mine." *My transformation is now complete.* I no longer identify with Castro's revolution or the company. Rather, I oppose them both.

Later, when a co-worker asks,

¿Cómo puedes negarte de voluntario para proteger la compañía?

Ahora nos pertenece. ¿Estás en contra de nosotros?

“How can you refuse to volunteer to protect the company? It now belongs to us. Are you against us?”

I am nervous, but snap back,

¡La compañía no me pertenece a mí y no te pertenece a ti!

“The company does not belong to me and does not belong to you!”

Now, I feel scared. It is hard to express this feeling of terror I was experiencing, even now nearly sixty years later! News about imprisonment and disappearance of members of Castro's inner circle fuel my imagination.²⁰ My fear increases. Marina's foresight has been confirmed: Castro's opinions are not to be questioned by anyone, not even his top echelon. If you do, you are demonized as a counter revolutionary. You may be arrested and languish in jail or mysteriously disappear. I am concerned for my safety. The chances I could possibly be incarcerated increase. Fear and anxiety circulate through my body and settle inside me. They are

²⁰ Hubert Matos and Camilo Cienfuegos held the highest rank in Castro's army, *comandantes*. Hubert Matos was jailed after sending a letter to Castro requesting to be allowed resign and return to teaching. Previously, Matos had a disagreement with Castro over the role members of Cuba's Communist Party should play in Cuba's new government. He spent twenty years in jail. Camilo Cienfuegos, in-charge of Cuba's army, disappeared when flying back to Havana a few days after arresting Hubert Matos. Cienfuegos also disagreed with Castro over the firing squads and the role of members of the communist party. No traces of Cienfuegos, the plane's pilot, or the plane were ever found. No distress signal was received.

my constant companion. I can't shake the anxiety. Not sure who I can trust, I continue to become increasingly suspicious and secretive and tell myself,

! Yo no quiero vivir asi! ! Me tengo que ir!

“I do not want to live like this! I must leave!”

I call Pruessman, the general manager of Goodyear de Cuba, S.A., who was transferred from Argentina shortly after I started to work at Goodyear. I developed a good rapport with him and felt he would help me obtain a transfer to Central or South America. A few weeks earlier, Triay, the office manager, was transferred to Venezuela; and Bobes, the credit manager, to the Philippines. I do not want to go to the Philippines. It is too far away from Cuba.

“Meet me at the side entrance of the Embassy tomorrow at ten in the morning,”

Pruessman tells me after listening to my request. When I hang up, my mind is in turmoil.

*¿Qué le digo a Marina, a mis padres? Los viejos nunca expresaron dudas sobre mis decisiones. ¿Las expresaran ahora? Lo dudo.
¿Pero cómo puedo estar seguro? ¿Qué sucederá con mis estudios? ahora que me queda menos de un año? ¿Cuándo terminaré? ¿Qué hago con el carro? No debo preocuparme. ¡No estaré fuera por mucho tiempo! ¡Castro no durará mucho! ¡Regresaré pronto!*

“What do I tell Marina and my parents? They have never questioned my decisions before. Will they question this one? I doubt it. But how can I be sure? What about my studies? I have less than a year to finish college. When will I graduate? What do I do with my car?” I tell myself I should not be concerned. This will be short term. I will return in a few months. Castro's government

can't last too long. I will be back soon!"

!Esto será por poco tiempo!

"This will be temporary" I assure myself.

Following my conversation with Pruessman, I request a copy of my transcript from *La Universidad de La Habana* and pick it up on September 23, 1960 from *Dra. Eloísa Lezama Lima, Secretaria de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Derecho Público*. While I am making all these preparations to leave, I do not realize I am going to become an "exile" or what that could mean. I have no theory on which to fall back, no education on what it means to be an exile. I did not know the "history of an exile does not begin the day we leave the country, but on the day we feel the country has abandoned us" (Cámara 2003, p. 151).

Ready to drop Marina off for the night, I decide to tell her about my decision to leave. We sit in my car which is parked next to one of the sidewalks facing *El Aire Libre*, an open-air restaurant occupying the first floor of the three-story building situated on the southeast corner of *Avenida 23 y Calle 12*, one of the busiest intersections in *el Vedado* section of *La Habana* and a block away from the main entrance to *el Cementerio Colón* [Colon Cemetery], Cuba's largest. Marina lives with her aunt in a one-bedroom apartment on the third floor.

¡Me tengo que ir de Cuba! ¡ Con todo lo que está sucediendo me tengo que ir! Fuí a la Embajada Americana y me dieron una visa. Me voy en unos días. Espero que comprendas.

"I must leave Cuba! With everything that is happening, I must leave! I went to the American Embassy and obtained a visa. I will leave in the next few days. I hope you understand."

¡No me vas a dejar aquí! ¡Me voy contigo!

“You are not going to leave me here! I am going with you!” she responds.

Her voice conveys the conviction of a person who has seen the future. Her response surprises me. I thought she would want to stay in Cuba, living with her aunt, close to her father and the rest of her family. Besides, I would not be gone very long. Castro surely will be deposed soon. I had not considered taking her with me at this time. I knew taking her may mean getting married. I had already given her an engagement ring on New Year’s Eve 1960. And, while my body was still seized by lust and was in love with her, I did not feel I was ready to give up my independence yet.

With my left hand, I pull out a cigarette from a pack of Salem in my shirt’s left pocket. With my right hand I push in the car’s cigarette lighter. I stare through the windshield and wait for the lighter to pop. I feel Marina’s eyes fixed on the right side of my face. As I light the cigarette, I hear myself mumble,

¿Con quién te vas a quedar en los Estados Unidos?

“Who are you going to live with in the U.S.?”

¡En West Palm Beach con mis amigos Inés y Toni!

“In West Palm Beach with my friends Inés and Toni!” Marina snaps back.

The tone of her voice is bellicose; the pitch, sharp; the tension high.

Mi planes son de ir solo primero. Además, no sé si podré conseguirte una visa.”

“My plans are to go alone first. Besides, I do not know if

I can get you a visa., I meekly respond.

¡Pues mira, es mejor que lo hagas!

“Well, you better do it!” She demands.

As she finishes her remark, Marina opens the car door and steps out. Her right hand holds the car door open. Her eyes are fixed on mine.

¡Yo aquí no me voy a quedar sola!

“I’m not going to stay here by myself!”

Marina’s left index finger is extended. She moves it slowly from left to right a couple of times, turns around, closes the door behind her, and walks towards the entrance leading to the stairs to her apartment. Her movements are slow, deliberate, and sensuous.

The next day, I am back at the American Embassy, this time with Marina. When we leave, her passport bears an entry visa. My sense of the future changes forever!

* * * *

Departure

8 de octubre de 1960

La Habana, Cuba

Saturday, October 8, 1960 is a dry, cool morning. Yet, I perspire. The dry coolness of the early morning air indicates the departure of a hot and humid summer as we enter the airport where a plane will take us to Florida. A few days earlier, Pruessman sent a message advising me to report to work at Goodyear's downtown Tampa store by October 10.

Two young guards wearing crumpled olive-green army fatigues and unkept beards show no emotion as they thoroughly search through Marina’s luggage and my two, newly bought suitcases sitting on the table in front of them. Bold letters in a large sign behind them quote José Martí, Cuba’s independence apostle:

Sólo los cobardes abandonan La Patria

“Only cowards abandon the motherland.”

I look at Marina. She looks at me. I try to tell her how confused I feel. I can't. Thoughts of staying enter my mind.

¿Encontrarán los \$65 dentro de mi cámara fotográfica de 35mm?

¿Debo quedarme? ¿Soy un cobarde porque me voy?

“Will they find the 65 US dollars inside my 35mm camera? Should I stay? Am I a coward for leaving?”

I am nervous but try to appear calm as these moral questions continue to crowd my mind. I tremble as I try to hide my fear and continue to struggle with the idea of staying, of changing course at the last moment. Finally, the guards wave us through and into *la pescera* [fishbowl], a nickname given to the glass enclosure where passengers are kept waiting to board the plane after being searched. My thoughts continue to crowd my minds after we enter *la pescera*. Time appears to be frozen when my thoughts are broken by the sound

¡Dionel Cotanda!

coming through the huge loudspeakers staring at me from each corner of *la pescera*. As I look around, I feel relieved as I realize they are calling the names of those they want to board the plane leaving for Miami. I push my thought of staying away. I breathe deeply as I enter the plane behind Marina. She tells me she cannot bear to look out the window and takes the aisle seat. I take the window seat next to her. The rest of the passengers fill the plane slowly. There is not an empty seat.²¹ I move close to Marina and whisper,

¡Todo el mundo se va de Cuba!

“Everyone is leaving Cuba!”²²

²¹ President Kennedy has yet to break relations with Castro. Cuban and U.S. commercial air carriers fly in and out of Cuba daily.
²² Over 500,000 Cubans left the island nation during the 1960s (Moore 1988, p. 359).

As she nods, I tell myself,

¡Qué bonita y tranquila luce!

“She looks beautiful and calm!”

Our sixteen-month courtship flashes through my mind. I deeply appreciate her calmness when we said *Adiós* [goodbye] to our parents. I have mixed emotions about her accompanying me to the U.S. It seems the decision was hers, not mine. I know she will be with her friends in West Palm Beach. But I don't know what to expect about the future. I believe we will return together to Cuba soon. I can't bear the thought that it could be longer. I push such thoughts away.

¿Cuándo levantaraemos vuelo? ¿Me llamarán para que regrese a la terminal? ¿Por qué no levantamos vuelo?

“Will we ever take off? Will the security officers call me back to the terminal? Why don't we take off?”

I am restless. Suddenly, the plane begins to race down the runway. As it lifts, I look out the window watching my homeland disappear:

¿Qué tiempo estaré afuera?

“How long will I be gone?”

CHAPTER TWO: LIFE OUTSIDE OF CUBA

Arrival

When I arrive in Miami, my belief of a quick return is reinforced. I learn that troops are training in Guatemala to invade Cuba. An invasion of Cuba seems to be only months away. Eisenhower will not tolerate Castro's confiscation of U.S properties without compensation.²³ The air is thick with the fever of war.

¡Regresaré en unos pocos meses!

"I'll return in a few months!" I tell myself,

I am certain the growing number of Cubans disenchanted with Castro will unite in a common effort to overthrow his regime and provide a political environment conducive to the unimpeded exercise of freedom of expression, the very freedom of expression without fear of retaliation that Castro vehemently promised during his quest for power. Surely, they will.

The day after my arrival I proceed to travel to Tampa where I will start work at the Goodyear store on the NE corner of Morgan & Twiggs while Marina stays with friends in West Palm Beach. As we enter Tampa, the Greyhound Bus slowly moves West on Seventh Ave. We cross Fifteenth, then Fourteenth Street. We are in the heart of Ybor City from where another exile, the Cuban Apostle José Martí sent the signal, hidden in a cigar, to start the war of independence against Spain in 1895. When we stop to turn South on Nebraska Ave., we face a two-story wood-framed green building on the Southwest corner with the number 1720. I would

²³ The Foreign Claim Commission of the United States Cuban Claims Program (2009) list of the top 50 certified corporate claims amounts to \$1,505,888,500. Source: <http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/fcsc/docs/ccp/-listofclaims.pdf>

later record a daily five-minute radio message there encouraging Cuban nationals to unite in our efforts to overthrow the Castro regime.²⁴ As we proceed South, the sun sinks in the horizon and casts long shadows. I notice the grimness around me. Dilapidated wood frame houses appear ready to tilt on their side and die. Listless black bodies drag their feet as they slowly move to nowhere in particular.

Suddenly I realize everything is strange, different. No one expects me. I do not know anyone. I feel a knot in my stomach and my hands perspire. My body shivers. Is it the strangeness, the loneliness, or the memories that haunt? Perhaps, it is all of them combined. Am I imagining or remembering?

¿En qué me he metido?

“What did I get myself into?” Pops into my mind.

The magnitude of my decision to leave Cuba, while not evident at the time, surfaces now as I look back in hindsight (Freeman 2010).

* * * *

An Interlude: An Unrealized Future

My thought *¡Regresaré en unos pocos meses!* “I’ll return in a few months!” will turn out to be wishful thinking. Mine will become a departure without return. I do not foresee that the U.S. will be home to my daughters and the final resting place to my maternal grandfather, my father-in-law, father and mother. I do not anticipate that Marina and I will create a family, that our interactions will turn into a life-long relationship deeply entrenched in the U.S., that I will become a successful business manager, that I will write a doctoral dissertation.

²⁴ The messages were aired from Radio Sol, a radio station located in downtown Tampa and followed Woody Garcia’s program.

An unrealized future is now my past and my present nearly sixty years later, memories of my lived experiences in Cuba flash in front of me and point to the future that might have been. These vivid memories continue to make me question who I am, where I belong, and what *homeland* means to me. What have I missed? Has mine been a meaningful life (MacIntyre 1984)?

* * * *

The Wedding

November 20, 1960

West Palm Beach, FL.

Within a few weeks of my arrival to Tampa, I receive a letter from Marina indicating we need to start preparing for our wedding. She suggests it take place in West Palm Beach, FL, where she is staying with friends. We agree that she proceeds with the arrangements. When I call mother to tell her about our plans she remarks,

Mi hijo, no esperabamos que sucediera tan pronto.

Estamos contentos por ustedes y tristes ya que no vamos a estar presentes.

“My son, we did not expect this would happen so soon.

We are happy for you, but sad because we will not be present.”

Once Marina completes the arrangement, I board a Greyhound Bus, on Saturday, November 19, 1960, and travel to West Palm Beach. Our wedding takes place the next day at the Sacred Heart Church in Lake Worth and is officiated by Father Rastatter. A small reception follows at the house of Inés and Toni, where Marina has been staying. Late that afternoon, we

board a Greyhound Bus to Tampa and, upon arrival, walk to the Thomas Jefferson Hotel.

A few days later, we purchase a used French made car, a Simca, from Dan Fleenor, owner of the Hell Drivers who I met in Cuba. We purchase the car thanks to Mr. Oscar Bonis, V.P. at the Broadway National Bank, who approves the loan for the same amount as the purchase price. The car allows us to move out of the Thomas Jefferson Hotel and rent a house from Siro Ledo.²⁵ We also purchase a used refrigerator from Goodyear for \$150 on credit extended by Northside Bank with the endorsement of Dan Fleenor. From Badcock Furniture we purchase a bedroom set and a four-chair dinette set also on credit.

Before our marriage, I'd applied for admission to the University of Tampa with the intention to continue my education. When I show Marina the acceptance letter to start taking classes during the Spring Semester of 1961, Marina raises questions,

¿De dónde vamos a sacar el dinero para pagarlo?

*¿Además, sabiendo que estoy sola todo el día, ahora
me vas a dejar sola por la noche también?*

“Where are we going to get the money to pay for
your tuition and the books? I am alone during the day,
every day. Are you going to leave me alone at night also?”

Marina is homesick. This time her reasoning is persuasive. I do not register for classes. I do not realize there will be no university classes for me for another 25 years!

* * * *

The Fiasco

²⁵ We met Siro Ledo, a real estate broker, from a fellow worker at Goodyear. We celebrated our first New Year's Eve at his house and became good friends. Ledo introduced me to Bonis.

April 21, 1961

Tampa, Fl.

On January 10, 1961, the front page of the New York Times headline reads “**U.S. Helps Train an anti-Castro Force at a Secret Guatemala Air-Ground Base**”, and shows a map indicating a landing site on what would turn out to be *Bahía de Cochinos*, the Bay of Pigs. On April 21, the invasion of Cuba to overthrow Castro becomes a reality. The fever of war reaches its zenith. The news is on the front page of every newspaper. Radio and television stations blare the news. I am assured that I will be back in Cuba soon.

The plan to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro originates under the Eisenhower administration and calls for Cuban nationals to be trained in Guatemala under the auspices of the U.S. government. Once trained, they will land near the city of *Trinidad*, on the southern coast of Cuba and close to the *Escambray* mountains.²⁶ Once the forces occupy the landing area, they are to declare themselves to be the legitimate government of Cuba headed by José Miró Cardona, first Cuban prime minister under Castro who was pressure to resign. The U.S government would immediately officially recognize Cardona’s government and openly provide additional support. When Kennedy takes office, concern over the now public knowledge of the invasion plans, changes the landing site to the Bay of Pigs and denies direct air support from the U.S. in efforts to provide deniability of any U.S. government support for Castro’s overthrow.

Within seventy-two hours following the landing, the Bay of Pigs invasion turns into a fiasco stunning the Cuban community and embarrassing President Kennedy. We resent Kennedy’s last-minute refusal to provide air cover to the invasion forces. My belief of a short stay becomes questionable. I feel remorse for not participating in the invasion. To drown my

²⁶ From 1959 to 1965, a group of insurgents consisting of former Batista soldiers, local farmers, and former guerrillas who fought alongside Castro to overthrow Batista operated in the Escambray Mountains to overthrow the Castro government.

guilt, I intensify my involvement with the *Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba*, Cuban Revolutionary Council, an umbrella organization for the different exile groups bent on overthrowing Castro and headed by Cardona. Every day my efforts focus on writing and delivering a radio message of encouragement to the Cuban community in exile as I redouble my efforts to try and overthrow the Castro regime. I begin and end each message as follows,

*!La voz del Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba,
frente al comunismo opresor, nuestros diario
mensaje de libertad!*

“The voice of the Cuban Revolutionary Council,
against the communist oppression, our daily message
of freedom!”

* * * *

Hope

July 12, 1962

Tampa, FL

I work at Peninsular Lumber at 901 N. Dale Mabry Ave., as an inside salesperson earning \$40 a week. We now live in a one-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a frame house at 2503 Aileen St. Our first daughter, Ileana, is born at the *Centro Español Hospital* on Bayshore Blvd. She shines a ray of hope in our dark life as exiles. Economically strapped, we yearned for our homeland.

We want to leave Tampa, where we experience hostility from pro-Castro groups like the *Fair Play for Cuba Committee* and *El Círculo Cubano*, the Cuban Club. The Cuban Club was founded in 1902 as a mutual aid society to “**bind all Cuban residents to Tampa in a fraternal**

group, to offer assistance and help to the sick.”²⁷ They do not welcome our opposition to the Castro regime. They support Castro and have announced the donation of a tractor.

Nos vamos a reunir frente al Círculo Cubano en protesta del tractor que planean enviar a Cuba en apoyo de la Reforma Agraria.

“We are meeting in front of the Cuban Club to protest the tractor they plan to send to Cuba in support of the Agrarian Reform,” Iglesias tells me.

We are at the *Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba*’s offices located on the second floor of the two-story wood-frame green building I first saw when I arrived in Tampa. Iglesias represents the *Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba* in Tampa. I represent *Rescate Democrático Revolucionario*, one of the organizations under the Consejo’s umbrella. The *Tampa Tribune* and evening television news cover the protest attended by Cubans opposing Castro.²⁸

As September 1962 rolls around, we hear drums of war again. Rumors abound. The U.S. government plans a new attempt to overthrow Castro. The drum beat of Spanish speaking recruiters exhorts Cuban nationals to volunteer for service in the U.S. Army confirming the rumors we hear. They promise we will be part of an invasion force to free Cuba. I had not been part of the forces that landed at the Bay of Pigs, but this time I **know I must** volunteer. So much is riding on this. I tell Marina,

!Yo no voy a regresar a Cuba si no participo en esta lucha.

No puedo regresar como si fuera un turista en un avión de

Pan American!

“If I don’t participate in this fight, I’m not going to return.

²⁷ Quoted from: *The Cuban Club website at cubanclubbybor.com.*

²⁸ Unable to come to an agreement with *El Círculo Cubano* over Castro’s government, Cuban exiles in Tampa eventually established *El Club Cívico Cubano*. The building is located at 10905 Memorial Highway, Tampa, FL 33615.

I can't return to Cuba as if I were a tourist in a Pan American flight."

The second I finish, Marina snaps back,

Aún que sé vas estaré muy preocupada for lo que te pueda pasar a tí y a mí aquí sola con Ileana, creo que debes ir. !Nunca me perdonaría si te digo que te quedes y por esa razón no regresamos a Cuba!

"Even though I'll be worried about what may happen to you, and to me for staying alone with Ileana, you should go. I would never forgive myself if I asked you to stay and we are not able to return to Cuba!"

* * * *

Training to Help Bring Democracy Back

October 22, 1962

Miami, FL

Inducted into the U.S. Army in Miami, I pledge alliance to the Cuban and U.S. flags, both in display during the ceremony. Ironically, the cultural sites they represent will later pull me in different directions as I question who I am: Am I Cuban? Am I Cuban-American, a hyphenated American? Am I an American?

We leave Miami in a chartered bus. Upon our arrival at Ft. Knox's reception area, I hear artillery fire. The time to do battle appears to be near. I notice every recruit is a Cuban national; every instructor, a hyphenated American. Our Basic Training is conducted in Spanish. For the most part, commissioned and non-commission officers are veterans of the Korean War. Their

ethnic background is from México, Panama, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. They reinforce our belief that an invasion of Cuba is imminent!

A few weeks later, on the late afternoon of October 22, 1962, Kennedy addresses the nation over television,

. . .missiles in Cuba add to an already clear and present danger. . .Neither the United States of America nor the world can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. . . First: To halt this offensive buildup, a strict quarantine of all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being implemented. I want to say a few words to the captive people of Cuba, to whom this speech is being directly carried by special radio facilities. . .as one who knows your deep attachment to your fatherland, as one who shares your aspirations for liberty and justice for all. . .Now your leaders are no longer Cuban leaders inspired by Cuban ideals. They are puppets and agents of an international conspiracy, which has turned Cuba against your friends and neighbors. . .

(American Rhetoric)

Kennedy's announcement of a naval quarantine appears to the U.S. government's intention not only to dismantle the Soviet Union's missiles and nuclear weapons from Cuba, but also to remove Castro from power. But, six days later, on October 28, Khrushchev announces the Soviet Union will remove the missile and nuclear weapons from Cuban soil in exchange for the removal of U.S. missiles from Turkey and a commitment from the U.S. government and its allies

not to invade Cuba. Kennedy consents. Going forward, despite Cuban exiles efforts to overthrow the Castro government, Kennedy's new hands-off policy towards Cuba coupled with Soviet Union full support for the newly self-proclaimed Cuban Marxist-Leninist regime appears to guarantee Castro will remain in power for a long time. My believe in a prompt return begins to falter.

* * * *

Kennedy's Sons

December 19, 1962

Ft. Knox, Ky.

At Ft. Knox, many Cuban recruits seek answers about the Kennedy/Khrushchev agreement. We are concerned over our future and upset over training in a place where snow is a constant companion. We were planning to fight in Cuba where it does not snow. Our morale is very low. On a cold December morning, we participate in an act of defiance by refusing to respond to the morning call for assembly. Shortly after, they tell us we can go to breakfast without going to assembly, will be sent home for Christmas, and will need to report to Ft. Jackson, S.C. following Christmas to finish our training in a milder climate.

Before we leave to go home for Christmas, approximately 10 companies consisting of 160 recruits each are called to formation. The U.S. and Cuban flags are on display. The band plays the U.S. & Cuban national anthems. The base commander congratulates us on completing the individual basic training and confirms we will not return to Ft. Knox. After the New Year, we will receive our individual advance training and basic unit training at Fort Jackson.

The master sergeant of our company is a Korean War veteran born on the island of Puerto Rico who has served in the military for more than twenty years. He stands next to me when he

says,

*!En todos mis años de militar, nunca oí tocar el himno
ó vi desplegada la bandera de otra nación en una base
militar en territorio americano sin que existiera la presencia
de algún oficial de otra nación! ¡Ustedes deben ser
especiales para recibir este tratamiento, son hijos de Kennedy!*

“During all my years in the military, I never heard
the hymn or saw a flag of a foreign nation in a U.S.
military base located on American soil without a single
foreign dignitary being present. You must be special to
receive such a reception, you’re Kennedy’s sons!”

* * * *

A promise made

December 29, 1962

Miami, FL.

On December 23, 1962, the Cuban nationals serving prison time in Cuba for landing on the Bay of Pigs to overthrow the Castro regime arrive in Miami. President Kennedy, using James Donovan, as an intermediary, had obtained their release by exchanging them for fifty-three million dollars in food and medicine given to the Castro regime.²⁹

Six days later, on December 29, ABC television broadcasts the President’s meeting with the members of the Brigade. It is a huge public event held at the Orange Bowl in Miami. The

²⁹ James Donovan was an associate prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials in Germany, defended accused Russian spy Rudolf Abel, and led the negotiations to exchange U-2 Pilot Gary Powers before being called by Kennedy to negotiate with Castro for the release of the Bay of Pigs’ combatants.

members of the Brigade present the Brigade's flag to President Kennedy. In turn, he claims,

*I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this Brigade
in a free Havana (YouTube 1962).*

I am overcome with emotion. I feel the loss of my homeland deeply within me and still hope that I may soon return. I miss my parents, my family, and the familiar surroundings where I grew up. As I watch and listen to the President's remarks on live television, I question the meaning of Kennedy's words,

*¿Qieren decir que de nuevo invadirá a Cuba? ¿Serán falsos
los rumores acerca del acuerdo de Kennedy con Khrushchev
de que los Estado Unidos no invadirá o permitirá que Cuba
sea invadida de territorio americano en cambio de remover
los cohetes que fueron instalados en Cuba?*

“Do they mean he plans to invade Cuba again? Are the rumors false about Kennedy's agreement with Khrushchev not to invade Cuba, or allow Cuba to be invaded from U.S. soil in exchange for the removal of the missiles installed in Cuba?”

When the event takes place in Miami, I am at home on leave. Ileana sleeps peacefully in Marina's arms, oblivious to our drama. I tell Marina,

*No sé si debemos creer en las palabras del Presidente.
No sé cuando regresaremos y veremos a nuestros
padres y hermanos o al resto de la familia.*

“I don't know if we should believe the President's words.

I don't know when we will return and see our

parents and siblings or the rest of the family again.”

Given the unconfirmed rumors that Kennedy’s bargain with Khrushchev includes a hands-off policy towards Cuba, I am doubtful about Kennedy’s commitment to Cuban exiles. My mind drifts away to images of mother, father, brother, grandfather, and other relatives. Will I ever see them again? Slowly, I begin to realize the magnitude of my decision to leave Cuba and question who I am. Who am I now? Where do I belong? As I look across the room at Marina and Ileana, my gut aches for my homeland. I do not realize, until some years later, that identity is brought forth in conversations with **others**. Even when exiled, alone and in pain, there is no self without an other. We **are** a dialogue. (Cotanda 2001b)

* * * *

An Interlude: A Reflection

Birthplaces evoke strong memories. For most of us, they are a place of origin out of which a self emerges through family interactions in childhood (Mead 1934). As geographical markers of genetic and social roots, they give us a sense of belonging. Geographical residence, as a metaphor or identity, is the dominant metaphor for any traveler. It points to the place where our journey starts. To the sojourner it represents the place to return to; to the immigrant, the end of a journey and the start of a new one; to an exile, a place in heaven, a place one must reach after doing penance that will not guarantee arrival.

As an exile, my experience became more than just a physical phenomenon of crossing Cuban and American national boundaries (Milosz 1993, p. 26). Cuba traveled with me. But the culture that travels with me does not stay the same. It continues to change and differ from the one left behind. The diasporic experience continues to grow on me and

in me, transforming me from within, and becoming a blow of fate. It becomes a test of internal freedom that is terrifying, as terrifying as the lack of external freedom I ran from (Milosz, p. 30). As time passes, I become unwittingly enmeshed in transculturation. Even today, at the age of 80, the fear of losing my Cuban identity is as real to me as ever. My identity, in both form and function, slowly begins to lose its place-defined quality and acts independently of Cuban culture. I physically inhabit a place to which I claim legal rights, America, the site of my present life, the culture of my children, who, like all non-Anglo Saxon first generation born Americans, must come to grips with the question, to what place does my self belong—parental, birth/host culture, both, neither? (Cotanda 2001b)

This dissertation concentrates my attention on these questions and issues.

* * * *

Training ends: A Request to Fight Communism

January 12, 1963

Ft. Jackson S.C.

At Ft. Jackson, our training continues to be conducted in Spanish. I meet several members of the 2506 Brigade freed from Castro's prison who were present when Kennedy promised to return the Brigade's flag in a free Havana. They were U.S. Army uniforms with the corporal insignias. They augment the number of instructors training us.

I hear the new Captain assigned to our company, unlike the previous one, does not speak Spanish. In early May, our Master Sergeant tells me to report to the Captain's office. Once there, I notice seven other members of the company present. The captain tells us to follow him to an area behind the fourth peloton barrack. We stand in a circle under the tall pine trees. He speaks softly, but firmly,

“Your training at Ft. Jackson is complete. Now, you need to sign up for four years of active duty to train at O. C. S. so you may become an officer. You should be proud and honored at this unique opportunity to be able to fight communism wherever it may be.”

When we ask if this meant in Cuba, he responds,

“I do not know.”

Aware Kennedy is sending “military advisors” to Vietnam we ask him if it means Vietnam, the response is the same,³⁰

“I do not know.”

We get the same response when we ask him to confirm or deny the rumors among Cuban recruits that Kennedy reached an agreement with Khrushchev which prevents the U.S. from invading Cuba. Unable to obtain much information, all but one of us decline to join O.C.S. Our goal is to reclaim Cuba, not to fight communism around the world. He appears to be surprised. He does not understand how we can profess to be anti-communists and decline the offer. He feels we need to seize the opportunity to fight communism anywhere it exists and is upset at what he considers is the illogical position of all but one of us.

In late May, after completing my military training, I travel home on a Greyhound Bus from Ft. Jackson to Tampa. As we turn south on Nebraska, I notice the green two-story frame building, the site of *El Consejo Revolucionario de Cuba*. I remember being in a small room located on the second floor recording my farewell message before leaving for training at Ft. Knox. My earlier conversation with Iglesias to attend a protest at the Cuban Club also comes to

³⁰ To protect South Vietnam from the Vietcong, Kennedy sends “military advisors” to train South Vietnamese soldiers.

mind. I realize that Castro's government is now fully entrenched. I am at a loss. What happens now? I can no longer be able to hang on to the idea of an inevitable return to Cuba any time soon. My parents, brother, and father-in-law remain in Cuba. I have no idea when we will be together again.

* * * *

The Reluctant Immigrant

10 de julio de 1964

Ybor City, Tampa, FL.

When I arrive from Ft. Jackson, Marina and I rent a two-bedroom, one bath wood framed home on Spruce St. I go back to work at Peninsular Lumber Co. On July 10, 1964, our second daughter Maria Elena is born at *Trelles Clinic* located on Eight Ave. in Ybor City. A few months later, we purchase a two-bedroom, one bath wood framed home at 3816 Fig St.

The following year, On October 1, 1965, I join Robbins Manufacturing Company (RMC) as an outside salesman calling on contractors. This is the same year Castro reaches an agreement with the Johnson administration to let Cubans who hold a visa waiver and are stranded in Cuba following the Bay of Pigs fiasco leave through *Camarioca*, a town due east from Havana. My parents, maternal grandfather, father-in-law and brother-in-law hold such a visa. Manuel, my father-in-law, together with his youngest son, Carlos, arrive in Tampa the same year and come to live with us for a few months until they move into an apartment.

The following year, our youngest daughter, Lourdes, is born at *Trelles Clinic*. The year after her birth, we drive to the Tampa Airport to pick up my parents and grandfather. Years later, my mother would reminisce,

. . .tres imágenes nunca se me borran de mi mente:

*las espaldas de Dionel y Marina cuando caminaban
hacia el avión en Cuba en rumbo a los Estados Unidos,
el verdor de los cañaverales cubanos desde el aire
cuando yo me iba de Cuba, y mis tres nieras con sus
vestiditos azules y zapatos blancos recibíendome en
el aeropuerto de Tampa . . .*

“. . .three images that will never leave my mind are:

Dionel and Marina’s backs as you walked to the plane

on your way to the U.S., the deep green color of the

Cuban sugar fields I saw from the air as I left Cuba,

and my three granddaughters in their little blue dresses

and white shoes waiting for me at the Tampa airport. . .”

* * * *

A Puzzling Question

October 24, 1970

Tampa, FL.

Beginning my second decade in Tampa, I must now face the reality of not returning to Cuba any time soon. I feel the cool stillness filling the air as I stand in the back yard of the house on Osborne Ave. which we purchased the previous October. I am staring at the deep brown reddish maple leaves slowly settling on the grass. As I realize Fall is upon us, I hear the voices of Manuel, Marina’s father, and Carlos, her youngest stepbrother, discussing the latest news received from Cuba. Their efforts to bring Marina’s step-mother and oldest stepbrother to the U.S.A. have not been successful. When I turn to look at them, I notice my parents and

grandfather listening in deep silence. Suddenly, I hear laughter coming from our two youngest daughters, Maria and Lourdes. They are playing on the swing hanging from the strongest branch of the maple tree. Their innocent laughter provides a stark contrast to the solemn conversation among Marina's family members. Standing next to me is Ileana, now eight years old. She says,

*Daaddee, unos niños en el colegio se burlaron de mi y
de mi amiga porque estábamos hablando en español.*

Daddy, some kids in school made fun of me and my girlfriend
because we were talking in Spanish.

My mind races at breakaway speed,

*¿Qué le digo? ¿Como mantego su interés en **mi** idioma,
el vehículo a **mi** cultura?*

What do I tell her? How do I reinforce her interest in **my** language,
the vehicle to **my** culture?

Baibee, ¿tu puedes hablar en inglés?

Baby, can you speak in English?

She looks puzzled by my question and comments,

Daaddee, ¿que pregunta es esa? Tu sabes que yo hablo inglés.

Daddy, what kind of question is that? You know that I speak
English.

¿Los niños que se burlaron de ustedes hablan Español?

Do the children that made fun of you speak Spanish? I ask.

When she answers "No," I continue,

Bueno, déjame ver. Cuando ellos hablan, hablan en inglés y tu entiendes todo lo que ellos dicen. Cuando tu hablas en inglés ellos te entienden. Cuando tu hablas en español, ellos no entienden lo que tu dices. ¿Dime, quién tu crees que es mas inteligente?

Now, let me see. When they speak, they speak in English and you understand everything they say. When you speak in English, they understand what you say. When you speak in Spanish, they do not understand what you say. Tell me. who do you believe is smarter?

Suddenly, her face lights up. A big grin appears. My eyes are moist. This memory is forever embedded in my mind.

* * * *

The Entrepreneur

August 11, 1975

Tampa, FL.

Bruce Robbins Jr., current President & CEO of Robbins Manufacturing Company (RMC), sits across my desk. Since, October 1967, I have held the position of manager for RMC's Truss Plant, a metal plate connected wood roof and floor trusses manufacturing plant. I am just back from vacation. Before I'm able to say anything, Bruce starts to reminisce about his service during WWII in Europe under General Patton's command. His comments remind me that I had not received my discharge papers from the Army. Later I will find out that they were mailed to our old address on 3618 Spruce St. and were returned to the Army. When I finally request and receive them, I notice my discharge was official on October 31, 1968. Bruce's voice brings me back,

“When you were on vacation, Paul Green called to let us know they are selling TCT Engineering. I told him we needed to wait until you return. What are your thoughts?”

A couple of years earlier, I mentioned to Paul Green, manager of TCT, of our interest in pursuing a purchase. TCT is a provider of metal connector plates and engineering services for wood truss manufacturers.

“Bruce, we currently do not purchase from TCT. Were we to purchase them, we’d be the largest customer. Our purchases alone would be enough to make the operation break even. Any of their existing customer we retain will provide us with a profit.

I see a lot of upside potential with no downside risk.”

Bruce embraces the idea. Later, the purchase of the assets of TCT Engineering for \$75,000 takes place. Robbins Engineering Inc. (REI) is created as a wholly owned subsidiary of RMC. I am appointed President & CEO of REI and continue to be Vice President of Truss Operations of RMC.

During the next few years I am consumed by my efforts to help make REI a success while at the same time make certain our truss operation continues to be a successful venture. In 2006, RMC Board of Directors decides to sell REI to MiTek Industries, a Warren Buffett company. The sale of REI results in a sizeable dividend to the shareholders and my appointment as the fourth President & CEO of RMC. I become the first non-family member to hold the position.

* * * *

During the Fall of 1981, our daughter Ileana starts attending the University of South

Florida (USF). One year later, she is followed by our daughter Maria Elena. Our daughter Lourdes enrolls in 1984. Their college experience, now the main topic of conversation at our dinner table, rekindles my desire to return to school following a twenty-five-year hiatus. In the following chapter I narrate my experiences as a university student.

CHAPTER THREE: BACK TO SCHOOL

April 1, 1986

University of South Florida

On April 1, 1986, I apply for admission and provide USF with a copy of my transcript from *La Universidad de La Habana*. The first class I attend is listed as APB 2140 Food + Drug.

On July 1, 1986, I meet with an advisor, Susan Fernández. On the Advising Record Form, she lists my Planned Major as either Pre-law or Business and mentions I was granted a “Bulk Credit of 48 credit hours” as a result of my transcript from *La Universidad de La Habana*.

As soon as I am back in school, I realize what a welcome distraction university classes provide from my daily business responsibilities. After two semesters, my interest to register for business courses wanes. I decide to pursue International Studies and Political Science instead.

On December 17, 1988, I receive a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in International Studies and a Minor in Political Science. School is such a welcome addition to my life I do not want it to end. Prior to graduation, I visit the Department of Mass Communications thinking it was like the marketing major I pursued at *La Universidad de la Habana* before my departure from Cuba. But, after talking to the graduate advisor, I was unimpressed. While still in the building, I notice a sign indicating the Department of Communication was in the same floor and decide to inquire into whether Communication may be what I was looking for.

I enter the Communication Department and am directed to talk with Dr. Carol Jablonski, Director of Graduate Studies. She asks me about my interests, then says,

“Based on what you tell me, I believe you should attend Dr. Bochner’s Communication Theory Class. I think you will find it interesting.”

After providing details about the class, she continues,

“I suggest you attend our Public Speaking class as well.”

I find Dr. Jablonski’s welcoming and enthusiastic demeanor refreshing and decide to follow her suggestion to attend Dr. Bochner’s class. As I enter the classroom and head to a seat in the front row next to a window, I notice Dr. Jablonski seated towards the back. I do not know anyone else. Following the introductions, I learn several attendees are either professors or graduate teaching assistants in the Communication Department. Besides Dr. Jablonski, Dr. Navita James, Dr. Marsha Vanderford, and Dr. Kenneth Cissna are present. Later, I enroll in their classes.

The presence of so many professors attending Dr. Bochner’s class raises my curiosity and I ask myself,

“Why are so many professors sitting in Dr. Bochner’s course?

Something special must be happening here!” I tell myself.

My memories of that first night in the Spring of 1989 rush in twenty-five years later as I read one passage in Dr. Bochner’s book narrating his life as a professor (Bochner 2014):

“(Thomas) Kuhn challenges the fundamental premise of progress in science—the building-block model of science. Science doesn’t evolve cumulative, brick by brick. Progress isn’t gradual and continuous—it’s abrupt and irregular, akin to a fissure that breaks sharply from its foundation. The building-block model gives the impression of an orderly and precise progression in which science moves closer and closer to something called ‘truth.’ Each research study aims to add on to the ones that preceded it. But history tells a different story, says Kuhn, one that

reveals a chaotic process of change during which the stability of science is punctuated by a 'revolution' that suddenly revises and replaces the entire 'disciplinary matrix' or 'paradigm' of scientific beliefs that preceded them. 'The new paradigm, or a sufficient hint to allow later articulation, emerges all at once, sometimes in the middle of the night, in the mind of a man [sic] deeply in crisis'." (Bochner 2014, p.152).

Bochner's vibrant presentation energizes the air. I'm enthralled. He challenges my mind and makes me wonder whether the Cuban revolution was a paradigm shift. His words bring back to me "the crisis" I felt "in the middle of the night!" I ask myself,

"Is life as an exile a paradigm change? Am I still 'in the middle of the night'?"

* * * *

The summer of 1989 was muggy and wet. At least that is as I remember it on one morning at the University of South Florida campus. I am in Dr. David Payne's office. He is the Graduate Director. When I ask about registering for his class on *Therapeutic Uses of Rhetoric*,

"I am not sure you should register for this class," he tells me.

His response makes me wonder,

"Is it his small office, crowded with books and papers scattered on the desk and the floor, his mannerism, his beard, his casual attire, his horn-rimmed glasses, his condescending voice, or his discouraging remark what makes me feel uncomfortable?"

"It is all of them combined," I tell myself as I believe he is discouraging me.

"Why?" I ask him and at the same time ask myself,

"Is it my piercing eyes and inquiring voice, the Cuba I represent or that I have not applied to the graduate program yet?"

Before I can answer my own question, I hear his firm, sharp words,

"Well, businesspeople and academia do not always get along well!"

Undaunted, I enroll in his class that afternoon. And, as I listen to lectures and participate in class discussions, I find out he embraces the same Marxist ideology I left behind in Cuba. I realize his discouraging words about registering for his class were not directed at me, but rather to what my clean-shaven face, long-sleeve button down blue shirt, red-checkered tie, and black shining penny loafers represented to him: The Capitalist system he wants to change. I find **his** rhetoric is **not** therapeutic. But, this time, I do not leave.

* * * *

The Making of a Bostrom Young Scholar

I am delighted to learn that most communication professors encourage connecting theory to real life as it is lived. In Jablonski's class, *Rhetoric of the 60's*, I make connections to Castro's rhetorical style. Bochner's 1992 class on *Narrative Inquiry* sparks the question,

"Is living in exile a condition that supports just living day to day and not reflecting on each action or decision?"

Bochner's class, *Social Construction of Self*, and Ellis' *Sociology of Emotions*, introduce me to autoethnography, a research method that centers on connection between self and culture. Neumann's *Contemporary Cultural Studies* allows me to reflect on how much Cuban culture is still within me. As a class assignment, in Ellis' *Qualitative Research Methods*, I record a conversation with my brother José about his experiences in Cuba. In Vanderford's class, *Survey of Rhetorical Theory*, I am encouraged to analyze and compare, inspired by Poulakos' (1984) rhetorical concepts, Castro's use of rhetoric and the one used by Cuban exiles. In my term paper, *The Rhetorics of the Ruler and the Exile*, I discuss the "rhetorical relationship between the ruler

and the ruled" (Fagen, Brody, & O'Leary, 1968).

After reading my paper, Dr. Vanderford calls me aside and says,

“Dionel, I started reading your paper and was not able to put it down. You need to send it to the Southern Speech Communication Association. I know you have never done this before, but I believe your paper will be accepted. I will help you walk through the process. What do you think? Will you do this?”

I sit on the chair next to Vanderford’s desk. I am baffled, lost for words. To make certain I am not dreaming, I pinch myself .

“Dr. Vanderford believes my paper is worthy of presentation at an academic convention. Of course, I must follow her advice,” I tell myself.

With trepidation, but propelled by Vanderford’s encouragement, I submit my paper to the Southern Speech Communication Association (SSCA).

A few months later, at home alone, the phone rings. To my "*Hello*," a woman's voice I do not recognize inquires,

“Dionel Cotanda?”

"*Yes*," I reply.

“Congratulations! I am Dr. Pamela Kalbfleisch from the Department of Communication and Mass Media at the University of Wyoming. I call to inform you that your paper was chosen as this year's winner of the Southern States Communication Association's Bostrom Young Scholar's Award. Out of fifty papers received, your paper "*The Rhetorics of the Ruler and the Exile*"

was rated first. You will receive the Bostrom's Young Scholar Award for 1995! Will you be able to attend?"

She waits for my response, but I am speechless. My hands shake as I ask myself,

"Is this a hoax?".

"Hello, are you there?" she asks.

"What did you say is your name?" is all I am able to muster in a meek tone.

"Pamela Kalbfleisch, K-A-L-B-F-L-E-I.. ."

I am in a daze. If it is a hoax, I am going to flush it out. I ask her to hold on a minute while I reach for pen and paper. She repeats it a couple of times. My hands tremble. I do not write. Unable to make sense of the experience, I scribble, then mutter, "thank you."

Alone, in the darkness of the room, tears flow from my eyes as I think back to my conflicted beginning as a university student:

"Am I the same college student who attended La Universidad de La Habana and left Cuba to maintain the freedom to dissent as a Cuban? Can my story now be told without fear?"

* * * *

The Presentation

When I tell Marina the Bostrom Young Scholar award will be presented during the SSCA convention in New Orleans, she suggests,

Sera una buena idea si todos estamos presentes durante tu presentación.

"It'd be a good idea if we go as a family to your

presentation.”

Marina’s “family pride” validates my new life as a university student. What I am doing is giving new meaning to my life, past and present.

On Friday, April 7, 1995, the seven of us travel to New Orleans in María Elena’s car, a brand new 1995 white Suburban. The driver is Amador, her husband. When we arrive, we check into the Monte Leone Hotel. The next day, when I receive the Bostrom Young Scholar award, I make copies of my paper available to conference participants:

*Rhetorical Artifacts: Method, Purposes*³¹

My history is embedded in the current Cuban drama. As such, this paper reveals portions of who I am. In my analysis, I draw upon my own experiences as a Cuban exile and at random from several of Castro's published speeches and interviews. In addition, I rely upon Rice's (1992) rhetorical work on uses of "the authorizing figure" and Cuban exile's published interviews and books. The English translations provided after Spanish quotations are mine. But, before I proceed, it will be helpful to present a brief recap of the events that propelled large number of Cubans to leave their island nation.

Cuba, Castro, Exile

“When Batista overthrew Prío in 1952, few mourned the passing of Prio's government. The Constitution of 1940, however, became the symbol of the highest expectations of the citizenry, and its restoration soon developed into the rallying cry of the opposition movement” (Perez Stable, 1993, p. 9).

“The constitution symbolized the ideals of democracy, social justice, and honest government that representative democracy during the 1940s and dictatorship during the 1950s

³¹ This is only a part of the paper. I do not include the first section.

had traversed” (Perez Stable,1993, p. 59)

When Batista fled from Cuba on January 1, 1959, the different factions who had participated in the struggle to remove him from power formed a provisional government. On January 12, 1959, Castro, as commander of the provisional government's armed forces, claimed elections would be held under the constitution of 1940 within eighteen months:

De ninguna manera debe pasarse de ese plazo.

“Under no circumstance should such time frame be exceeded.”

(Fiallo, 1979, p. 25).

On May 1, 1960, within two months from the election deadline and by then in full control of the provisional government, Castro, at a mass rally held at the Plaza Cívica de La Habana, raised the question about the need for elections:

Elecciones . . . ¿para qué?

“Elections . . . what for?” (Fiallo, 1979, p. 29).

Even though ending Batista's dictatorship and restoring the constitution had been the expressed objectives (Perez-Stable, 1993, p. 59), by the end of his presentation, Castro had persuaded the crowd that there was no need to hold elections. He claimed the revolutionary government to be the genuine representative of the Cuban people and proclaimed those who insisted on holding elections wanted to stop the Cuban revolution. As critics of the revolution, they were "immediately suspected of trying to destroy it" (Bourne 1986, p. 197). Castro believed not only that "he had the right to govern Cuba," but also that his "rule could safeguard la patria" [the homeland] (Perez-Stable, 1993, p. 176-77). Castro's actions set the stage for what was to become the largest mass exodus in the Americas—over one million Cubans, frustrated over the perceived inability to accept or stop the massive social changes introduced by Castro, decided to

leave their present situation behind to change their future—their relation to *Being*.

Initially, Castro promised a return to the constitution of 1940 and to conduct free elections within a year to eighteen months. Once he felt his position of power was strong enough, he challenged the need for either. "Moreover, at no time after 1959 did the Cuban government recognize the right to dissent from the revolution, socialism, and the leadership of Fidel Castro" (Perez-Stable, p. 178). Castro talked about what he would do in the future, but his focus was the present—the actual, his position of power. Let us now look at how Castro's rhetoric reflects this position.

Castro: Rhetoric of the Actual—The Present

Castro's rhetoric is rooted in the actual. His aim is to perpetuate his present position of power. His focus is the actual. As an expert rhetorician, Castro did not want to be at odds with his audience. Early on in his struggle to overthrow Batista, Castro denied he was a Marxist-Leninist. Later, once in power, Castro invokes rationality, uses the authorizing figure of Cuba's apostle—Marti, and provides proofs of the U.S. government's attempts to destroy the Cuban revolution in his efforts to persuade Cubans to keep him in power.

Geyer (1990) notes that at Belen, a Jesuit high school, Castro tried desperately to hone his oratorical skills and joined the oratory group, the *Academia Literaria Avellaneda*, named after a prominent Cuban poetess (p. 40-50). An effective rhetorician, Castro knows his audience well. He firmly believes Cubans would have originally rejected his Marxist-Leninist ideology. During the struggle to overthrow Batista, religion still had a large influence over the Cuban population. Castro recognized most Cubans perceived a conflict between Marxist-Leninist ideology and religion would eventually make a "conflict inevitable" (Bourne 1986, p. 289). Therefore, at first, Castro avoided a conflict by denying he was a Marxist-Leninist. Having attended Catholic

schools, it was not difficult for Castro to foster a religious image. Indeed, his "oratory has always been peppered with religious references" (Bourne 1986, p. 290) and, during Castro's first interview, published after his arrival in Havana, he displayed a religious medal around his neck (Fiallo 1979, p. 15). Later, Castro candidly admits his conviction that if Cubans had known he was a Marxist-Leninist, he would not have been successful in his attempt to seize power:

Desde luego, si nosotros nos paramos en el Pico Turquino cuando éramos "cuatro gatos" y decimos: somos marxista-leninistas—desde el Pico Turquino—posiblemente no hubiéramos podido bajar al llano. Así que nosotros nos denominábamos de otra manera, no abordábamos ese tema. . .

“Of course, if he we stand up on the top of the Turquino mountain when we were "four cats" and say: we're Marxist-Leninists—from the top of the Turquino—most likely we would not have been able to come down into the valley. So, we'd refer to ourselves in other terms, we'd not approach this topic. . .” (Fiallo 1979, p. 21).

It was not until later, once Castro felt he had persuaded Cubans to divorce their religious beliefs from reason, that he reveals his Marxist-Leninist leaning. In other words, when Castro felt certain most Cubans had learned how to practice the belief system of the Western world: *reason*, he publicly revealed his Marxist-Leninist ideology:

soy marxista-leninista y seré marxista leninista hasta el último día de mi vida.

“I'm Marxist-Leninist and shall be Marxist-Leninist till the last day of my life” (Fiallo 1979, p. 19).

Once Castro believed he had taught the Cubans how "to think", "to reason out" (Taber 1985, p.156-157), he did not hesitate to publicly provide the questions to address the topic he had avoided earlier: his ideology,

¿Creo en el marxismo?

Creo absolutamente en el marxismo.

¿Creía el primero de enero?

Creía el primero de enero.

¿Creía el 26 de julio?

Creía el 26 de julio.

“I believe in Marxism?”

“I believe in Marxism.”

“Did I believe on January 1?”

“I believed on January 1.”

“Did I believe on July 26?”

“I believed on July 26.” (Fiallo 1979, p. 17).

Once Cubans knew how "to reason out" and "think," Castro, now anointed *el líder máximo de la Revolución*, the maximum leader of the Revolution, publicly announced what he had kept secret: not only that he was a Marxist-Leninist on January 1, 1959, when he seized power, but since before July 26, 1953, when he stormed *el Moncada*, Cuba's second largest army barrack, in an attempt to overthrow Batista's government and promising to re-establish the constitution of 1940 to provide Cubans a vehicle to freely elect their government.

Castro's rhetoric, like the rhetoric of actuality, "assumes a rational universe whose structure and causes man needs to know and understand" (Poulakos 1984, p 223). Castro points

to a rational universe when he answers the question,

MacNeil: “May I raise a point? Your system, which you say works very well, it does presuppose that the leadership of the country, you, are always right, that you are infallible. Is that not so?”

Castro: “No, it does not presuppose that, because we are not as dogmatic as the church, although we have been dogmatic, and we have never preached a personality cult. You will not see a statue of me anywhere, nor a school with my name, nor a street, nor a little town, nor any type of personality cult because we have not taught our people to believe, but to think, to reason out. We have people who think, not a people who believe, but rather who reason out, who think. And they might either agree or disagree with me. In general the overwhelming majority have agreed. Why? Because we have always been honest; we have always told them the truth. The people know that the government has never told them a lie. And I ask you to go to the world, tour the world, and go to the United States and ask if they can say what I can say that I have never told a lie to the people. And these are the reason why there is confidence. Not because I have become a statue or an idol but rather simply because of the fact that they trust me. And I have very few prerogatives in this country. I do not appoint ministers or vice-ministers or directors of ministries or ambassadors. I don't appoint anybody, and that's the way it is. We have a system, a system for the selection of cadre

based on their capacity, etc. I have less power, 100 times less power than the president of the United States, who can even declare war and nuclear war” (Taber 1985, pp. 156-157).

Castro's view of today's Cuba is that of a rational universe where reason reigns over belief. Cubans do not believe, but "think" and "reason." Reason is the state's ideology. Castro used reason to move Cubans to believe he was telling them the truth to solidify his position and manage his constituency.

An important element in Castro's rhetoric of the actual is his use of Marti, the apostle of Cuban's war of independence against Spain, as the authorizing figure to justify his leadership position in the Cuban revolution. The authorizing figure is useful to tie Castro's rhetoric to the present and actual. Rice (1992) claims that among the many methods rhetors use to motivate, solidify, and manage their constituencies is the "authorizing figure," one of the chief rhetorical tools employed. He claims the concept of the authorizing figure combines the notion of authorizing—"to increase the force, power, or effect of something"—to that of figuration—"in the sense of [a] figure pulling away from [the] ground"—whereby rhetors are able "to boost their own authority, or power." It provides rhetors the ability to increase their own authority by being associated with "past figures of authority." This is what Rice refers to as "past increasers." He argues that "the referencing of historical figures for present purposes is a common practice and is frequently employed in the political realm—for example, Ronald Reagan's references to Edmund Burke and Abraham Lincoln, Jesse Jackson's references to Martin Luther King, Jr." (Rice 1992, p. xiv).

When using the authorizing figure, rhetors use the past to focus on the present, the actual. Rice goes on to point out that "leaders put themselves in positions of authority by appeals to a

nation's past" which perpetuate the present position (Rice 1992, p. 11). The actual—the present position—is the focus. The past justifies the present. The authorizing figure concept uses “the rhetoric of actuality” by pulling from the past to focus on the present. We see this in Castro's discourse when he makes references to Marti:

“We had men as extraordinary as Marti, who died in the war. However, that, in the long run, did not impede the independence of Cuba, nor a revolution as radical as socialism, which at present is being carried out in our country. Cuba lost many men who were highly capable throughout history, and that did not hinder the development of our people.” (Turner, 1990, p. 10).

Castro rhetorically uses Marti—the Apostle of Cuba's independence—as the authorizing figure to maintain his present position as leader of the contemporary Cuban revolution. Castro claims the present is a continuation of Cuba's earlier struggle against Spanish colonialism. When Castro looks to the past to find Marti's authorizing figure, he addresses the present: the legitimacy of the Cuban revolution and his actual position in it:

“Castro's appeals to Martí are attempts to bring credibility to his own leadership; in effect, the rhetorical strategy serves to authorize Castro's actions in a number of ways. The successful rhetorical figuration of Martí by Castro helps to increase or promote Castro's ability to lead, to take action, and to shape the future of his nation” (Rice 1992, p. 12).

Claims made on the grounds of Marti's past authority contribute to the political force of Castro's policies and his ability to carry them out (Rice 1992, p. 14). Like the rhetoric of

actuality, Castro's rhetoric "exists to affect decisions about human actions through the force of relevant factual evidence and valid proof" (Poulakos 1984, p. 223) as it addresses Cubans as they are and adapts what he has to say to their views, beliefs, and values. Castro attempts to persuade Cubans when he claims he will uphold their views, beliefs, and values:

“And we will have for all time a fatherland with dignity, a fatherland with independence, and not a yankee colony. The fatherland must be saved. This is the task that today we are calling on 7.5 million Cederistas to perform. Socialism or death” (Fanning, 992, p. 15).

“Any country which resolves to liberate itself from the monopoly of North American trade, which determines to make an Agrarian Reform, which decides to have its own industries, to have its own independent policy has to oppose imperialism” (Dickson 1988, p. 20).

Well versed in using tools of persuasion, Castro uses rhetoric to persuade. He uses his speeches to mobilize the support of the Cuban people. “Socialism or death” and “Hit the Yankees hard” are slogans to which his audience still respond. Castro, in referring to the latter, claims:

“An old slogan that has persisted for all these years. . .[T]he United States acts as an enemy of Cuba and the United States maintains a severe economic blockade. They [Cubans] know this. These slogans. Often, in many public meetings, these are slogans that catch on and then are repeated” (Dickson 1988,p. 40-41).

Castro's rhetoric places Cubans "in a socio-political context which it seeks to perpetuate" (Poulakos 1984, p. 223). He points to the determination of the U.S. to destroy the revolution which provides many benefits to the population to persuade Cubans not to have elections:

“Well, yes, we do have economic difficulties, like all countries in Latin America, as well as the rest of the developing countries, not to use the Third World term which, I know, Ted, you don't like. We've had these difficulties for a long time now which are, to a certain extent, due to the fact, if we consider that the United States has been (unintelligible) the country for over 30 years and sabotaging our economy, prohibiting the export even of aspirins to our country. It is even possible that we might have even greater difficulty in the future, depending on how events evolve between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But despite everything, our health levels are above any other developing country and above any other Third World country and above many developed countries. We could say that our educational and health levels are competing with those of the United States, and in several indices, we are above them. Since we do not have illiteracy, the functional illiterates are a minimum group in our country, and in the United States, it's tens of millions” (Turner 1990, p. 2).

Whenever Castro refers to the past, his focus is to perpetuate the present situation in Cuba and his position as a ruler. According to Perez-Stable (1993, p. 170), Castro never entertained democracy to mean the right to dissent as provided by the constitution of 1940. Castro has no

self-doubts about his right to govern Cuba (p. 173). When he points to the future, Castro insists “his rule is the only safeguard for la patria” and does whatever is “necessary to prevent the mounting popular disaffection from developing an organized expression” (p. 181). As part of these efforts, Castro's relies increasingly on propaganda “to make Cubans fearful of what would happen to them if the revolution collapsed” (Oppenheimer 1992, p. 305). Full-page color ads display a smiling face of an elderly Cuban with the legend: “To maintain the security we enjoy, let's stay united and march forward” (Oppenheimer's 1992 p. 305).

“In fact, animosity has become part of the formula of perpetuating the revolution. In Castro's discourse, there will always be a clear enemy. In the same way that Marti's pan-Americanism looked to the future, Castro's ominous predictions about the future of U.S.-Cuban relations also are projected into the future, though in a much more negative fashion” (Rice 1992, p. 122).

Castro claims that if the United States is successful, the Cuban revolution will collapse. As a result, not only would there be bloodshed, but also millions of Cubans would lose their jobs, houses, health care benefits, and “a humanitarian society that blends Christian and socialist influences with Marti” (Rice 1992, p. 126).

Castro's rhetoric pulls from the past using Marti's observations as interpreted by Castro to provide Cubans a promise of a better future. The interpretation of the future he presents appears as a natural extension of the past. Like the rhetoric of actuality, Castro's "is a situational rhetoric that approaches man as he is in his present predicament" (Poulakos, p. 223) as it tries to persuade. Castro's rhetoric is a rhetoric of actuality. I argue in the next section that when Castro's rhetoric of actuality—the present—is compared to the rhetoric of Cuban exiles, exiles's rhetoric falls under the rhetoric of the possible—the future promised by Castro.

Cuban Exiles: Rhetoric of the Possible—The Future

Colmenero (1985), in discussing immigrants in general, claims they encounter hardships "in trying to make sense of their world view and the obstacles they must overcome" (p. 25). Leon (1991) calls attention to the difference between an immigrant and an exile as one of individual pain versus collective pain. The immigrant leaves her country, more or less voluntarily, to look for a better economic situation and wants to return when she finds it. The exile is compelled or compels herself to leave her country. Even if her individual economic situation is better than when she left, she knows that the condition that oppressed her still oppresses other countrymen who may not be able to go into exile. Therefore, regardless of her financial success or lack thereof, she does not want to return until she knows the condition has disappeared (pp. 104-105). Commenting on the anger Cuban exiles who refuse to visit Cuba feel when confronted with the reality of those that do and return, Rieff (1993) touches on what Leon calls "collective pain":

“For to contemplate return, for those who do not actually have the experience, is again to come face to face with the pain of exile, with a sharply refocused sense of lives, and homes, and youth, all gone forever, with the gnawing discomfort that gives with being an immigrant, no matter how privileged an immigrant, in America, and with the inexpressible, desolate sense all exiles the world over share of being at ease and at home nowhere on earth” (Rieff 1993, p. 22).

Like the rhetoric of possibility, the rhetoric of Cuban exiles "assumes an incomplete universe, a universe [Cubans] must bring to completion" (Poulakos 1984, p. 223). Before they can return to Cuba, the condition that oppresses Cubans must disappear. However, while an

immigrant may eventually feel herself at home in her new country of residence, the exile is at ease and at home **nowhere** on earth. If she never returns, she will always long for what she left behind—that which she cannot go back to. If she is able to return, what she finds will not be what she thought it was going to be. In either case, it will always be impossible for her to live in the present—the actual. The past she yearns for to become the future will never be the present. She will never live in the present. For the exile neither the past nor the future will ever become the present. The world will always be what it is not—an incomplete universe.

Richmond (1973), who calls the exile status "an uncertain situation," refers to the Cuban immigration after Castro came to power as "a forced-migration" (pp. 1-2). On the other hand, Fagen, Brody, & O'Leary (1968) believe the departure of large number of Cubans from their country after Castro's ascent to power is a *political self-imposed exile*. It is political because the Cuban revolution was the "first cause" of the outflow, and self-imposed because those who left for the most part could have chosen to stay and adapt to the revolutionary changes going on in Cuba (pp.4-5). However, whether Cuban exiles feel compelled or are forced to leave is not my focus. My focus is on the exile's notion of time as reflected in the following observation:

“People go into self-imposed exile only when they have experienced the effects of changes in economic arrangements, social structure, or political order in extremely personal and negative ways. Individuals may be alerted or sensitized by experiences of those outside the immediate family circle, but the precipitating experiences are personal and proximate. The Cuban revolution gave large sectors of the population occasion to have such experience” (p. 76).

Cubans go into exile when they have personally experienced as unacceptable the present situation they find themselves in. The present becomes a negative experience which will continue if they do not leave. As they focus on the future, they see the situation they are in will remain the same. They do not see the present changing. To leave is the only way they see themselves able to avoid the present experience. To leave does not change the situation they find themselves in, but their situation—Being, the contingent. It physically removes them from a particular situation, but it does not change that particular situation they leave behind. Since they cannot change that situation they find themselves in—the actual, they leave to change their situation, their relation to Being—the future. Their focus is the future.

Every exile works on different notions of time. They order it where the past and the future "take precedence over the present." What "might have been" and "might yet be" takes precedence over the "actual" that "could not possibly be" (Rieff 1993, p. 197). However, what is important for my discussion is that when they leave, it is the present situation exiles are not comfortable with and leave behind. They go into exile to change their future, not the situation they leave behind. When they leave, they leave the situation—the present, the actual—unchanged, but they change their "relation to Being"—the possible, the future.

Similar to the Sophists, the rhetoric of these Cuban exiles refers to a world that is not. Their rhetoric "attempts to persuade by attending that part of the world that is not" (Poulakos, p. 223): a Cuba without Castro which has not existed since 1959. As such, it is an incomplete universe, a universe Cuban exiles try to bring closer to completion by attending to what Cuba might be when Castro is not in power any longer.

Geldoff (1991, p. 208) interviewed Maria Cristina Herrera, who left Cuba in August 1961 "thoroughly committed to the overthrow of the Cuban government." She is a currently a tenured

professor in Miami Dade Community College South Campus and the executive director of the Institute of Cuban Studies, Inc., Miami—a group that have "promoted dialogue among all Cubans—here [outside Cuba] and there [in Cuba] . . ." Herrera uses the rhetoric of possibility when she comments on other Cuban exiles attitudes towards a dialogue with Castro—a world that is not:

“We have been stalemated for thirty years from frozen positions that don't pay off. It is not that I am a communist or that I support Castro or the government. But I am interested in my people and in my nation's future with the present perspective. I don't want to go to the past, but I don't want to remain in the present. And the only way that you can build the future is with different attitudes” (p. 208).

As she comments on a Cuba that is not, she claims she does not want "to go to the past" or "remain in the present." Her focus is a future that "you can build." Her rhetoric is one of possibility.

Geldoff (1991) also interviewed Mirta Ojito who was born in 1964, left Cuba during the Mariel boatlift of 1980, and is currently a reporter for the Miami Herald. Ojito realizes her current situation and wants to see it change in the future:

“I am only here because of the political situation of Cuba right now, and I will go back. As soon as there is a political space for me to go back, I will go back and live there. This is only for the time being, temporary. That doesn't mean that I don't try to be part of this. I just became an American citizen last week, because I don't know how long this is going to take. And I'm not going to say like the early

Cubans did: "We're not going to adapt, we're going back to Cuba next year." I don't know how long this is going to take. And I'm young and I must adapt, and I must vote, and I must have a say in this country. But as soon as I can go back to mine, I will"
(Geldoff 1991, pp. 298-299).

Ojito's rhetoric is one of possibility. She looks at the future as she would like the future to be, not as it is. She wants to change her present situation (Poulakos 1984, p. 223). Ojito perceives her situation as it is not. Even though she recognizes that she is adapting to the U.S. culture, she has not come to grips with her current situation: she is an American citizen but does not recognize the U.S. as her country, her home. Her home is Cuba, a Cuba that does not exist, where she will go back to whenever she is allowed "to speak, to think. . .have freedom" (Geldoff 1991, p. 303). Like Herrera, Ojito's focus is the future.

Aguilar (1991)—a Cuban exile, a professor at Georgetown University, a writer, and a member of the board of "Human Rights"—locates the major differences between the Cuban exiles and the Cubans in Cuba in the racial composition and the educational and ethical crisis existing in Cuba today. He exhorts Cuban exiles not to make moral or material claims, but to show their love for Cuba by using every opportunity to support the elimination of Castro's government. He asks them to be peaceful, hopeful, and supportive when it takes place.

Aguilar (1991) addresses Cuban exiles in terms of "their capacity to become what they are not" (Poulakos 1984, p. 223). Even though Aguilar acknowledges the deep differences, he tells those who believe the differences are too great to overcome that "exile" is a concept, that "reality" is the hundreds of thousand Cubans spread all over the world who have not been able to express their love for Cuba, now a love purified ironically by the separation from their

homeland. He views the changes in the Cuban culture “not as determinants of, but as obstacles of the future to be overcome” (Poulakos 1984, p. 223). Aguilar (1991) points to the Lithuanians and Czechs as examples of what the future of Cuban exiles might be (pp. 110-114). His focus is on the future, a rhetoric of possibility. While only a sample of three, the rhetoric of these Cuban exiles—Herrera, Ojito, and Leon—is representative of the rhetoric of Cuban exiles: a rhetoric of possibility—the future. Their experiences resonate with mine.

Conclusion

Smith's (1921) concept of the probable (Corax's probability—a practical method for speakers and writers of all ages to handle the affairs of life) and Poulakos's (1984) notion of the possible—one of three categories he uses to understand sophistic rhetoric—form the foundation from which I stood to argue that Plato's rhetoric focuses on the past; Aristotle's, the present; and Sophists's, the future.

I utilized Poulakos's rhetorics of possibility and actuality to frame my argument that the rhetoric of Cuban exiles is a rhetoric of the future; whereas Castro's is a rhetoric of the present. To conclude, I focus on the implications of this difference.

Fagen, Brody, & O'Leary (1968) believe that social scientists and citizens need to focus on the relationship of rulers to the ruled since the international flow of refugees and their decision to leave their native land during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s contain enough similarities to warrant comparison. They believe we need “detailed research” to understand the Cuban exile flow in the same way that we ‘understand’ the outflow of Jews from Germany in the 1930's, given the policies of Hitler, or the exodus of Moslems from India (pp. 5-6). To understand the Cuban exile flow in the same manner that we understand the outflow of the other groups mentioned by Fagen, Brody, and O'Leary (1968), we need to look at the separation of

religion from the national interest (Kissinger 1994). This separation opened the space for ideology to substitute religion in the affairs of the modern Western nation states. Religious conflicts still generate an outflow of refugees. Yet, the Cuban exile flow and that of natives from other countries stems from the ideological conflict between the relationship between a nation state and its individual citizens

While replacing religion with ideology may help explain the international flow of refugees, the rhetorical relationship between rulers and ruled had not changed since ancient Greek times. The rhetoric of the rulers is still one of the actual—the present. The ruler deals with the what is, the now. The ruler is *in* power and wants the actual to continue. On the other hand, the rhetoric of exile, those who refuse to be ruled by a particular ruler, is one of the possible—the future. The exile deals with what I not, the contingent. The exile wants the *actual* to change. When the religious conflicts still generate an outflow of refugees, the Cuban exile flow and that of natives from many other countries stems from the ideological conflict between the relationship between a nation state and its individual citizens. On one end of the spectrum is the belief that the state should have complete control over its citizens; on the other end, that the state should have very little, if any, control.

However, while the replacement of religion by ideology may help explain this international flow of refugees, the rhetorical "relationship between the rulers and the ruled" has not changed since ancient Greek times. The rhetoric of the ruler is still one of the actual—the present. The ruler deals with the what is, the now. The ruler is in power and wants the actual to continue. On the other hand, the rhetoric of the exile, who refuses to be ruled by a ruler, is still one of the possible—the future. The exile deals with what is not, the contingent. The exile wants the actual to change. When the exile finds herself unable to change the actual, she changes her

relation to Being—the future.

Because "[h]istory can never be entirely divorced from the making of new history," Rice (1993) argues that the process of authorization, or something like it, which must occur in many movements and in many political systems, requires further research. (p. 136). However, because the ruler not only controls the writing and interpretation of history—the past, but makes decisions in the present that either become obstacles to be overcome or consequences to live with in the future, the study of the relationship of the rulers to the ruled needs to be expanded to include those that refused to be ruled by the ruler—the exile, people like me.

Following my presentation, the respondent, professor H. L. Goodall, Jr. (1995) uttered the following words that became an inspiration to me to continue this work:

“. . .What we have here in Cotanda’s paper is a compelling portrait that draws into focus a lifeworld based in possibility, in the desire for Being, that serves as an intriguing explanatory metaphor for all those for whom “exile”—either from dominant theories or economic and ideological dictators—becomes an experiential and rhetorical state. . .From Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I have a dream. . .” speech to the talk of fundamentalist snake handlers of Sand Mountain, those displaced persons experiencing cultural, economic, racial, and ideological exile who remain within the borders of their own lands display rhetorical strategies that also rely on imagining a future as a way of completing the self. . .I think [Cotanda’s work] could be experientially an existentially connected inspiration to exiles elsewhere” (p. 3).

Prof. Goodall's words provide an answer to my question:

“Am I the same college student who attended La Universidad de La Habana and left Cuba to maintain the freedom to dissent as a Cuban?”

I am the same, yet I am different. I left Cuba due to lack of freedom to dissent and now embody a freedom to express that desire through an exploration of the story of my live experience, my identity. I use my memory to explore who I was and who I am.

CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTITY, DISPLACEMENT AND MEMORY³²

The positive feedback I received as the recipient of the Bostrom Young Scholar award propels my efforts to continue to write about my experience as an exile during Dr. Eric Eisenberg's class, *Communication & Identity Development*. His insights on exile and the postmodern world of displacement bring to the forefront issues of memory, displacement, and identity. Other graduate courses encourage me to look at my experience in unfamiliar but appealing ways. In Dr. Bochner's *Writing Workshop* class, I rewrite the paper for publication in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* under the title *Identity, displacement and memory* (Cotanda 2001b) which starts,

Yo me fuí de Cuba para mantener mi libertad de crítica como cubano, no para convertirme en un americano, o en un cubano-americano, un americano con guión.

"I left Cuba to maintain my freedom to dissent as a **Cuban**, not to become an **American** or a **Cuban-American**, a hyphenated **American.**"

As an exile, a member of the Cuban community in the U.S., born and raised in Cuba, my first cultural experiences, i.e., my childhood ontology, were within Cuban culture; my later ones were diasporic, different from the ones experienced by native Cubans in Cuba today.³³ My

³² This chapter covers parts of my article *Identity, displacement and memory*, published in 2001 by *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 24, pp. 65-74. I inserted other parts through other chapters.

³³ To García (1996) "Cuban culture in general was highly Americanized: Cuban were consumers of Hollywood movies and the American mass media, and their language, dress, and even sports and recreational activities reflected the influence of their neighbor to the north" (p. 15).

identity now is a product of experiences in both cultures, diasporic and Cuban, but I do not inhabit either completely. Identity is brought forth in conversation with others. My conversations with my parents, who live in the U.S., provide a bridge to my past and theirs; with my daughters, to my present and theirs. My identity is continually influenced by my cultural inheritance, my *Cubanidad*.³⁴ However, I view my identity as being also strongly influenced by the political situation as a result of Castro's revolution as well as by my *Cubanidad*. I live with a tension between these two sources (Clifford 1992, p. 116). I know that American culture deeply influences who I am, but I do not inhabit it either. It is not the site I place myself in. Cuba is the site I not only call my own, but the one significant others place me in. I know the Cuban culture I left is not the one that travels with me. The one I inhabit is a different Cuba. It is more like a habitus, a set of practices and dispositions, parts of which I remember and articulate in specific contexts, the diasporic experience out of the collective memory of Cuban exiles.

Exile is cultural dislocation and geographical displacement—not only cultural expatriation, but also mental incarceration and isolation from significant others, a public event with private, emotional consequences. Return to Cuba requires Cuban exiles to give up freedom to dissent (Perez-Stable 1993, p. 178).³⁵ Indeed, to become an immigrant, abandon the exile status, requires Cubans to give up their collective pain—the Cuban identity, our *Cubanismo*. To many Cuban exiles, to exercise the immigrant's option of belonging to neither Cuban nation, not to Cuba and not to the exile, is even worse (Rieff 1993, p. 40). As a Cuban exile, I am an outcast in Cuba. Since I felt incapable to change *the* situation of oppression I felt in Cuba, I came to the

³⁴ *Cubanidad* refers to the bond of Cuba as a place of birth and identity as a member of the Cuban nation. The term fuses the search of an affirmation of that which is Cuban regardless of ethnic background to a sense of pride, confidence, and duty (Martínez 1994, p. 38). It combines values, customs, and traditions to a strong sense of a shared Cuban history that emerges from struggles to obtain Cuba's self-determination as a Spanish colony.

³⁵ Cubans have never considered themselves immigrants. We are exiles . . . making a cameo appearance here" (Arregui as quoted by Milani, 1995, p. 5-2).

U.S. and changed *my* situation. I left Cuba to maintain my freedom to dissent as a *Cuban*, not to be an *American* or a *Cuban-American*, a hyphenated *American*.³⁶ My departure was a futile act of self-definition.

We cannot define ourselves to ourselves. Humans are never alone, even if isolated from the physical presence of other humans (Gergen 1991, p.242). We are not self-made. We *are* a dialogue, a conversation with others even when exiled, alone, and in pain. The pain an *emigré* feels is *the* fine line that demarcates exile from immigrant. To an exile, the immigrant status suggests disengagement from collective pain, abandonment of cherished memories, and loss of identity. It denies the existence of an "original" cause for displacement, the "original sin" that led to displacement from paradise: resistance to oppressive power, not an act of liberation but of frustration.

An immigrant looks for a new life. Implicit is the possibility of no return and, with it, possible assimilation, definition by others. An exile, on the other hand, seeks temporary residence and does not expect assimilation. Return is not only expected, but also taken for granted. *An exile refuses to be defined by others, expects to return, and, when unable to, in the end cannot prevent being defined through interactions with others in the host country.*

The sense of displacement, the essence of exile lingers within me. Displaced, an exile remains in limbo, *place-less*, a nomad restless to return while hunted by assimilation narratives that attempt to make her stay, the exile's paradox. I realize that I cannot "be taught in American" and "play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming an American" (Okada 1976, pp. 15-16). But I also know that I was not born an American. My geographical markers are in Cuba and, as long as I remain a dissenter,

³⁶ (Perez-Firmat (1996) claims "Cubans have always been hyphenated Americans (p. 16).

they are not accessible to me I *must* draw my identity from memory.³⁷ From this constant tension of displacement and assimilation I *must* articulate my own story, my own identity.

What I am saying is that exiles belong to the world of displacement. Exile is about being *place-less*, at ease and at home nowhere on earth. Exile draws its strength from location “in an imaginative world of pure feeling” drawn out of memory (Rieff 1993, p. 159). Displaced, separated from my physical markers, my residence, and many significant others, I rely on a site of memory I *must* visit. Memory becomes the depository of my identity. Memory evoked by conversations with others about the past and texts and artifacts I can access.

Memory travels with me. I must recall and link together memories in order to establish a sense of personal continuity (Crites 1986, p. 159), the roots *where I belong*. It is my cultural past and will be part of my future. A past and a future frozen and fused to the present. However, since cultures are not frozen in time, I know there is no cultural return. There is no living cultural past to which I can return. Space and time collapse. What was *there then* becomes what is *here now*, a cultural *now* always present, the one that traveled with me constantly permeated by the one I now geographically inhabit.

Exiles work on a different notion of time. They order where the past and the future take precedence over the present. What might have been and might yet be takes precedence over the actual that could not possibly be (Rieff 1993, p. 19). For an exile it is an ever changing cultural *present*—the tension of the past that might have been and the future that might yet be set against the actual that could not possibly be but is—one deeply embedded in her inviting an orientation

³⁷ Castro “has never deviated from ‘*L’etat, c’est moi*’ [I am the state]” and “his enduring conviction, unchallenged by his colleagues, that he alone understands what is good for Cuba” (Szulc 1995, p. 175). Convinced of possessing the truth, Castro does not tolerate dissent (Perez-Stable, p. 178, Short 1993, p. 117). His regime continues to extract “a heavy price—the denial of personal and political freedoms—” from “old and new Cuban generations” alike (Short, p. 173).

to inhabit meaning in a world of “might be”: a dream where the future is behind and the present, the actual in which I live, is the past we face that *cannot be* but *is*.

* * * *

April 12, 2000

Tampa, FL

It is a dry spring. The early morning downpour quenches the thirsty ground. As they pounce against the kitchen windows, the large raindrops produce alternating beats, a drum call to a summer not far away. Mother has received another letter from my cousin Nora:

La Habana. . . Yo todavía no he interiorizado que [mi hijo] se me va, y que a lo mejor estaré años sin verlos [hijo, hija política y nieto], pero es por su bien y su porvenir aquí no hay futuro para nadie, yo quisiera que todos ellos pudieran irse aunque me quede solita, es triste ver tus hijos sin ilusiones ni esperanzas. . .

“Havana. . . I have not yet internalized that [my son] is going away from me, and that perhaps I will be years without seeing them [son, daughter-in-law-, and grand-son], but it is for their well-being and their future. There is no future for anyone here, I wish that all of them [the rest of my children], could leave even if I am left by myself. It is sad to see your children without dreams or hopes. . .”

My decision to leave Cuba jumps in front of me and peers into my eyes. I cannot help but compare it to the one announced by my cousin, naked facts in front of me: conditions in Cuba have changed, yet *the* political situation is the same. Displacement continues. The inability to dissent is now wedded to unmet expectations, lack of dreams and hopes. Deprivation forces

Cubans to keep their eyes firmly focused on the present, while Castro, to impose his worldview, continues to mass produce images of the past. Cuba suffers from shortage of positive images of the future (Iyer 1995, p. 133). A dream from the past, the Cuban revolution is now a nightmare perpetually frozen in my face and the faces of all Cuban exiles. Displacement continues into the foreseeable future.

Like displacement in our postmodern world, exile creates a rhetorical exigency that can only be resolved through discourse: we *must* narrate our identity to attach meaning to our lived experiences; we *must* tell stories to make sense of the world, we *must* carry on a dialogue to tell us who we are, where we belong, how we got here.

“Thirty-four **long** years in the U.S.A., Cuban, exile, U.S. Army veteran,
Father of **American** daughters, corporate executive, graduate student,
Bostrom **Young** Scholar. . .”

I tell myself I am all of these while tightness embraces my chest shortening my breath. I find all these achievements ironic. They were not what I “saw” when I left Cuba. I did not realize then that ultimately, whether resistant or compliant, I would be defined through my interactions with others. I have met the Other. I am what I was not then. The magnitude of my decision to leave Cuba is clear to me now, not as a result of my experiences after leaving Cuba, but rather due to my graduate education which allows me to be reflexive, attuned to my lived experiences, and able to integrate what has been split in my life for over thirty years as I concentrated on making a living, being part of my family, suppressing my Cuban identity, feeling as an exile, living my separate worlds of family, work, academia, and exile. I am excited being in this Department of Communication where they ask “Tell me your story. Who are you?”

I learn from my teachers (Dr. Arthur P. Bochner, Dr. Carolyn Ellis, Dr. Eric Eisenberg, Dr. Marsha Vandeford, Dr. Navita James, Dr. Ken Cissna, Dr. Carol Jablonski, and Madeline Cámara among others) and my fellow students (Christine Kiesinger, John Morgan, Lisa Tillman, Laura Sells, Dan French, Diana McCarty, Honey Rand, and Cara Mackie among others.)

Excited by all this support, during the fall of 2000, in Dr. Bochner's *Close Personal Relationships* class, I begin to explore my relationship with my father through my writing.

CHAPTER FIVE: ;DEJAME IR! “LET ME GO”: FATHER’S DEATH, LINGERING MEMORIES.

Encouraged by Dr. Bochner and Dr. Ellis, in 2001, I present the following paper at the Society of Symbolic Interaction Couch-Stone Symposium held at the University of Miami, Florida:

Miss Me, But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road and the sun has set for me,

I want no rites in a gloom-filled room,

why cry for a soul set free?

Miss me a little. . .but not too long,

And not with your head bowed low.

Remember the love that was once shared,

Miss me. . .but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take, and each must go alone.

It’s all part of the Master’s plan, a step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and sick of heart, go to the friends we know,

And bury your sorrows in good deeds. . . Miss me. . .but let me go.

Author Unknown 38

March 12, 2000 ³⁹

³⁸ Poem supposedly found in the pocket of an unidentified World War I British soldier.

³⁹ My gratitude goes to Linda Vangelis for her comments during the preparation of an early draft of this article and to Arthur P. Bochner for his continued support and suggestions throughout the process.

Belleair Beach, Fl.

My fingers rest on the keyboard. My eyes stare at the computer monitor. I want to write about my father. His voice lingers in my mind. . .

Where do I begin?

My eyes move away from the screen and travel through the sliding glass doors. Slowly, they scan the bright white sand, the brownish green patches of sea oat, the fast-moving green waters of the Gulf. My gaze fixes on the horizon where the sailboats move swiftly outside Clearwater Pass. I notice the leaves from the palm tree just outside my balcony dancing to the rhythmic sound of the wind. My eyes start to move to my left.

What should I write about him?

Again, I try to focus. I can't. Attracted by the murmuring sound of the wind, my eyes move through the west window. The strong wind caresses the gulf waters. They embrace, become waves, and rush to the shoreline. Snowcaps join the waves in a flirtatious ride. Lovers on the gulf waters, but not in the shoreline. There, the tenuous relationship abruptly ends. The waves retreat. The snowcaps rest on the soft bright sand. Losing the sustenance of the gulf waters, the caps turn into aimless snowflakes. Some fly high and disappear into the crisp fresh breeze. Others, like seashells, remain motionless, anchored to the sand, enduring a slow death. My eyes return to the computer monitor.

What should I write about him?

What do I really know about him?

Still uncertain where to start, I review my field notes:

June 9, 1993.

I do not find writing to be easy and writing about the Other adds to

the difficulty. It brings into focus the need to decide for the Other what to disclose. I wonder if the reason that self-disclosure and writing does not come easy is that it means leaving imprints behind; incriminating evidence that later may testify against me. While contexts change, we are expected to be accountable for our actions regardless of the context under which they took place. Permanency and continuity haunt me. At times we come face-to-face. Then, I realize yesterday's I is a part of today's I. Today's I cannot run away from yesterday's I. Escape is not an option. Father recalls that one of the reasons he feels he was able to leave Cuba without much difficulty was that he left no traces behind. He was a private person, not prone to share what he did or said. He feared retaliation. In Cuba, the rules of the game were in constant flux.

I tell myself the flux still exists there today. Then, I hear a distant murmur. When I pay close attention, I hear the words.

Stories, whether written, read, told, compared, analyzed, or invoked, serve many moral purposes.

Suddenly, I realize the voices come from theorists such as Nelson (1997), Coles (1989), McIntyre (1981), and others I have read. They provoke me to raise questions.

*What moral purpose will my yet untold story serve?
Is mine a struggle against recognizing the continuity of my
I, the recognition that fragmentation is a figment of my*

imagination?

Does my struggle arise out of a desire to keep certain experiences incarcerated in my subconscious in order to avoid the pain evoked by inaccessible geographical markers that anchor my “I”, my shattered dreams, my distant relatives, my memories of growing up? My desire to feel the presence of attachment to a homeland?

Is the story I want to tell an attempt to make sense of my departure from Cuba or to pass moral judgment over Castro’s Cuba?

Bochner (2001) often interrupts my thoughts and as he often does, asking,

What is the point?

I begin to wonder and remember the question Childress (1997) borrowed from Estroff

Whose story is it anyway?

Can anyone ever own their story?

* * * *

From its inception, Castro’s Cuba did not tolerate dissent. On October 8, 1960 I leave (Cotanda 2001). My father stays. Grandmother’s delicate health prevents dad’s departure. Following her death, the missile crisis causes another delay. Finally, in 1967, together with mother and grandfather, he boards one of the Freedom Flights that departs from Varadero and arrives in Miami less than an hour later. They can’t foresee that they will never return. Neither do I.

* * * *

Father turned 55 years old a couple of weeks after his arrival in the U.S. The year was 1967. My mother and her father came with him. Mother was 54 years old; grandfather, 90. After being separated for almost seven years, the three wanted to be with me. They did not speak English and brought only the clothes on their backs. My parents' main concern was not to be a financial burden to anyone while being able to help my brother leave Cuba. Hence, father worked more than one job until he turned 70; mother, until she was 65. Their early years in Cuba were not much different than their later ones in the U.S.—dominated by hard work. When he was a child, father worked after school. On several occasions, he told me:

Yo trabajaba después del colegio en una bodega. No me pagaban. Los viejos lo hacían para que no andara en la calle.

“I worked after school in a grocery store. They didn't pay me. My parents did it, so I would not be out in the street.”

Mother tells me she met father as a child. He helped the man delivering charcoal to her house. I do not know if this was an extra job nor if he was paid for it. Father mentioned

El primer trabajo donde me pagaban fue cuando terminé el quinto grado.

“My first paying job was after fifth grade.”

In 1923, father starts his first “real” job at the largest grocery store in town. The place, named *La Paila*, encompassed a bakery, a restaurant, and lodging for traveling salesmen.⁴⁰ Father was up at 6:00 AM and went to bed at 11:00 PM. His primary responsibility was to keep ice, beer, and cold drinks in the icebox. He earned fifteen pesos a month plus room and board.

⁴⁰ I remember father saying they were all men

He was eleven years old and very proud of his job. His father worked as a cook at the same place.

Several years before my father's death, I asked him to write about his life, to leave a record of his experiences. Mother told me that she heard him talking into the recorder. After his death, I did not find any recordings. Did he erase them? I did find a greenish lined paper, eight and a half by eleven inches together with five legal size pieces of white paper. He wrote with a pencil, perhaps to make erasure simpler, like he probably did with his recordings. His notes bear no date.

* * * *

Nací en Bauta el día 30 de Mayo de 1912 siendo las 11AM. En lo que yo recuerdo, eramos 8 hermanos, mi mama y mi padre, el cual era cosinero, y de los muy buenos, en Total eramos 10 personas. recuerdo, yo tenía 5 años y me madre me llevaba con ella cuando iba a trabajar ya que ella era despalilladora en un taller de despalillar tabaco y me sentaba a su lado, mientras ella trabajava, ya el trabajo que ella asia era sentada, claro nosotros viviamos muy cerca del lugar y podiamos ir caminando. mis hermanos tambien trabajavan, y, que eramos muchos y se ganaba poco, despues . . .

“I was born in Bauta on May 30th, 1912, at 11 AM. From what I remember, we were 8 siblings, my mother and my father, who was a cook, and a very good one at that, in Total we were 10 persons. I remember I was 5 years and my mother would take me with her

when she went to work since she was a cigar stripper in a cigar shop and would sit me next to her, while she worked since the work, that she did was done sitting down, clearly, we lived very close to the place and were able to go walking. my brothers and sisters also worked, and, since we were many and not much money was earned, after. . .”

* * * *

“*A life told in six pieces of paper,*” I tell myself every time I look at the papers. I do not know exactly when he wrote them. However, I can tell that the writings were not done at one sitting. I notice erasures. His spelling and punctuation reveal a grammatical weakness, a reminder of my earlier embarrassments as a student. But his elegant penmanship tells me his mind was not full of poison yet, and reminds me of his flair, his dark black, neatly trimmed mustache, his stern self-assurance, his humble demeanor and indomitable persistence, his plain mannerism, but above all his love for his family and, according to mother, for other women too.

Father was a good provider. I saw him laugh. I saw him frown. I saw him angry. I knew of his kindness. I also felt his rage, his belt against my butt, the back of his right hand across my face. I remember blood running from my nose. I often wondered if he ever recognized or felt my fear, my anger, and, at times, not only my hate but also my shame. I do not remember seeing him cry, until one day, almost eleven months before he died when tears emerged from his eyes.

* * * *

September 1, 1995

Tampa, Fl.

!Déjame ir!

“Let me go!”

Father pleads. His feet are bare. His hospital gown dangles from his dark neck. Hairy arms hang from his sides. The palms of his small hands face me. His manicured fingers point to the ground. His bearded face is drawn. The hair in his ears and nose has not been trimmed. His long black eyelashes seem longer than ever. In the center of each of his eye sockets is a deep black sparkling circle surrounded by a pure white mass. Large dark purple circles surround the skin just below his eyes. Tears gently move down his cheeks. He does not sob. He seems weak and disoriented.

!Déjame ir!

I hear his raspy voice.

* * * *

Father’s kidneys are failing.

“*They are 95% gone,*” his doctor said.

His mind is slowly deteriorating. The impurities in his blood are relentlessly poisoning his brain cells. He had never been admitted to a hospital before. Now, at 81, he is having difficulties coping with hospitalization and with his deteriorating health. His memory is failing. He knows it. Looking at my notes, I recall his struggle two years earlier when he attempted to renew his driver’s license.

* * * *

May 19, 1993.

A couple of weeks ago father failed the vision part of his driving test. The examiner referred him to an eye doctor. Father was certain his eyes were not the culprit, but rather that the lady examiner was a "difficult" woman.

Le caí mal. Me quiso fastidiar. Tu sabes como es eso

“She did not like me. She tried to mess me up. You know how it goes.”

He spoke fast and curt. The way he spoke when he was upset. v

The following Tuesday, he went to a different location to renew his license,

!Díos mío ayúdame!

“God help me!” I heard him plead with no success.

Ten days later, on May 29, father is able finally to renew his license,

You can see the red spots on abuelo’s [grandfather’s] forehead

from pushing so hard against the machine. He tried so hard!

¡Daddy, está tan contento! [He is so happy!] The lady was so nice!

exclaimed my daughter Lourdes. To mother, he is a different person; to Lourdes, persistence and kindness brought the positive results; to my wife, her prayers to the Virgin Mary worked; to my father, it was pure luck.

¡Me salvé! ¡Adiviné!

“I was lucky! I guessed!”

He exclaimed with a unique smirk across his face.

* * * *

Two years later, in early August of 1995, my father’s elegant penmanship was gone. He could only scribble his name. His physician decided it was time to clean the poison in his blood that was slowly destroying his mind, hence his hospitalization. He was being prepped for dialysis treatments. But his heart was too weak.

“A result of a silent heart attack,” said the heart specialist. Father’s physician concurred.

“*Peritoneal dialysis will be best for him,*” the kidney specialist added, and father’s physician agreed.

During August 30, 1995, they performed surgery and inserted a plastic tube through his belly in order to pump dextrose. The tube would never come out.

“*Every six hours, an exchange must take place. It only takes thirty minutes!*” a nurse announced.

The dextrose full of poison was removed. Clean dextrose was pumped back in *every six hours, every day, every night while he lay on his back!*

Following the operation, every time father swallowed, a creamy thick lava flowed out of his mouth. He refused to eat.

“*He must eat, or we will have to insert a tube down his throat!*” the attending physician commands.

“*My father does not want that done,*” I respond meekly, but firm.

“*Then, your father will die!*” the physician pronounces in a high-pitched voice. As I watch the doctor’s face turn red, I realize he is upset. Abruptly, he turns away and walks out of the room.

* * * *

Modern medicine often silences the voice of the patient by reducing the particular to the general (Frank, 1995). The ill person accepts having the particularity of her “individual suffering reduced to medicine’s general view” (Frank 1995, p. 11). To modern medicine, the body of its patients become its territory. Hence, central to the achievement of modernist medicine is colonization, an attempt to control or cure disease by subjecting it to the attention of scientific experts. Thus, the postmodern experience with illness may be viewed as *post-colonial* (Frank

1995).

* * * *

September 1, 1995

Viejo, no te puedes ir del hospital todavía. Tienes que comer para que te cures y puedas regresar para la casa.

“Old man, you can’t leave the hospital yet. You must eat to be cured.

Then, you will be able to go home.”

As I finish my words, father raises his arms high above his head. The tube taped to his right arm quickly follows. Slowly, he shakes his head.

!Luce tan frágil!

“He looks so fragile!” I tell myself.

We are alone in the world. Or so it seems to me thinking about it now. I remember standing in front of father, my body trembling, my hands perspiring, my mind confused, throbbing, ready to explode from the emotional overload. I remember my sadness, my fear. I recall wanting to know, to understand what was happening. Why is he dying? What could I do? But above all, why didn’t I do something before the blood poisoned his brain?

!Déjame ir!

The pain in his voice grabs my heart and squeezes tight. He is calm. Slowly, he begins to lower his right arm. Again, the tube quickly follows. With his right index finger, he points to the window next to where I stand. My eyes follow his finger and then look outside the window. A brilliant blue summer sky is the background. Thick fluffy perfectly formed white clouds compose the foreground. I want to run from his pain, get out. His voice brings me back.

!Déjame ir!

I hear pain. I feel pain. Finally, his words hit me smack on my eyes. He does not want to go home. He wants to fly to some place up there, high in the sky. I realize he is ready to die but push the thought away. I refuse to let my mind accept what is clear, but my body understands. I feel afraid. I choke. I try to hold back my tears. I can't stop them.

* * * *

I still remember how defenseless, yet calm, he was. He appeared at peace with himself and was ready to die. But I was not, though did not know it then. My mind refused to accept what was going on: *The doctors wanted to keep him alive. I wanted to keep him around. He wanted to die.* I did not want to let him go. Why was I being so selfish? Why couldn't I let him go? Why did I let him go through the torture?

* * * *

As I embrace him, I pretend that he wants to go home and whisper into his ear.

No puedo dejar ir viejito. Tienes que comer para curarte.

Entonces podrás ir para la casa y sentarte en el portal como me dijistes que querías hacer de nuevo.

“I can't let you go my little old man. You must eat to be cured.

Then you will be able to go home and sit in the front porch of your house as you told me you wanted to do again.”

* * * *

I recall Brody's (1997) question,

Who gets to tell the story?

The practice of medicine is political. The physician's “objective” approach to treatment renders the patient an object to be cured, hence the patient's suffering may go unnoticed,

unarticulated. The doctor does not ask, ‘What does this **mean** to the patient? The doctor does not see illness as a struggle for meaning, but only as a battle for survival. The patient must surrender to the care of a physician, to the medical narrative. The patient’s story is suppressed. As the expert, the physician’s story, his interpretation, is privileged. Frank (1995) calls this *a narrative surrender*. The physician gets to tell what is “really happening.” The claim is that an objective approach, being untouched by patient’s suffering, allows a physician a better chance to “cure” a patient. However, if “*no one is listening to the patient’s story, the suffering remains without meaning, and healing has been rendered impossible*” [original emphases] (Brody, p. 28). In other words, the body may be cured, but the person may not heal.

The physicians wanted to cure my father’s body. My father wanted to heal his soul. At the time, I could not tell the difference. To me, they were both the same. I didn’t know what I didn’t know. Not knowing the difference, I failed to act earlier to ameliorate father’s suffering. His words live with me, always present in my mind. Why didn’t I do more? Why did I let the doctors wait so long?

* * * *

September 3, 1995

After what appears to be long hours of a one-sided conversation, I convince father—or he convinces himself—that it is OK to use a wheelchair. We both need some fresh air. As I wheel him down to the courtyard, I realize the hospital is full of visitors. Many are dressed in their Sunday best. When we reach the courtyard, I point to the pond, the large fish, and the young girl in the blue dress trying to impress the fish with her innocent smile. Referring to my daughter Lourdes, I ask.

¿No se te parece a la más joven de tus nietas cuando tenía la

misma edad?

Doesn't she remind you of your youngest granddaughter when she was the same age?

Slowly, he nods. He does not talk much anymore. His voice is almost gone. He tries to communicate with gestures, a nod of the head, a closed fist, a pointing finger, a faint smile. He has not eaten in the last four days. When the family occupying the large gazebo facing the pond leaves, I wheel him over the wooden ramp and stop at the center of the gazebo. I pull a chair and sit next to him. We remain silent for what seems a long time. The fresh breeze sparks my thoughts. My mind drifts to Cuba during my youthful years. Memories begin to flow. I see a man larger than life, a man who told me the story about the three wise kings that came in the night bearing gifts, a man who I saw place a bike next to my bed when he thought I was sleep,

"Has he eaten yet?" My daughter's voice breaks my thoughts.

I shake my head. By now, the sun hides behind the west wing of the hospital building casting a long wide shadow across most of the courtyard.

"No, but would you try?" I ask as I look at the sky to avoid her eyes. I did not want her to see me cry. I did not want her to know that my father wanted to die.

She picks up a banana from the dinner tray. She sits in front of him.

"He has an excellent rapport with his youngest granddaughter.

Perhaps, he will listen to her," I think to myself.

Slowly, she begins to peel the banana. She moves it close to his lips. He hesitates.

"He has never said no to her before," I tell myself.

Time freezes. A long time goes by. Or so it seems to me thinking about it now. He opens his lips and takes a small bite. He chews for what appears to be hours. He begins to swallow.

“*Will the lava flow appear again?*”

The moment freezes in my mind.

* * * *

!Déjame ir!

Father’s guttural voice is with me. His light green hospital gown, his right index finger pointing to the sky, his deep black eyes, the lava coming from his mouth, his gentle smile are images embedded in my mind.

Yes. Either my daughter convinced father or father convinced himself to eat again. Lava did not flow. I was so happy, I cried. Father went home and sat on his front porch like he told me he wanted to do. The doctors patched his body. We spent more time together. We embraced. We kissed. We cried together.

But father would never again be the man he was. I did not let him go when he wanted to go. The illness poisoned his brain. His mind never fully returned. He could start the car and let the motor idle for a while, wear a faint smile on his face, but he could not drive. He could open the hood of the car, look at the engine, but he could never change the oil again. He could scribble his name, but he could never write a check or balance a check book again. He was our prisoner. For over ten months, we kept him alive. Every six hours we made him lay on his back. One of us—mother, a nurse, or I—exchanged the dextrose in his tummy, *every six hours, every day, every night while he laid on his back.*

We tried to teach him. He tried to learn, but he was never able to do it alone. His blood poisoned his brain. He felt useless and wanted to die.

One afternoon, I found mother sitting on his chest forcing food into his mouth.

¡Tienes que comer! ¡Tienes que comer!

“You must eat! You must eat!” Mother repeated in a high-pitched voice.

For a while, she appeared to succeed. Then, one morning, I found his hands tied to his bed. Before I could say anything, mother snapped at me,

¡Se quería sacar el tubo!

“He wanted to pull the tube!”

She was tired. She was losing her mind. He wanted to go. She wanted him to stay. An independent man, he went through hell. Then one day, almost eleven months after his first hospital stay, he made up his mind he would not eat again.

* * * *

July 12, 1996

Due to what the doctors called “an internal infection,” father is back at the hospital for a third time. An ambulance brought him this time. His voice is gone, but his eyes, always beautiful, serene, deep black, speak like never before. His eyes rest on mine but become restless when they land on the physician’s face.

“We cured the infection. But your father must be fed. If we don’t insert a feeding tube, there is nothing else we can do!” the attending physician barks at me.

“He is frustrated. He wants to die. He doesn’t understand why you want to keep him alive,” I tell myself. My head wants to explode. I want to hit the doctor. But I don’t.

“Your father should be moved to the Arbors where he recuperated before,” he now commands.

I find no words. I am confused. I simply nod as I ask myself,

Why did he say recuperate?

Is there something else I should have done?

The doctor makes it sound like it's all my fault.

I feel guilt. Yes, he recuperated, but he was never the same man again.

Why did they wait so long to clean the poison in his blood?

Why didn't I make them treat him earlier? I ask myself as the doctor leaves.

To no avail, I plead. I cajole. I beg. I pout. I cry. I insist. I demand. Finally, I tell father,

!No quiero que te vayas! Tienes que esperar!

Tu primera bisnieta está en camino

“I don't want you to go. You must wait.

!Your first great granddaughter is on her way!”

He hears but does not listen. He is firm. He never eats again. He made up his mind.

* * * *

July 19, 1996

He is back at the Arbors. We are in his room. My mother holds his right hand; my brother, his left. My wife silently prays. I stand by his side. My fingers rub his hair. I look at his eyes. His gentle, soft gaze penetrates my eyes. They tell me it's time. I smell death. I try to hold back, but tears form in my eyes. I leave the room so that father doesn't see me cry. Perhaps for the first time I come face to face with the fact that father is going to die. My mind accepts what my body has known for some time: My father is going to die. My pain feels unbearable. Yet, I realize I must bow to his desire to die. I must let him go. His pain needs to end. My selfishness needs to stop.

As we leave for the night, I stop at the nurse's station.

Please, make sure he doesn't suffer any more tonight,” I beg. I want them to let him die.

As I leave the building and walk to my car, I wonder whether the nurse realizes my father wants to die. *Did she see the tears in my eyes?*

* * * *

July 20, 1996, 4:30 A.M.

The phone rings.

“*Your father passed away in his sleep a few minutes ago,*” says the male voice on the other end of the line.

Though not surprised, I can’t hold back my tears. I sob. Then, I cry.

El viejo se murió

“The old man died,” I tell Marina as I look into her eyes. She does not say a word. Her right hand gently holds my left one.

As I pull my car out of my driveway, the sun begins to break through the horizon.

Why is traffic so light? I wonder. Of course, it’s Saturday morning. I tell myself as I pull off I-275 and turn East.

When I turn North and begin to approach the Arbors, father’s words ring in my ears.

¡Déjame ir!

My head feels as if it is ready to explode. I want to scream, but I don’t.

Suddenly, I begin to realize that my struggle is not with death, but rather with a life I did not share in enough. We did not spend enough time together. I felt that if I could keep him here, alive, I might learn who he was! But I can’t, and I won’t. And would not have! We could not make up the seven years of separation following my departure from Cuba.

As I drive into the parking lot, I notice mine is the only car. The manicured lawn becomes a thick carpet under my shoes. Small water droplets sit on the leaves of the neatly

trimmed hedge. Soon, like diamonds, they will shine. I admire the pine trees, the maples, the nature's preserve, the wooden wrought iron bench, the covered car entrance, the tiled porch, the potted plants, the wooden wrought iron bench, the clean walls.

They do such a good job. They keep the grounds so nice, the buildings so well maintained, I think to myself as I walk through the sliding glass doors.

I feel I am in a resort, a Marriott's Courtyard, not a death holding station. The smell of death is gone. I smell clean air, peace. He lies still. His arms rest on the bed next to his torso. His deep black eyes are closed. I want them to penetrate mine, but they can't. He looks so peaceful. He is at rest. I hold his hands and gently lay my lips on his forehead. He is warm. His skin offers no resistance to my kiss. I pause for a moment.

"Te quiero Viejo. Si, yo se. Yo soy egoísta.

Quería que te quedaras Y tu te querías ir.

"I love you old man. Yes, I know. I am selfish.

I wanted you to stay. And you wanted to go,"

The words above are the ones I find to say goodbye. My father now becomes a symbol of absence and loss, another episode of leaving, departure.

* * * *

April 9, 2000

Belleair Beach, Fl.

As I come to the end of writing this story, the wind blows against the palm tree outside my balcony. The leaves dance again. Rain pellets belt the west windows. The sunrays dart through the fast-moving dark clouds. A cold front is moving in. The white caps flirtatiously ride the waves rushing to the shoreline. "Yes. I know. Their romance ends at the shoreline," I say to

myself. I feel father' eyes looking at me and remember his words when I was a little boy,

La hija del diablo se está casando. Los truenos anuncian la ceremonia.

“The devil’s daughter is getting married. Thunder announces the occasion,”

Is father listening now? Can he see?

* * * *

An Epilogue

June 20, 2001

Tampa, Fl.

To whom does this story belong?

Forced to confront his personal and academic worlds when his father died while he was attending an academic conference, Bochner (1997) reminds us that “we’ve been conditioned to separate the personal and the professional domains of experience” (p. 432). I was also conditioned to distance my professional life from my personal one. I segment my life into family, social, business, and academic. My relationship with my father revolved around family. I don’t know when, but at some point, I realized that the boundaries were permeable. The divide was superficial yet had real consequences. My early college education and professional life distanced me from my father. During my late teens, at times, I felt embarrassed at father’s lack of formal education and “refined” social skills. I was bothered whenever I saw him walk away from the dinner table with a toothpick hanging from his mouth. My “higher education” and “more refined” social skills” made me feel “superior.” Eventually, feelings of embarrassment were replaced by guilt. No, I am not proud of having felt embarrassed. But I did. Now I realize those feelings revealed who I was and remain part of who I am, my lived experiences.

Exile from Cuba and later graduate education brought back humility to my field of vision

and reinforced my appreciation for my father's love, his caring. Exile provided experiences we could share. Graduate education allowed me to see the false dichotomy between body and mind, emotion and intellect. Exile and graduate education brought us together, but never as close as when he was ready to die.

After reading an earlier version of this draft, Bochner (2002) wrote to me,

*Is it the case, when a father dies, that we feel our aloneness and apartness more deeply and we confront our regret that we didn't broach or breach the **divide** between us? [original emphasis]. That we did not insist on a purifying conversation.*

I doubt if I ever shared my feelings of embarrassment with father. I don't know if he knew. We didn't broach or breach that divide. My aloneness and apartness appear to be more a confrontation with something I never experienced before: a life without a father. Like him, I experience the angst of displacement, loss of country, fear of no return. Unlike him, I had not lost a father. I did not know life without him. At times, we were distant. But he was always there for me. I did not always know it. But he always cared. During my formative years, he facilitated my education, ironically, the very thing that would pull me away from him. He also provided shelter. More importantly is that he provided an unflappable love, a strict discipline, a loving understanding, and a quiet admiration. Unfortunately, I did not always respond in kind and will always wonder if he knew.

As I continue to abstract from my experiences, I remember that individual experiences never take place in a vacuum, but rather are always wedded to the individual experiences of others (Cotanda 2001b). Individual experience arises out of our relationship with others. Ours is a world of relationships, interactions with others. Indeed, "We are always in a conversation with

others, even when exiled, alone and in pain. There is no self without an other. Without Other, Being ends” (Cotanda 2001). But, if such is the case, how does one let go without being consumed by feelings of guilt? Malcolm (1992) suggests one possible method: writing.

Malcolm (1992) struggles with feelings of guilt after he removed the respirator doing his mother’s breathing. Following “the big decision to let her go,” he spends nine hours and five minutes in a “windowless private hospital room with the television on” watching her die as her pulse drops, “eighty-two . . . eighty . . . forty-four . . . Forty-two . . . Mouth still open. Same little gasps. Forty . . . Thirty-six . . . thirty-four . . . thirty . . . twenty-four . . . zero. There were irregular heartbeats for a while. After all those years, some parts found it hard to quit” (pp. 290-291). Overcome by guilt and doubts, Malcolm writes a family memoir, *Someday: The Story of a Mother and her Son*, an autoethnographic account. “It feels good and liberating now to have done it,” he observes (p. 296).

Malcolm’s writing is what Richardson (2000) calls “*a method of inquiry*, a method to find out about yourself and your topic” (p. 923). Writing it all down on paper makes Malcolm (1992) realize his mother’s death is “official,” (p. 295) true and real to him. Through his writing Malcolm makes sense of his lived experience. Writing as a method of inquiry helps make sense of who I am to me and to others. Through writings like this, I try to excavate hidden memories, describe myself to myself and to others, try to evoke similar experiences in others, in hopes to help erase the artificial boundaries that appear to separate us (Bochner 2001). Mine is an attempt to come face-to-face and embrace the Other.

In the next chapter I discuss how I address mother’s needs following my father’s death, the voices I heard every morning at her kitchen while sipping *café cubano*, and how I try to cope with her health as it begins to deteriorate, specially her mind.

CHAPTER SIX: REMEMBERING, FORGETTING, FORGIVING: ON LOSING

MOTHER⁴¹

July 22, 1996

Tampa, Fl.

When I walk into mother's kitchen the day following father's funeral services, I find Mario waiting for me,

Dionel, yo me voy a mudar para vivir con la vieja.

“Dionel, I'll move into mother's house to look after her.”

I did not meet Mario until he came to the U.S. He was a close friend of my brother José. Mario moved into our house in Cuba after his parents asked him to leave due to a disagreement over his lifestyle. Mario would become another son to my parents. I always wondered if they were trying to fill the void created by my departure. Yet, I never asked.

Before they left Cuba, my parents left behind enough money to take care of the needs Mario and José would face. They would also facilitate, financially and emotionally, their departure from Cuba to Spain and later to the U.S. Hence, I am not surprised to learn Mario's decision. But I am surprised the next day when I do not see Mario and notice mother's sadness,

Vieja, ¿dónde está Mario?

⁴¹ This chapter covers parts of my article *Voices at mother's kitchen: An autoethnographic account of exile*, published June 1, 2006 in *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, 3: pp. 562-588. I have inserted other parts through other chapters. The article evolved from my work during two seminar classes at the University of South Florida: *Ethnography of Communication* offered by Professor Stacy Holman Jones, Ph.D., and *Autoethnography* offered by Professor Carolyn Ellis, Ph.D. Without their insightful reviews and comments and those of classmates Linda Vangelis, Mary Poole, and Rachel Gerakari, I would not have written it. Indeed, it would not have been published without the continued encouragement and unwavering support I received from my mentor and friend Professor Arthur P. Bochner, Ph.D.

“Mother, where is Mario?”

El se puso bravo conmigo por que no lo dejé mover unos muebles.

!Se fue y no contesta mis llamadas!

“He got upset with me because I would not let him move the furniture.

He left and is not answering my call!”

I confirm Mario is not accepting mother’s calls and, at mother’s insistence, I grant her desire to live in the house by herself and would later secure someone to look after her when we are not around. Mario never came back into her life. I saw Mario once at a performance of Cecilia Valdés at U.S.F. We said hello to each other, but I did not ask him what happened between him and mother. My brother José continued to be in touch and visit with him.

* * * *

March 11, 2002 ⁴²

The early morning sun breaks through the kitchen windows. Two windows are to my right. One is behind me. The horizontal awnings that provide privacy from the street and the neighbors next door help to diffuse the soft rays of the sun around the kitchen and into the living room. I inhale the pungent aroma of the Cuban coffee mother places in front of me.⁴³

Mother’s hesitant voice breaks my trance:

Tu hermano me llamó ayer.

“Your brother called yesterday.”

“¿Qué te dijo?”

“What did he tell you?”

Te mandó recuerdos. No sé porqué vive allá tan lejos en Los Angeles.

⁴² Following father’s death, I visited mother every morning, except when I was away on business.

⁴³ The strong aroma of Cuban coffee brings memories of my youth in Cuba and the aroma coming from the coffee mill next to our apartment building.

“He sent his regards. I don’t know why he lives so far away in Los Angeles.”

I nod. The same question often enters my mind. He should be here. Mother needs him. He never married and could live with her and help take care of her. From previous conversations, he is aware she does not want a stranger living with her and does not want to move in with anyone else. She has made it clear that she wants to stay in her house until the day she dies.

As I lower my cup, my eyes land and become fixed on the large, earth-colored, ceramic bowl serving as a centerpiece for the kitchen table. A cupped lid covers the oblong center and holds four open sections together. I think about José, our childhood. Mother’s words bring back memories of Cuba; what brought me to the U.S., a story that began on a cool March morning fifty years earlier.

* * * *

November 7, 2002

Tampa, FL.

Eight months later, as soon as I walk into mother’s kitchen, she tells me about a phone call, this time from her nephew Robertico now living in Spain with Amparito, mother’s sister, and her daughter Daisy, mother’s niece,

Robertico llamó. Hablé con Amparito y Daisy.

“Robertico called. I talked with Amparito and Daisy.”

¿Cómo están?

“How are they?”, I ask.

Dice que bien. Están tratando de venire. Yo les dije que venga a vivir conmigo.

“He said they’re fine. They’re trying to come here. I told them they could live with me.”

As I listen to her words, I look at mother's thin gray hair, her glasses—now too big for her face. The pointed dried growth to the right of her nose, just below her right eye and visible through her lenses, reminds me to make a doctor's appointment to remove it. I move my eyes away from mother's face as I open the horizontal awnings preventing the early morning sun from joining us. The smell of Cuban coffee again fills my nostrils. Sabina, who recently started looking after mother, stands by the stove as she pours the rich brew into a small purple bulb-shaped cup mother set aside for me a long time ago.⁴⁴ Like mother, she pours the thick black liquid to the top of the cup. Sabina looks at mother and, using mother's nickname, asks,

*¿Cuca, quieres café?*⁴⁵

“Cuca, do you want coffee?”

¡Tú sabes que yo nunca le digo que no al café!

“You know I never say no to coffee!”

Since father's death in 1996 (Cotanda, 2001a), mother has lived alone. She does not want to move out of her house or allow anyone who is not a member of the family to move in with her. Currently, there is not a family member able or willing to do it. I believe this is mother's way to assert her independence. She never lived alone before. Now, concerned over the deterioration of her health, I look for someone who would look after her. When a few weeks earlier I told mother Sabina was coming to help around the house for a few hours each day, mother rejected the idea and insisted,

Tu padre no quería extraños en la casa.

“Your father did not want strangers in the house.”

⁴⁴ Sabina had recently arrived from Cuba with her husband Jesús and son Alfredo who now works with me.

⁴⁵ Besides Cuca, mother's nickname, I used different words of endearment when addressing mother, among them *vieja*, *viejito*, *Doña Eumelia*

Undaunted, I asked Sabina to come and help take care of mother. With father gone, I need to make certain someone is looking after her for her own safety. But I must gently override her desire to be alone. I want her to feel loved and cared for, not invalidated! Now, a few weeks later, when I ask mother,

*¿Doña Eumelia quiere que le diga a Sabina
que no venga más?*

“Doña Eumelia, do you want me to tell Sabina
not to come again?”

She is quick in her response,

*No, no, ella es muy buena conmigo. Yo no tengo
que decirle que haga nada. Es mi amiga. Yo la quiero mucho.*

“No, no, she is very good to me. I don’t need to
tell her to do anything. She’s my friend. I love
her very much.”

Mother is pleased with Sabina but continues to wait for her sister Amparito, her nephew Robertico, and her niece Daisy to arrive from Spain.⁴⁶ She wants them to live in her house for as long as they want.

*Ellos van a necesitar algún lugar donde vivir
cuando lleguen. Yo quiero que vengan a vivir
conmigo. Después que yo me muera, tú los
dejas vivir aquí todo el tiempo que quieran.
Todo lo que tienen que hacer es mantener la*

⁴⁶ Amparito died while she was in Spain waiting to come to the U. S. A.

casa, pagar los impuestos y el seguro.

“They are going to need a place to stay when they arrive.

I want them to stay with me. After I die, you let them stay here as long as they want. All they need to do is keep up the house, pay the taxes and the insurance.”

Although mother’s memory continues to falter, she does not forget them. I wonder whether by the time they arrive she will be able to understand what is going on. At times, tears come to her eyes when she talks about the living, but never when she talks about death. She cries because of the emptiness she feels from not seeing her relatives for such a long time. Yet, she faces her own death without fear,

Cuando yo me muera, yo quiero que muevas los restos de mi padre y lo entierres al lado mío y de tu padre.

“When I die, I want you to move my father’s remains and bury them next to me and your father.”

The voice conveying the request is firm. It’s the voice of one in a position of authority who knows the request will be fulfilled. She trusts me.

Tu padre compró seis terrenos en el cementerio, pero no sabía en cual de ellos lo iban a enterrar. Yo si. Mi nombre ya está puesto en la cabecera de la tumba, al lado del suyo.

“Your father bought six cemetery lots, but didn’t know in which one he’d be buried. I do. My name is already engraved in the headstone, next to his.”

My eyes are fixed on the earth-colored, ceramic bowl at the center of the kitchen table. I realize mother's voice now conveys the conviction of a person who anticipates the future, the ending of her life. It brings back memories of Marina's voice, one that also foreshadowed a life-changing experience forty-three years earlier.

* * * *

February 19, 2003

Tampa, Fl.

¿Qué tal les fue en el médico?

“How did things go with the doctor?” Sabina asks as I unlock the black wrought iron door guarding the entrance to mother's kitchen.

Bien . . .

“Well . . .”

As I respond, Sabina walks over to the stove to make sure the dark Cuban brew completes its journey and settles in the top part of the brewing machine. Half an hour earlier, the doctor placed a band-aid over the stitches he inserted on the right side of mother's nose.

. . . ahí traje pan cubano, croquetas de jamón y dos pedazos de chicharrones de puerco.

“. . . I brought Cuban bread, ham croquettes, and two pieces of pork-crackling fingers.”

As I talk to Sabina, I hold the door for mother to come in. Once inside, Sabina places a cup of coffee on top of the kitchen table. I notice a copy of *La Gaceta*, a trilingual—English, Español, and Italiano—weekly newspaper published in Tampa's Ybor City, dated February 14, 2003. When I flip through the pages, I notice the bold letters in a full-page ad (“Hillsborough County,” 2003):

. . . the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners to honor Mayor Dick Greco with the Hillsborough County Moral Courage Award in recognition of his historic trip to Cuba . . . from those who were proud to witness Mayor Greco's finest moment. . . His motives were humanitarian and his effort moved us one step closer to a day when Americans and Cubans can once again be friends. . . (p. 13)

Greco's smiling face adorns the upper center section of the page. His white teeth jump off the page. His wide-open eyes look down at me. He exults satisfaction, confidence of a job well done. My eyes move to the bowl at the center of the table. Images of the Cuba I left reappear, a Cuba where Americans and Cubans were friends. I hear the background music Sabina has on, the same music they played at that New Year's Eve party almost forty-five years ago. . . .

Mother's voice brings me back,

. . . tres imágenes nunca se me borran de mi mente: mis tres nietas con sus vestiditos azules y zapaticos blancos recibíendome en el aeropuerto de Tampa, el verdor de los cañaverales cubanos desde el aire cuando yo me iba y las espaldas de Dionel y Marina cuando caminaban hacia el avión en Cuba. . .

“. . . three memories are always in my mind: my three granddaughters in their little blue dresses and white shoes waiting for me at the Tampa airport, the vivid green color of the Cuban sugar fields from the air as I left, and Dionel and Marina's backs as they walked to the plane in Cuba. . . .”

I realize she is talking to Sabina. My eyes are still fixed on the earth-colored bowl. This is not the first time I hear mother tell this story. As time passes, departure and absence increasingly define her memories. Every time mother tells the story, tears slowly run down her cheeks. When I see her tears, I've got to fight to hold mine back. Her words always rekindle my memories of a day deeply embedded in my memory, my own departure . . .

Mother's voice breaks through my memories.

¿Sabina, quién trajo el periódico?

“Sabina, who brought the paper?”

My eyes move away from the earth-colored, ceramic bowl and land on Greco's smiling face as Sabina responds.

¡Bustamante, cuando dejó tu almuerzo!

“Bustamante, when he left your lunch!”

My eyes move away from Greco's smiling face. I fold *La Gazeta* and place it next to the bowl. I finish sipping my cup of Cuban coffee, walk toward mother, and hand her the paper,

Vieja ahí tienes algo acerca de Castro para leer luego.

“Mother, here is something about Castro for you to read later.”

She snaps back,

Sabes que no me interesa oír su nombre. Su gente asesinaron a tu tío frente a su hijo. ¡Nunca se lo perdonaré!

“You know I'm not interested in hearing his name. His followers murdered your uncle, while his son watched.

I'll never forgive him!”

I keep forgetting that mother now becomes upset whenever she hears Castro's name. I mumble an apology, kiss her forehead, place the empty cup in the sink, and turn to Sabina.

Sabina, déjale la curita puesta en la cara a la Vieja

hasta mañana. Me voy para el trabajo.

“Sabina, leave the band-aid on mother's face till tomorrow.

I'm off to work.”

* * * *

Every day, when I enter mother's kitchen, my mind drifts to Cuba. I hear voices. I hear mother's struggles not to forget or forgive. As I sit at mother's kitchen table and drink *mi café cubano*, memories abound forcing me to confront who I am, what my past means to me, what hers mean to her. I hear voices that won't let me forget. I struggle with many memories, too many voices popping in and out of my mind. Each time, mother's mind appears to slowly but relentlessly deteriorate. She forgets. I remember. Have the accumulated losses across time taken their toll on her? These memories are too painful to sustain. Mother wants me to keep her house and let relatives live in it after she dies. Does she want her house to serve as a conduit to keep the family together, provide narrative continuity and unity into the future? I don't tell her how I feel. I may not want to continue to listen to these voices or linger in her kitchen because they now bring me so much pain. I watch her deterioration, remembering the life that could have been. I struggle to push off these memories. Mother's kitchen table is an umbilical cord I feel I must cut. But can I?

* * * *

In the summer of 2004, Sabina tells us she will not be able to care for mother any longer. Sabina's daughter-in-law just gave birth to a baby boy. Sabina, now a grandmother for the first

time, will be looking after her grandson. I start to search for someone else to look after mother who now at 91 is not able to be alone. Her memory continues to decline. Her mind appears to drift away, often sitting in silence.

After not being able to find someone like Sabina to look after mother, we start looking for a place where they would look after mother. As I sip my cup of Cuban coffee, I tell mother,

Vieja, mañana a las 10 te llevaré a conocer una familia cubana que viven en la calle Tampa Bay, no muy lejos de aquí. Ellos se dedican a cuidar personas mayores como tú.

“I will pick you up tomorrow morning at 10 o’clock to meet a Cuban family living on Tampa Bay, not too far from here. They take care of elderly persons like you.”

!No quiero irme de mi casa! !Aquí yo estoy bien sola!

“I don’t want to leave my house. I’m fine here by myself,” she replies quickly.

Marina walks behind as I help mother walk up the steps leading to the front porch of the well-kept white frame house. María Luisa Marín, the owner of the facility, opens the front door.

She wears a big smile as she introduces herself,

¡Buenos días, adelante y bien venidos!

“Good morning, come in, and welcome!”

As we walk into the living room, I look to the left and notice a bedroom with a twin bed near a window facing south and overlooking the porch. In the living room, a couch is placed against the right wall, facing east. A reclining chair is near the west wall facing south. A

television set faces north next to a window not too far from the front door. One elderly woman sits on the couch; another on the reclining chair. They both are watching television. We exchange pleasantries. They are both alert and smiling.

We walk into the dining room, which is furnished with a dining table with six chairs, a two-piece china cabinet against the east wall and server against the north wall. To the left of the dining room is a bedroom and a bathroom; to the right, a hallway leading to a bathroom with a bedroom on each side. From the dining room, we walk into the kitchen. I smell the aroma of coffee being brewed. To the west of the kitchen, there is another bedroom that, like the kitchen, has a door that opens to the backyard. The woman brewing coffee introduces herself. Her name is Iris. She asks us to enjoy some of her brew. We accept. The facility looks like someone's private residence, not an assisted living facility. The home smells clean and is tidy. I feel I'm visiting friends and not inspecting the place.

Creo que la vieja estará bien aquí.

"Mother will do well here," I whisper to Marina.

When we take mother back home, I ask her,

Vieja, ¿qué te pareció el lugar?

"What do you think about the place?"

El lugar está muy limpio y la gente es muy amable,

pero yo me quiero quedar en mi casa.

"The place is very clean; the people are very friendly,

but I want to stay in my house," she responds.

Mother wants to stay in her home by herself. Marina and I know she can no longer function safely. She is too forgetful. If someone does not remind her, she will forget to take not

only a bath, but to turn off the stove. She can't remember to take her medicines. Yet, I continue to struggle with the decision to move her out of her house and into a place where she will be taken care of twenty-four hours a day. I'm frustrated we are unable to find someone like Sabina so she could stay in her own house. I also feel selfish for not taking her to our house. Am I abandoning her, leaving her again? Finally, on July 15, 2004, I write a check for \$1500 to María Luisa Marín, the owner of the care facility on Tampa Bay Blvd.

At María Luisa's suggestion, during the first few days, I drive mother again to María Luisa's place where she will spend the day, eat her three meals, and take a bath. In the early evening, we take her home. Then one of us, either Marina or I spend the night with her. We hope this will make it easier to finally move her.

When mother moves out of her house, I continue to stop by every morning and have a cup of *café cubano* with her. Some days we take her out to lunch or dinner, or to the doctor, or to visit relatives, or to the beach, or to play dominoes. She appears to accept the change, but perhaps she is only resigned to it. Her memory continues to deteriorate. Her memory is now so poor that she has no apparent awareness of time.

* * * *

Mother sits on the reclining chair staring at the television set when I bring her coffee. I pull a chair from the dining room set, place it next to her, and sit. She does not pick up the cup of coffee placed next to her. She seems disoriented.

Doña Eumelia, ¿no quiere tomar café?

“You don't want to drink coffee?” I ask her.

When she does not respond I ask her,

¿Quién soy yo?

“Who am I?”

Her blue eyes begin to sparkle as they take a long look at me,

¡. . .mi hermano Roberto!

“. . .my brother Roberto!”

¡No, yo soy tu hijo Dionel!

“No, I’m your son Dionel.”

She laughs and responds,

Roberto, tu siempre tan chistoso. Tu sabes que

no puedes ser mi hijo. ¡Yo no estoy casada!

“Roberto, you’re always joking. You know you cannot
be my son. I’m not married.”

My denial of being Roberto makes her laugh. Her response brings me pain: it confirms her relentless loss of memory. Still, it is important, vital, that I continue to be with her to validate her humanity.

* * * *

María Luisa shows me a piece of one of mother’s teeth and exclaims,

!Se le rompió unos momentos atrás desayunando!

“It broke a few moments ago while eating breakfast.”

Mother appears to be in pain. I call Dr. Orta, her dentist, who tells me to bring her right away to his office on Martin Luther King Avenue. When we arrive, Dr. Orta’s assistant takes us into the first room to the right of the reception area. Dr. Orta walks into the room, says hello, and asks mother to open her mouth. Mother is very tense. She rocks her body back and forth and moves her right hand from left to right. I plead,

*Necesitas abrir la boca para que el doctor pueda
arreglarte el diente y quitarte el dolor.*

“You need to open your mouth for the doctor to fix
your tooth and do away with the pain.”

She slowly opens her mouth. Dr. Orta looks at her broken tooth, puts a cream on his
finger and tells her,

Te voy a poner una crema por dormirte la encia. . .

“I’m going to rub this cream on your gums. . .”

!Ayy!

“Awwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!”

Her scream chills my bones and surprises us. She had been to Dr Orta’s several times
during the last few years and had been very compliant and quiet. Now, she pushes Dr. Orta’s
right hand away, continues to scream, and hits him with her right hand and both legs. Dr. Orta
pulls his hands away from mother and backs away. His face shows complete surprise. I embrace
mother and whisper in her ears,

Ya, ya pasó todo. . .tranquilízate. . .

“It’s all over. . .calm down. . .”

She stops screaming, places her arms around my neck.

Papito, papito. . .tengo miedo. . .

“Daddy, daddy. . .I’m afraid. . .”

Mother is now a child again. I’m no longer her brother. I’m her father. I want to cry but
hold back my tears. Mother will not be around much longer.

September 1, 2011

My cell phone's background is a picture of mother sitting on a reclining chair. We are celebrating her 98th birthdate. Sitting to her right is her great-granddaughter Sarah holding a birthdate cake with the number 98 in the center. Behind Sarah are mother's granddaughters Lourdes and Ileana; Marina and I are behind mother; mother's granddaughter Alexis is to my right; mother's granddaughter María sits to her left. Everyone smiles except mother. Her eyes are fixed to nowhere.

A few weeks later, Dr. Bermudez, after seeing mother, remarks, "Your mother's heart is weak. Her dementia is now in its final stage. She does not want to eat. She is on record as not wanting to be force fed. I'm going to refer her to Hospice who will make sure she does not suffer. I expect she will not live more than a week or so."

* * * *

October 26, 2011

The sound coming from the phone wakes me up. The sound stops and I hear Marina's voice,

Hello. . . ¡yo se lo digo. . .enseguida vamos!

" . . .I'll tell him. . .we'll be right over!"

*María Luisa llamó. Cuca falleció. Le dije que
enseguida íbamos.*

"María Luisa called. Cuca just passed away.

I told her we'd be over right away" Marina tells me.

We pull out of the driveway and head west to Himes Ave. where we turn south. There are very few cars on the road. We turn east on Tampa Bay Blvd. and notice the first rays of the sun

are coming out. I park in the same spot I did seven years ago when I brought mother for the first time here.

María Luisa opens the door, but this time her face is drawn. Iris, the woman who was making coffee that first day, stands behind the reclining couch mother would sit on. Her face expresses sadness. The nurse from Hospice stands by the entrance to my mother's room, the first one to our left with a window facing the porch. There is also sadness on her face. Mother lays still on her bed. She wears a pink gown. I kiss her forehead. Tears run down my face.

¡Viejita, te me fuistes. Ya no podré seguir tomando café contigo!

“Viejita, you left me. I'll not be able to drink coffee with you anymore!” I tell myself.

While mother's death is not unexpected, my mind wants to stay focus on the pain I feel at this moment. To push the pain away. I force myself to address questions I've avoided: What do I do with her house? Will my cousin Robertico want to move in? Do I sell it?

On February 28, 2012, Robertico moves to mother's house. He works at Publix and part time at a restaurant in St. Petersburg. He agrees to pay the utilities, real estate taxes, and insurance. He hopes to convince Daisy, our cousin, and her husband to move in with him. Daisy and her husband declined. They are moving to Miami.

On November 30, 2013, Robertico, tells me he lost his part time job in St. Petersburg and will not be able to continue to pay the expenses with only his meager Publix's income. He will move back with our cousin Jorge, Daisy's brother.

Not long after Robertico moves out of the house, Marina tells me,

Yo creo que es hora que vendas la casa de tú mama.

Nadie de la familia quiere vivir en ella. Si la casa continua

vacía, se deteriorará.

“I believe it’s time to sell your mother’s house. No family member wants to live in it. If the house remains empty, it will deteriorate.”

I agree with Marina.

After a long process of clearing the title to the house, I sell it and distribute the proceeds among my brother José, my wife Marina, the daughters, granddaughters, and sons-in law.

I have buried my maternal grandfather, my father in-law, my father, my mother, among others; and now I have sold the house. Is this a sign the umbilical cord is cut?

CHAPTER SEVEN: A RELUCTANT IMMIGRANT

*Residir en el exilio es sobrevivir
a la intemperie, exponerse a los
rigors de un tiempo ajeno.*

(Pérez Firmat 2000, p. 19)

Pérez Firmat claims that to reside in exile is to survive being exposed to the weather, the rigors of someone else's weather. For the last fifty-nine years, I have been living under someone else's weather. María Cristina García (1996, p. 213) and Perez (2013, p.597) claim Cubans who left after Castro took over regard themselves first and foremost as having been forced to leave their homeland for political reasons. I am one of them.

As I begin writing this last chapter, Bochner tells me, "You continue to have this lingering unrest about Cuba which you have not been able to resolve." Bochner's words bring to my mind Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1992),

El exilio es una tierra que el escritor lleva siempre consigo.

"Exile is a land a writer always carries inside." (p. 127)

I left Cuba almost sixty years ago. Yet, I still carry Cuba inside of me.⁴⁷ I left to maintain my freedom to dissent without fear of retaliation, not to become an immigrant and give up my homeland, but rather to be temporarily absent, an exile. At the time I felt powerless to exercise any other option that offered a viable future and made sense under the Castro regime.

⁴⁷ Veiga (2016) titled her memoir "We carry our homes with us."

In her Senior Honors Thesis at the University of Florida, my granddaughter Alexis, based on her research (Amaro & Portes 1972; Duany 2017; García 1996; Pedraza 1998), refers to the first Cubans leaving the island nation and coming to the U.S. following Castro's takeover as the "Golden Exiles" and indicates 250,000 "migrants" arrived between 1959 and 1962 (Ercia 2019, p. 6).⁴⁸ Among them were "executives and owners of firms, big merchants, sugar mill owners, cattleman, representatives of foreign companies [and] professionals (Duany 2017)." Alexis quotes María Cristina García (1996) who "further explains the idea of 'temporary exiles' as follows: these migrants 'were in the U.S, not to make new lives for themselves as *norteamericanos* but to wait until they could resume their previous lives back home.' They left their lives not knowing that they would ever again return." (Ercia 2019 p. 7). While I would not use the term "immigrant" or "Golden Exile" but rather simply "exile" to describe myself or other Cubans like me who left the island nation between 1959 and 1962, I agree the characteristics listed above will be found within this group of Cuban *exiles* or *reluctant immigrants*.⁴⁹

I want to emphasize that an immigrant looks for a new life. Implicit is the possibility of no return and, with it, possible assimilation, definition by others. An exile, a reluctant emigrant, on the other hand, seeks temporary residence and does not expect assimilation. Return is not only expected, but also taken for granted. ***An exile refuses to be defined by others, expects to return, and, when unable to, in the end cannot prevent being defined through interactions with others in the host country.*** When I left Cuba, I did not realize that identity is brought forth in conversations with *others*. Now I know that, "even when exiled, alone and in pain, there is no self without an other. We *are* a dialogue" (Cotanda 2001b, p. 66).

⁴⁸ "Under 'Operation Peter Pan' more than fourteen thousand children boarded planes and left Cuba between 1961 and 1963." (Alvarez Borland 1998, p.166, note 5)

⁴⁹ The term "Golden Exile" brings to my mind the "Golden Years," a supposedly leisure way of life for senior citizens. While I'm in my "golden years," I do not believe there is anything "golden" about it.

In this dissertation I refer to exile, the status of a *reluctant immigrant*, as an expression of an unfulfilled goal, a disconnection, a vote cast with our feet, displacement, and a departure from geographical markers anchoring a history that tells us who we are. Above all, exile expresses loss, a lingering loss. The pain I feel is both individual and collective. I feel it and other Cubans do too (Rieff 1993, p. 22. As an exile, regardless of the personal freedom and economic security I enjoy, I am not satisfied and will not be until Cubans in Cuba enjoy the liberty and justice promised by Castro over sixty years ago! Till then, I refuse to define myself as *an immigrant*. To Cuban exiles like me, to call ourselves *immigrants*, means we do not belong to either Cuban nation, not to Cuba and not to the Cuba in exile, which is even worse (Rieff, 1993, p. 40).

Throughout this dissertation, I have used my memory to recall my early years in Cuba; my fears as a child listening to a conversation about Batista's *coupe d'état* without understanding what the words meant; Castro's attack on Moncada and his closing arguments at his trial: *Condenadme, no importa, la historia me absolverá* [Condemn me, it does not matter, history will absolve me]; the rebels landing south of Niquero; the triumph of *la Revolución*; our pledge of allegiance to the "freedom fighter"; being overwhelmed with nationalistic feelings; the firing squads; my lust for Marina; my brother bearing witness to the explosion of *La Coubre*; Castro's *coupe d'état* to democracy; my fears of staying in Cuba; my fear of disclosure; my departure to the U.S expecting a prompt return; our wedding; the Bay of Pigs fiasco; the happiness of the birth of my daughters Ileana, María Elena, and Lourdes; the renewed hope when joining the U.S. Army in an effort to bring back democracy to Cuba; the disappointment with Kennedy's broken promise; the arrival of our parents; being faced with the need to reinforce **my** language and **my** culture to my daughters; becoming a successful entrepreneur; going back to school; Bochner's vibrant presentation of the importance of communication; the making of a Bostrom Young

Scholar; father's death and lingering memories; and mother's slow deterioration and eventual death. I set as my goal to make sense, to understand these experiences leading to and following my departure from Cuba, that is, the extent to which they make a unity of my life.

My graduate education, propelled by the continued support and encouragement I continue to receive from Bochner and others, now allows me to understand I may not be able to bring closure to what Bochner calls my "lingering unrest about Cuba." Now I know I need to learn to live with a wound that will not heal (Rieff 1995, p.76). Perhaps I have always needed this. I also understand that I am not defined by this "lingering unrest." I am defined by my relationships, with everyone I interact with, especially those close to me.

A Meaningful Life

In the second chapter of this dissertation I asked,

"Has mine been a meaningful life (MacIntyre 1984)?"

In search of an answer, as I look at my life "as a whole, as a unity," I encounter two obstacles described by MacIntyre (2001): One is social; the other, philosophical. The first one results from modernity's segmentation of human life, each one with its own norms and modes of behavior. Leisure is separated from work; private life, from public; the corporate and/or academic, from the personal. Our childhood and old age are ripped apart. Each part possesses its own characteristics with no resemblance to the unity of our lives. We are taught to think and feel in terms of each distinct realm created for each activity (p. 241).

The second obstacle, the philosophical one, derives from two tendencies. One is found in analytical philosophy; the other, in sociological theory and in existentialism. The one in analytical philosophy leads us to think atomistically about our actions and analyze complex actions and transaction as simple components and not as a whole. The fact that basic human

actions derive their character as parts of a larger whole is a point of view foreign to our predominant way of thinking. Hence, we fail to consider what is necessary to begin to understand our lives as more than a sequence of individual actions and episodes (p. 241).

The unity of our human life becomes invisible when we separate ourselves from the roles that we play, a separation created by Sartre's existentialism, the sociological theories of Dahrendorf, and Goffman which permeate the modes of thought and practice of modernity and prevent us from conceiving human beings as bearers of the Aristotelian virtues (p.242).

As I look at my life as a "whole", I find mine to have been a meaningful one to me and to others. When I left Cuba, I thought I would return soon. I did not set out to be a reluctant immigrant, an American citizen, a husband, a father of three daughters and a grandfather of two granddaughters all born on U.S. soil, a Bostrom Young Scholar, or an entrepreneur. Neither did I anticipate I would bury my parents and maternal grandparent in U.S. soil, join the U.S. Army, attend U.S.F., meet Art Bochner or write a Ph. D. dissertation. Yet here I am, learning to accept I will spend the rest of my days being "a reluctant immigrant" who leaves a legacy of displacement, loss, together with an unfulfilled dream of return but was nevertheless able to enjoy the love for and from his family and, at the same time, live his life with passion as an entrepreneur, a college student, a husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

An Ambiguous Loss: An Exile's Memory Work

Unknown to me, my desire to return to Cuba was always a race against time and mortality (Rieff 1995, p. 89) and an ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999, 2006), a lack of closure renders "it difficult to know when to begin or end the grieving process" (Perez, 2013, p.596). Perez (2013) points to themes of nostalgia, loss, ambivalence, and ambiguous loss as being common in Cuban American literature citing Alvarez-Borland (1994, 1998), Arenas (1994), Diaz (2010),

Eire (2003, 2010), Garcia (1993), Ojito (2007), Rodenas (2007), and Rubio (2006). I can't exactly pinpoint when my grief began and now recognize it will unlikely ever end.

I experience both types of ambiguous losses: the one associated with the psychological presence of physical loss of my homeland and absent loved ones, and the one when someone close is physically present but psychologically absent (Perez, 2013, p. 597). I started to experience the first one sometime after I left Cuba, perhaps when that plane took off and Cuban landscape disappeared; the second one, when mother was going through the final stages of Alzheimer's disease, her presence absence.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I mention the historical tendencies of *exceptionalism*, *diversity*, and *secularism* embedded in Cuban culture (Grenier & Perez 2003, pp. 29-43). They shed light on how we Cubans define ourselves as exiles, that is, as *reluctant immigrants* (p. 16). *Exceptionalism* is a shared perception that Cubans' national experience is different from that of any other people. For Cubans, this "sense of uniqueness is elevated to the point where it is a defining national characteristic" (p. 30). *Diversity* emerges from the contribution of many "other cultures to the intricacies of the Cuban culture mostly as the result of migration to the island during the first half of the twentieth century. . . [and] the pervasive influence of U.S. culture" (p. 40). *Secularism* and the absence of fatalism, values honed from a-centuries-old commercial port culture, lead us to believe that we can control our destiny. Our lives are in our own hands (p. 42). These three historical tendencies influence the lives of Cubans inside and outside the island nation, Cuba and its diaspora. They influence who Cubans are and who I am. I am a person who is accountable and responsible for the choices I made. I decided to leave Cuba to be able to fully express my thoughts without fear of retaliation. I sought freedom of expression—freedom. I now wonder if one can ever be "free" outside one's own country,

exposed to the rigors of someone else's weather (Pérez Firmat 2000, p. 19).

Yet, regardless of how hard I try to “resist the blandishment of assimilation” (Rieff 1995, p. 80), I can't help but wonder: Was I able to preserve my exile status after almost sixty years of absence from my homeland? Is preserving my exile status how I keep my desire to return to Cuba alive? Does exceptionalism and secularism still fuel my struggle situated between the politics of passion and the politics of affection, the space where I articulate meaning and my Cuban identity?

Exceptionalism and secularism fuel Cuban people's struggle situated as we are between *the politics of passion* and *the politics of affection* (Fernández, 2000, pp. 62-81). *The politics of passion* is the crusade for absolute moral ends for the community at large, the moral imperative of the state to change the reality of what *is* to *what ought to be*. *The politics of affection* is “an instrumental and affective logic that justifies breaking the norms of the state to fulfill personal needs (material and otherwise) as well as those of loved ones” (p. 1). Both *the politics of passion* and *the politics of affection* provide space for Cubans to articulate meaning and identity. *The politics of passion* forms the foundation for a formal relationship between the government and its citizens. *The politics of affection* fuels an informal relationship among the citizens faced with the reality of *what is*, the present. *The politics of passion* seeks a bond between the ruler and the ruled. *The politics of affection* undermines that relationship. The tension between these two poles rallied Cubans around Fidel Castro, a charismatic and deceptive leader, and set the stage for disconnection when the grand goal of the democratic society promised by Castro never materialized (Fernandez, 2000). Exile became a reality for over one million Cubans, over 10% of Cuba's current population.

The politics of affection became instrumental in the economic success of Cuban exiles

(Fernández 2000, p. 143). They contributed to capitalism in the diaspora, and the emergence of what Portes and Bach (1985) call “the Cuban enclave” in South Florida. While not to the same extent, these “enclaves” also emerged in Union City (New Jersey), New York (New York), Dallas (Texas), Los Angeles (California), San Juan (Puerto Rico), and half a dozen other areas that are home to large Cuban communities. Enclaves outside the United States developed in Madrid (Spain), Mexico City (Mexico), and Caracas (Venezuela) and other places where Cubans can be counted in the tens of thousands” (Montaner 2006). In these enclaves, the politics of passion continue to be at the heart of Cuban exiles politics: The Castro’s communist government is the “ultimate evil that must be combated” (Fernandez 2000, p. 143). Our dream of changing the regime lives on. We remember our desire for an independent Cuba did not start with Castro, but rather with the *criollos* who in October 10, 1868 declared independence from Spain.^{50 51} It lasted till May 28, 1878 and was known as the Ten-year War and, also, the Great War. A second war, known as *La Guerra Chiquita* [The Little War], broke out in 1879 and ended in 1880. These failures and Spain’s continued autocratic governance led many *criollos* to leave the island (Greiner & Pérez 2003, p. 16).

José Martí, who would become Cuba’s Apostle, arrived in New York on January 3, 1880 (Salcines 2019, p.1). Felix Varela, a Cuban priest and a leader in the desire to free Cuba from Spanish control, arrived in 1823. José María Heredia, regarded as one of the most important poets in the Spanish language, also arrived in 1823. This period “marks the beginning of the Cuban presence in New York, or for that matter, in the United States” (Pérez, L. 2018, p. 20).

⁵⁰ *Criollos* was the name given to those born in Cuba while it was a colony of Spain.

⁵¹ On October 10, 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes declared independence from Spain in what came to be known as *El Grito de Yara* that took place at *La Demajagua* sugar mill. Céspedes declared Cuba would be an independent nation where all citizens would be treated equal, were they white or black, Cubans or Spaniards. His declaration started *la Guerra de los Diez Años* [the Ten-Year War]. This attempt failed, but other insurrections followed, and Cuba gained independence in 1902.

“Near the close of the nineteenth century, New York’s Cuban community became the political and intellectual center of the definitive independence movement organized by José Martí. It was a time and place that defined the nascent nation” (p. 8). New York drew the Cubans that would help shape the incipient nation: intellectuals, writers, entrepreneurs, academics, musicians, and sports figures among them. The 1900’s would bring closer commercial, cultural, and political ties between New York and the island of Cuba. New York remained the most important U.S. city for Cubans until 1960 (p. 8). As the Cuban society “began to show the inexorable signs of totalitarian takeover” ((Nasca 2016, p. xii), many Cubans, unable to accept the changes being introduced by Castro, left the island nation as exiles.

“The common currency of exile is memory, above all the memory of wounds” (Rieff, 1995, p. 76). Encouraged by the United States, who appeared determined to overthrow the Castro regime, we believed we would return home in a few months (p. 77). However, the passage of time and the years lived in a state of perpetual disappointment and perpetual expectation turned the belief of a possible return into an unfulfilled dream (p. 78). “Hopes of Returning” is one of the themes listed by Perez (2013) that emerged from her interviews with twenty Cuban exiles who left Cuba before 1979, are over 65 years old, and reside in New York or New Jersey. The other themes are “Leaving Was Inevitable and Increasingly Difficult,” “Feeling Deceived and Displaced by Fidel,” “*Agradecimiento* (Gratitude) and *Traición* (Betrayal) Toward the United States,” “Idealizing a Prerevolutionary Cuba,” and “Melancholy for Lost *Patria*” [Homeland].

The idea of returning to Cuba has been very inspirational to me. Today, my hopes of return are an unfulfilled dream that brings a “Melancholy for *Lost Patria*.” I live conflicted with the dialectic of gratitude and betrayal. I am grateful for being accepted to reside in the United States, which not only provided the opportunity of expressing my thoughts without fear of

reprisal but also allowed me the opportunity to move up the economic ladder, provide for my family, and enhance my education. At the same time, I resent being misled by Kennedy's promise: *I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this Brigade in a free Havana* (YouTube). At the time, I did not realize that for the United States and the Soviet Union, Cuban exiles and Castro, respectively, were mere pawns of the Cold War, one that separated Cuban families and threatened to pull apart the threads holding together Cuba's *familismo*.

Legacy

The word *familismo* bring to my mind Bochner's words, "You may want to set up a meeting with your daughters to review what you may want to write about your legacy." He and I meet to review the progress of my dissertation at the Carrabba located at the SW corner of 56th St. and Fowler in Temple Terrace, not too far from the USF campus and my office. As he begins to cut the grilled salmon placed over the Cesar salad sitting on the table in front of him, Bochner continues, "I'll monitor the meeting and prepare the questions. We need to meet at a quiet place and record the session. Before we meet, you need to send your daughters a copy of the latest draft of your dissertation together with a copy of the questions" (Appendix B).

On March 26, 2019 we meet. Maria Elena, Ileana, and Lourdes sit across from Bochner and me. We're in Robbins Manufacturing Company's Board Room where I have been participating and, at times, conducting business meetings since 1973. Workplace and family now come together to gather information for the final chapter of my dissertation. One of the themes emerging from the interview is raised by María, "We always had a family vacation" (p. 1). Lourdes adds, "Yard work was a family affair" (p. 2). Ileana, referring to the Bostrom Young Scholar Award presentation, jumps in, "Yeah, we all went together" (p.2). María indicates that "in our family, a big thing was dinner. Well, it was breakfast and dinner. We always sat down as

a family for dinner” (p. 42). Every summer, we always—ever since I can remember, we always had a family vacation. Doesn’t matter how strapped we were. Always, family vacation for the summer. I remember Saturdays, I would mow with my dad, and then we’d play kickball or badminton (p. 1). Our daughters confirm that, unbeknown to us as parents, we were inculcating *familismo* to our children.

During our July 26, 2019 interview with our granddaughters, Sarah states, “I always say I’m Cuban. I’m Cuban but was born in Florida. . .I don’t think I’ve ever been like ‘I don’t want to be Cuban.’ I think it’s cool.” For her part, Alexis claims, “. . .it took me a while to realize and learn the value of my culture. . .and how cool it really is to be Cuban” (Ercia, Ercia, & Bochner 2019, p. 4). Our granddaughters confirm our culture is part of who they are as a result of our *familismo*.

Perez (2013) claims *familismo*, a strong family bond, was mentioned by half of the participants in her investigation. The participants recalled a Cuba rich in family values, one more united than in the United States. *En Cuba, un primo era como un hermano* [in Cuba, a cousin was like a brother] (p. 614). In response to one of Bochner’s question, Lourdes comments on my generation’s *familismo*, “. . .they’re all very family-oriented. Family comes first.” “Hard-working, hard-working,” Ileana adds (p. 18). Ileana’s words remind me of my parents’ dedication to hard work, a legacy I received from them together with a strong family value and a strong Cuban identity. Colmenero (1985) claims, “from a sociocultural perspective Cuban identity can be usefully conceptualized as a group of individuals who have internalized the same social category membership as a component of self- concept. This self-concept is referred to by Cubans as *Cubanismo*” (p. 66). This is how my parents saw themselves. This is how I see myself.

As I listen to our daughters, my decision to leave Cuba pops back in front of my eyes. As I try to make sense of my decision, now being able to look at it through the lenses of my graduate education and the benefit of hindsight (Freeman 2010), I realize I could not have made any other decision. Yet, I did not anticipate the length of time I would stay in exile or realize how hard it would be to leave the homeland behind. I was ignorant of the anxiety I would experience from separating myself from everything familiar to me. I had no concept of what my life as an exile would be. I was not aware of the lingering loss, the sense of displacement, the resistance to and fear of disclosure. I had internalized the fear of informing on yourself (Arroyo Naranjo 1997, pp. 60-63). Bochner claims my resistance to disclosure created the need for him to continually push me, however sensitively, “to talk about things” (pc). His sensitive insistence allows me to open up and continue to discover my buried treasures.

I know I would not be who I am today or be a part of a family like ours if I’d stayed in Cuba, my only other option. To stay and be able to survive would have meant for me to become compliant to the dictums of a system that would slowly, but surely, erode my soul! The system established by Castro would have fertilized my worst instincts. Staying meant corrosion; leaving, hope. In the end, I became a survivor of the Cuban Revolution’s disenchantment! I can be proud to count myself as a survivor.

Of course, exile is not a monolithic experience. I know the exile experience is not the same for every exile, but the experience of wound is (Rieff, 1995, p. 76). Every exile carries a wound. We share the status of a wounded storytellers (Frank 1995). A wound that does not heal. All we can do is to learn to live with it and pass on stories about it.

I also know that exile does not mean lack of attachment “to someone else’s weather” (Pérez Firmat 2000, p. 19), one that would turn out to be my daughters’ and granddaughters’

even though they identify themselves with their Cuban heritage. María Elena asserts “it’s our upbringing, how we were raised. We only spoke Spanish at home and constantly listened to the radio in Spanish. Mom bought—the records were all in Spanish. . .and Spanish food. . .my mom was an amazing cook” (Bochner & Cotanda, 2019, pp. 10-11). Without realizing it, we were trying to be Cubans through and through. In our Tampa home, we did what we had done in our Cuban homes. Our Tampa home and our family became symbols of Cuba, the homeland we lost.

I wonder if the way we brought up our daughters transferred the pain of the wound we carry. If so, I hope reading this dissertation helps them heal the wound they inherited and the grief that persists inside of us. I know they did not know so many things about my experiences. I kept so much inside of me, became so private. Thus, I want this dissertation to be a gift to my daughters and granddaughters who have been raised outside of Cuba but share a strong Cuban heritage. I hope this dissertation is as therapeutic to them as it has been to me.

Epilogue: My Unfulfilled Dream

Earlier I refer to my desire to return to the homeland as “an unfulfilled dream”. Instead of using the term “return” to the homeland, Grenier & Pérez (2003) are very careful to use the term “recovery” of the homeland to describe the ideology of Cuban exiles (p 120). The “recovery” of my homeland may now be a more appropriate term for me to use now that Fidel Castro is dead. Unfortunately, his brother Raúl is now the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, the most senior position in Cuba today. The rhetoric of Raúl, the new ruler, like Fidel’s, is also rooted in the actual, the present, and aims to perpetuate Fidel’s system of government. As an exile, mine continues to be one of possibility and assumes an incomplete universe, a universe Cubans need to bring to completion through a change to a democratic system of government (Cotanda 1995).

In writing this dissertation I often pondered the words Pérez Firmat wrote in reference to his book *The Cuban Condition* (2006): “The fate of the Cuban writer, the fear of the Cuban writer, has always been to find himself in others’ words” (Borland & Bosch 2009, p. 3). I found myself, my experiences, being articulated by many other Cubans: Franqui (1961 & 1981), Fagen, Brody, O’Leary (1968), Amaro & Portes (1972), Richmond (1973), Gonzalez (1974), Fiallo (1979) Colmenero (1985), Pedraza (1985, 1995, 1998,), Moore (1998), Taber (1985), Turner (1990), Geldoff (1991), Geyer (1991), León (1991), Cabrera Infante (1992), Fanning (1992), Oppenheimer (1992), Rice (1992), García C. (1993), Perez-Stable (1993), Rieff (1993, 1995), Arenas (1994), Borland (1994, 1998), Pérez Firmat (1994, 2000), Szulc (1995), García, M. C. (1996), Arroyo Naranjo, (1997), Thomas (1998), Fernández (2000), Fernández & Cámara Betancourt, Cámara (2003), Eire (2003), Grenier & Pérez (2003), Montaner (2006), Nasca (2016), Rubio (2006), Ojito (2007), Rodenas (2007), Gracia-Bosch-Borland (2008), Pérez, R. M. (2013), Diaz (2010), Veiga (2016), Duany (2017), Fuentes (2017), Ercia (2019). In each one of these writers I found a part of me. And, in doing so, I was reminded of my need to live with a wound that would never heal: my sense of displacement and loss. I will continue to hear Thomas Wolfe’s words being whispered in my ears, “You can’t go home again” (1940)—no matter how vividly you dream to.

Medina (2002), after his return from visiting Cuba in 1999, writes “you better be ready to accept the fact that you do not belong there any longer, that other people have taken your place within it” (p. 129). The words from Wolfe and Medina confirm that my sense of displacement — the essence of exile— will linger with me. Displaced from my homeland, I will remain in limbo, *place-less*, restless to return while hunted by assimilation narratives that attempt to make me stay, the exile’s paradox. I now realize I cannot “be taught American and play and fight and see

and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming an American” (Okada 1976, pp. 15-16).

I’ve worked with Americans since I arrived in the U.S.A. I have American friends who are close to me. Yet, I cannot forget that I was not born an American. My birth geographical markers are in Cuba and, if I remain a dissenter, they will continue to be inaccessible to me. Hence, I *must continue to* draw my identity from memory. While mental as well as bodily considerations are involved in questions of personal identity, the most important single feature is *memory* (Fitzgerald 1993, p. 23). From this constant tension of displacement and assimilation I *must* articulate my own story, my own identity (Cotanda 2001b, pp. 70-71).

In this dissertation I have used remembering and forgetting, an autoethnographic form, to help me awaken from my dream state without forsaking hope and love for family and homeland. My life story, like everyone’s else, will not be complete as long as I am alive. Thus, I write in order to make it possible for other exiles to use my story to better understand and reflect on their own suffering, loss, and belonging or lack of it.

Writing this dissertation allowed me to conclude I am not a victim of the Castro revolution, but rather **a survivor of the Revolution’s disenchantment!**

REFERENCES

- Adams, B. (1990). *Time & social theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Aguilar León, L. (1991). *Reflexiones sobre Cuba y su futuro*. Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal.
- Alvarez Borland, I. (1994). Displacement and autobiography in Cuban-American fiction. *World Literature Today*, 68, 43-48.
- _____. (1998). *Cuban-American literature of exile: from person to Persona*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia
- Alvarez Borland, I. & Bosch, L. M. F. (Eds.) (2009). *Cuban-American literature and art: Negotiating identities*. NY: State University of New York.
- Amaro N. and Portes A. (1972). Una sociología del exilio: Situación de los grupos Cubanos en los Estados Unidos. *Aportes* 23, 6-24.
- American Rhetoric Amemricanrhetoric.com
- Arenas, R. (1994). *Before night falls: A memoir* (D. M. Koch, Trans.). New York, NY: Putman.
- Arregui, R. (Curator) (1995, April-June). *American-Cuban, Cuban-American, thirty-five*. Belleair, Fl. The Florida Gulf Coast Art Center.
- Arroyo Naranjo, E. A. (1997). *Eliseo Alberto: Informe contra mí mismo*. México: Extra Alfaguara.
- Bizzell, P. & B. Herzberg (Eds.) (1990). *The rhetorical tradition: Readings from classical times to present*. Boston: St Martin's Press.

- Bochner, A. P. (1997). Narrative and the divided self, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 418-438.
- _____. (2000). Criteria against ourselves, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), 266-272.
- _____. (2001). Narrative's virtue, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 131-157.
- _____. (2002). Love Survives, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 161-169.
- _____. (2007). Notes toward an ethics of memory in autoethnography. In *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Inquiry Research: Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge*. N. Denzin and M. Giardina (Eds). Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, pp. 197-208.
- _____. (2012a) Bird on a wire: Freeing the father within me. *Qualitative Inquiry* 18(2), 168-173.
- _____. (2012b). Between obligation and inspiration: Choosing qualitative inquiry *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(7), 535-543.
- _____. (2014). *Coming to narrative: A personal history of paradigm change in the human sciences*. Left Coast Press.
- _____. (2017). Heart of the matter: A mini-manifesto for autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(1), 67-80.
- Bochner, A. P. & Cotanda, D. (2019). Interview conducted on March 26, 2019 in Tampa, FL.
- Bochner, A. P. & Riggs, N. (2014). Practicing Narrative Inquiry. In P. Leavy (Ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 195-222.
- Bourne, P. G. (1986). *Fidel: a biography of Fidel Castro*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company.
- Budget Films. (1959). Identifiers Clip-13831 & 13833. *budgetfilms.com*. Los Angeles, CA.
http://www.budgetfilms.com/search/?q=cuban+firing+squads&results_per_page=
- Cabrera Infante, G. (1992). *Mea Cuba*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janez Editores.
- Cámara, Madelín. (2003). Words without borders. In María de los Angeles Torres (Ed.) *By Heart/De memoria: Cuban women's journeys in and out of exile* (pp. 151-168)

- Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Castro, F. & Ramonet I. (2008). *Fidel Castro: My life*. New York: Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Clifford, J. (1992). Traveling cultures. In Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural Studies* (pp. 96-116). New York: Routledge.
- Cotanda, D. (1995). *Rhetoric of the ruler and the exile*. Bostrom Young Scholar Award, Southern Speech Communication Association.
- _____. (2001a). ¡Déjame ir!: Lingerin memories of father's death. Presentation at the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction Couch-Stone Symposium, University of Miami, Fl.
- _____. (2001b). Identity, displacement and memory. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 24. 65-74. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.
- _____. (2006a). Voices at mother's kitchen: An autoethnographic account of exile. *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, 3: pp. 562-588. Sage Publications.
- _____. (2006b). ¡Déjame ir! [Let me go!]. Presentation at the Second International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Cotanda, J. F. (1993). Interview conducted on October 23, 1993 at La Joya, California.
- Crites, S. (1986). Storytime: recollecting the past and projecting the future. In *Narrative psychology: the storied nature of human conduct*, edited by T. R. Sarbin. New York: Praeger.
- Diaz, I. M. (2010). *Cuba: Another side of the story: Memoirs of a Cuban childhood*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris.
- Dickson, T. V. (1988). *The role of the Cuban press in international political communication:*

"Granma weekly review" and Castro's U.S. Policy. Paper presented at 71st Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Portland, OR.

Duany, J. M. (2017) Urban Migration: A Post revolution Exodus Ebbs and Flows. *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*, 1-21. Retrieve September 21, 2018 from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows>.

Eire, C. (2003). *Waiting for snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban boy*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

_____.(2010). *Learning to die in Miami: Confessions of a refugee boy*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Ellis, C. (1991). Sociological Introspection and emotional experience. *Symbolic Interaction*14:23-50.

_____. (2004). *Ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. New York: Alta Mira Press.

_____. (2009). *Revision: Autoethnographic reflections on life and work*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. (1992). Telling and performing personal stories: The constraints choice in abortion. In C. Ellis and M. J. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 79-101. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ellis C. & Patti, C. (2014). With heart: Compassionate interviewing and storytelling with holocaust survivors. *Storytelling Self Society*, Vol. 10, 1: pp. 389-414. Wayne State University Press

English, T. J. (2007). *Havana Nocturne*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

- Ercia, A. N. (2019). *Cuban American patterns: Transnational ties of Cubans in the United States*. Senior Honor Thesis, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.
- Ercia, A. N., Ercia, S. N., & Bochner, A. P. (2019). Interview conducted on July 26, 2019 at Robbins Manufacturing Company, Tampa, FL.
- Fagen, R. R., R. A. Brody, & T. J. O'Leary. (1968). *Cubans in exile: disaffection and the revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fanning, D. (1992). *The last communist*. Denver: Colorado Journal Graphics, Inc.
- Fernández, D. J. (2000). *Cuba and the politics of passion*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Fernández, D. J. & Cámara Betancourt, M. (2000). Eds. *Cuba, the elusive nation: Interpretations of national identity*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Fiallo, A. (1979). *Cuba: una revolución reaccionaria*. Miami, FL.: Revista Ideal.
- Fitzgerald, T. K. (1993). *Metaphors of identity: A culture-communication dialogue*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Frank, A. W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Franqui, C. (1966). *Diary of the Cuban revolution*. New York: Viking.
- _____. (1981). *Retrato de familia con Fidel*. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, S.
- Freeman, M. (2010) *Hindsight: The promise and peril of looking backward*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fuentes, N. (2017). *El último disidente* edited by Norberto Fuentes and Pedro Schwarz. Cuarteles de Invierno: www.cuartelesdeinfierno.net.
- Garcia, C. (1993). *Dreaming in Cuban*. New York, NY: Random House.

- García, M. C. (1996). *Havana USA: Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994*. University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, California.
- Geldof, L. (1991) *Cubans: voices of change*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self: dilemmas of identity in contemporary life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geyer, G. A. (1991). *Guerrilla prince: The untold story of Fidel Castro*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Gill, A. (1994). *Rhetoric and human understanding*. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press Inc.
- Gonzalez, E. (1974). *Cuba under Castro: The limits of charisma*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Goodall, Jr., H. L. (1995). *Response to the Robert Bostrom Young Scholar Award Papers*. Southern Speech Communication Association Convention. New Orleans, LA
- Gracia, Jorge J. E., Bosch, Lynette M. F., & Borland, Isabel Alvarez (Eds.) (2008). *Identity, memory, and diaspora*. Albany: State of New York University Press.
- Grenier, G. J. & Pérez, L. (2003). *The legacy of exile: Cubans in the United States*. Boston: Allyn Bacon
- Hillsborough County Board of County Commission's Ad (2003) *La Gaceta*, Tampa, FL February 14.
- Horowitz, I. L. (1995). Ed. *Cuban communism: 1959-1995*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Iyer, P. (1995). *Cuba and the night*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Kissinger, H. (1994). *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kuhn, T. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolution* (2nd ed.) Chicago: Chicago

- University Press.
- Lavine, T. Z. (1984). *From Socrates to Sartre: the philosophic quest*. New York: Batman Books.
- León, L. A. (1991). *Reflexiones sobre Cuba y su futuro*. Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal.
- Levine, R. M. (2001). *Secret Missions to Cuba*. New York: PALGRAVE.
- MacIntyre, A. (1984). *After virtue: A study on moral theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- _____. (2001). The virtues, the unity of a human life, and the concept of a tradition. In *Memory, identity, community: The idea of narrative in the human sciences*. SUNY.
- Martínez, J. A. (1994). *Cuban art & national identity: The vanguardia painters, 1927-1950*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- McInerney, P. (1991). *Time and experience*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. (C. W. Morris, Ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Medina, P. (2002). *Exile memories: A Cuban childhood*. New York: Persea Books, Inc.
- Milani, J. (1995, May 5). Art of Cuba from America: a half-dozen young artists explore their Cuban roots through their work. *The Tampa Tribune*. pp. 5-1, 5-2.
- Milosz, Czeslaw (1993). On Exile. *Parabola*, Volume XVIII, Number 2, May 1993. New York: Parabola.
- Montaner, C. A. (2006). *Cuban-Americans and a Complex Identity*, Raíces De Esperanza Conference: Princeton University, April 22, 2006.
- Moore, C. (1988). *Castro, the blacks, and Africa*. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Nasca D. R. (2016). *Lights out: A Cuban memoir of betrayal and survival*. North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

- Ojito, M. A. (2007). *El mañana Memoria de un éxodo cubano* [sound recording]. Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books.
- Okada, J. (1976). *NO-no boy: a novel by John Okada*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Oppenheimer, A. (1992). *Castro's final hour*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/castro-failed-coup-moncada-barracks/>
- Pedraza, S. (1985). Cuban Exiles: Portrait of a Refugee Migration. *International Migration Review*, 19(1), spring 1985, 4-34. doi:10.2307/2545654
- _____. (1995). Cuba's Refugees: Manifold Migrations. *Cuban Communism 1959-2003*, 308-328. doi:10.4324/9780203794296-23
- _____. (1998). Cuba's Revolution and Exodus. *The Journal of the International Institute*. Volume 5, Issue 2. Winter 1998. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.4750978.0005.204>
- Pérez Firmat, G. (1994). *Life on the hyphen: The Cuban-American way*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- _____. (2000). *Cincuenta lecciones de exilio y desexilio*. Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal.
- _____. (2006). *The Cuban Condition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pérez, L. (2018). *Sugar, cigars, & revolution: The making of Cuban New York*. New York: New York University Press.
- Pérez, R. M. (2013). Paradise Lost: Older Cuban American exiles' ambiguous loss of leaving Homeland, *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 56:7, 596-622.
- _____. (2015). Cuba no; Miami sí: Cuban Americans coping with ambiguous loss, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 25:1, 50-66.

- Perez-Stable, M. (1993). *The Cuban revolution: origins, course, and legacy*. New York: Oxford University.
- Portell-Vila, H. (1986). *Nueva historia de la república de Cuba (1898-1979)*. Miami, FL: La Moderna Poesía, Inc.
- Portes, A. and Bach, R. L. (1985). *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Poulakos, J. (1984). Rhetoric, the sophists, and the possible. *Communication Monographs*. 51. 216-224.
- Radio Rebelde: <http://www.radiorebelde.cu/26-julio-rebelde/lahistoriameabsolvera.html>
- Raphael, D. (1988). *The Alhambra decree: 1492. The year of Spain's greatest glory. The year of Spain's greatest shame*. North Hollywood, California: Carmi House Press.
- Rice, D. E. (1992). *The rhetorical uses of the authorizing figure: Fidel Castro and Jose Marti*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing as a method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Richmond, M. L. (1973). Immigrant adaptation and family structure among Cubans in Miami, Florida. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1973). *Dissertation Abstract International*. 74. 9495.
- Rieff, D. (1993). *The exile: Cuba in the heart of Miami*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- _____.(1995). *From exile to immigrants*. Foreign Affairs. Volume 74, No. 4
- Rodenas, A. M. (2007). Identity and diaspora: Cuban culture at the crossroads. In A. Herrera (Ed.), *Cuba: Idea of a nation displaced* (pp.143-160). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Rubio, R. (2006). Discourses of/on nostalgia: Cuban America's real and fictional geographies.

Letras Hispanas, 3(1), 13-24.

Salcines, E. J. (2019). *José Martí en Tampa: 20 documented visits (1891-1894)*. Presentation at

University of Tampa, FL on June 24, 1960.

Scott, R. L. (1967). On viewing rhetoric as epistemic. *Central States Speech Journal*. 18. 9-17.

Shweder, R. A. (1986). Divergent rationalities. In D. W. Fiske and R. A. Shweder (Eds.)

Metatheory in social science: Pluralisms and subjectivities (pp. 163-196). Chicago:

University of Chicago Press.

Smith B. (1921). Corax and probability. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education*, 13-42.

Solomon, R. C. (1988). *Continental philosophy since 1750: the rise and fall of the self*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press.

Szulc, T. (1995). Fidelismo: the unfulfilled ideology. In Irving Louis Horowitz (Ed.), *Cuban*

Communism 1959-1995 (pp. 173-184). New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Taber, M. (Ed.) (1985). *Fidel Castro speeches 1984-85: war and crisis in the Americas*. New

York: Pathfinder Press.

Tarnas, R. (1991). *The passion of the Western mind: understanding the ideas that have shaped our*

world views. New York: Harmony Books.

Thomas, H. (1998). *Cuba or the pursuit of freedom*. New York: Da Capo Press.

Turner, T. (1990). *A conversation with Fidel Castro*. NY: Journal Graphics, Inc.

Vanderford, M. (1994). *SPC6231-Survey of rhetorical theory*. Tampa: University of South

Florida.

Veiga, M. (2016). *We carry our homes with us: A Cuban American Memoir*. St. Paul:

Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Visweswaran, K. (1994). *Fictions of feminist ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Wolfe, T. (1940). *You can't go home again*. Edward Aswell (Ed.). New York: Harper Row.

YouTube (1962). Kennedy's Orange Bowl speech.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=keenedy+at+the+orange+bowl&view=detail&mid=AD7263E247991A310103AD7263E247991A310103&FORM=VIRE>

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROCESS FOR DISSERTATION

In this dissertation, I use autoethnography and narrative inquiry to investigate and perform important historical events over the course of my life as a reluctant immigrant (Bochner 1997, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2017; Bochner & Riggs 2014; Ellis 2004, 2009; Ellis & Bochner 1992; Richardson, 1994). I use these methodologies to connect my memories of my lived experience to personal, cultural, social, and political issues (Ellis 2004, p. xix). Thus, I draw on my memory to relive my interactions with my mother, father, wife, daughters, granddaughters, and brother together with my experiences before and after my arrival to the U.S. Mine is an attempt to understand how my decisions to leave Cuba affected who I became and who I am today.

As part of the process, I met with Dr. Arthur P. Bochner, my dissertation advisor, eighteen (18) times. Our first meeting took place on March 22, 2018 and the last one on July 26, 2019. The March 26, 2019 meeting included my three (3) daughters. The one on July 26, 2019 included my two (2) granddaughters. I list below the date and length of each meeting. Our meetings took place in the Department of Communication conference room at the University of South Florida, Dr. Bochner's residence, different restaurants, and at my office and the Board Room at Robbins Manufacturing Company, all located in Tampa, Florida.

To prepare for our first meeting, Dr. Bochner suggested I write a chronological list of events I remember as being important in my life. For the meeting with my daughters, Dr. Bochner suggested they read what I had already written for my dissertation and review a list of

questions prepared for the meeting (see appendix B). For the meeting with my granddaughters, we asked them to read the same material plus the transcript of our meeting with my daughters on March 26, 2019.

Our meetings were not formally structured. Dr. Bochner posed open ended questions, and we held free flowing conversations (Bochner 1996, p.246). I used introspection as a method for producing interpretative materials from which my stories were drawn (Ellis 1989, 2009). Dr. Bochner conducted what Ellis and Patti (2014) call compassionate interviews. I used visual and other sensory images of my experiences to bring out my emotions at the time the events took place (Ellis 2004, p.333).

We recorded all our conversations, over thirty (30) hours in total. I used these recordings as a source for many of the stories I composed for my dissertation. All these stories were inspired by memories stimulated through the interview process.

The table in the next page contains a list of every meeting date and length of time we recorded for each meeting:

Table of Recordings

Meeting	Date	Time
1	03/22/2018	121
2	03/29/2018	89
3	04/05/2018	96
4	04/12/2018	115
5	04/24/2018	44
6	08/13/2018	164
7	08/17/2018	122
8	01/08/2019	67
9	02/01/2019	83
10	02/26/2019	82
11	03/12/2019	86
12 With Daughters	03/26/2019	143
13	04/17/2019	130
14	06/04/2019	119
15	06/12/2019	185
16	07/10/2019	83
17	07/17/2019	48
18 With Granddaughters	07/26/2019	96
Total Minutes Recorded		1873
Total Hours Recorded		31.23

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE 52

- 1.- Write down your reactions — thoughts and feelings — to your father's story.
- 2.- Identify anything in any part of the story that surprised you (any details or experiences of your father).
- 3.- Identify anything in the story that touched you — your heart or emotions.
- 4.- What questions were raised in your mind by the story?
- 5.- Scholars who write about trauma often claim that children of survivors inherit their parents' sorrow and pain as well as attitudes towards the source of that sorrow. What do you think?
- 6.- What are your earliest memories you can share about your identification as Cuba — that is the Cuban side of you (assuming you feel it).
- 7.- Any relevant family stories you want to share.
- 8.- Your dad focuses on what it might mean to live a good life. How do you regard the life he has lived as told in the dissertation?

52 The questionnaire together with a draft of the dissertation was sent to our daughters two weeks before the interview took place..