Los que se quedan: Non-migrant Experiences of Emigration, Absence and Diaspora in Contemporary Cuba

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Abstract

Fundamentally, this thesis explores emigration, exile and diaspora as central experiences of contemporary Cuban society and culture but, crucially, understands the processes of experience as lived mutually and simultaneously by both those who emigrate and those who do not. Through interviews conducted in Cuba, the biographical narratives of those who have not emigrated serve to interrogate some assumptions that characterise the study of Cuba and attempt to account for the complexity of the Cuban cultural encounter with emigration, exile and diaspora since 1959. A generational approach is employed to better understand how the absence of family members, friends, colleagues and compatriots has been experienced over several generations of Cubans living on the island. Intertwined discourses of migration mediate various iterations of national, family and interpersonal relationships through complex and often conflictive emotional and psychological processes of separation and absence over time. The manner in which the absences of those who have left are articulated in the imaginations of those who have stayed can cast a certain degree of illumination upon how exile and emigration have been lived in contemporary Cuba, not exclusively as political or economic experiences, but as nuanced social and cultural experiences of diaspora.

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Acknowledgements

Glossary of Terms Specific to Cuban Emigration

Balsero: A migrant who leaves Cuba without legal permission on a raft, or other small, usually makeshift, sea craft.

Bombo: A visa lottery system that was created as part of the 1994/1995 migration accords between Cuba and the United States and administered by the US government for Cuban citizens.

Carta de invitación: A formal letter of invitation required to travel (not emigrate) and used to verify certain economic levels needed to sustain the visitor while travelling to a foreign country, generally written by the person whom the traveller will visit.

Destierro: Literally meaning 'to unearth', it is a term often used in Spanish as equivalent to exile.

El exterior: A term referring to foreign lands; the world outside Cuba.

Escoria: Literally meaning 'scum', this was a derogatory term used to refer to anti-social elements and associated with Cubans who left during the boatlift at Mariel in 1980.

Gusano: A derogatory term used to refer to Cuban migrants or exiles mostly during the 1960s and 1970s with the connotation of being anti-patriotic or ant-revolutionary.

Liberación: An authorisation number given by the Cuban health ministry to public health practitioners, such as doctors and nurses, releasing them from their duties before they can emigrate.

Mafia anti-cubana: A term often used to refer to the most ardent anti-Castro elements of the Cuban exile communities in the United States, specifically in Miami, that will sometimes include assumptions of involvement in acts of terrorism against Cuba

Marielito: A term referring to a migrant who left Cuba during the boatlift at the port of Mariel in 1980.

Yuma: Originally used as slang for the United States or for a US citizen, this term has increasingly been used to refer to any foreign country or people from outside Cuba.

Introduction

I first met Alexis in 2006 at a salsa class that he was teaching in Puebla, Mexico. My interest in the class was based on the rumour that there was a Cuban instructor and hoped that it might help with my fieldwork for a master's thesis on Cuban migration to Mexico. For several months, I continued classes with Alexis and although my dance skills grew only marginally better over time, a friendship blossomed and he increasingly opened up to me about his life, both in Mexico and in Cuba. As a military officer, Alexis had been stationed at the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City when he met his future wife, a Mexican woman, at an event for groups in solidarity with Cuba. Almost four years after resigning his military post and moving to Mexico, he had found only sporadic employment teaching salsa or selling shoes out of his car. He often daydreamed about walking shirtless through the streets of his neighbourhood in Cuba and longed to wake up each morning and give his mother a kiss. Alexis also worried about his two-year-old son growing up in Mexico without a sense of being Cuban and he hoped someday to move back to Cuba so that his son might live part of his life on the island.

In early December of 2006, Alexis decided to travel back to Cuba and invited me along because he wanted me to see where he was from and meet his family on the island. Because my decision to go was made on such short notice, I ended up taking a separate flight and arrived in Cuba one day after Alexis, who was waiting for me at the airport. We piled into an old car and drove the short distance to his home in the neighbourhood of Rancho Boyeros on the outskirts of Havana, where his entire family, including grandmother, mother, two sisters, uncles and cousins, lived within a few blocks of one another. His mother's house was a small wooden structure with a faded mint-green paintjob and a modest front porch, where most of our visit was spent in what seemed like a constant stream of old friends and neighbours that came by to see him. One day, the whole neighbourhood was invited to a birthday party for his son and for

the occasion Alexis bought a live pig that was slaughtered in his neighbour's back yard for a *caldosa*.[1] Not knowing the next time he might be home, Alexis made a concerted effort to savour every minute of the nine days he was in Cuba.

On the last day of his visit, Alexis's family and friends gathered in front of his mother's house to say goodbye. While neighbours buzzed around, Alexis's two sisters sat next to each other on the porch in a still silence. When the moment came for him to leave for the airport, his mother hugged him tightly as tears quietly streamed down her cheeks. Because my flight back to Mexico did not leave until the next morning, I watched with the rest of Alexis's family and friends as his car drove out of sight. Later that evening, I found myself at the kitchen table having coffee with his mother. With tears welling up in her eyes, she confessed that although it gave her comfort to know that he had emigrated for love, she had never imagined the suffering of only seeing her son, with luck, every three to four years. His sisters, who had walked into the kitchen during this conversation, added that it saddened them to know that their children were not going to grow up with their cousin, Alexis's son. Alexis had once told me that he had divided himself between his family in Cuba and his life in Mexico. As I listened to his mother and sisters talk about his absence in their lives, it occurred to me that he was not the only one who had felt divided.

Travelling back to Cuba with Alexis helped me further understand his life as a Cuban migrant through his experience of returning home, but it also opened my eyes to what his emigration meant for those who knew him on the island. As I finished my master's thesis, I increasingly noticed a deficit of work that addressed the experiences of Cubans like Alexis's mother, who continued to live on the island but whose family or friends had left. Most academic literature, indeed most literature of any kind on the subject of Cuban migration, seemed to focus on the experience of the Cuban migrant.

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[1] Cuban *caldosa* is a stew made of various vegetables and meats that are often cooked in a large pot over a wood fire in an open space such as a yard or street for communal consumption, usually in celebration.

Furthermore, because of the historic significance of the Cuban revolution and the large number of Cubans who had migrated to the United States in that context, the Cuban-American experience since 1959 had been the dominant narrative of emigration, diaspora, and exile.[2] From the 1990s onward, scholarship diversified into previously neglected geographies of post-1959 Cuban emigration,[3] but the Cuban community that remained under-represented regarding its experience of emigration was the population on the island itself.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how experiences of contemporary Cuban emigration have been lived by Cubans in Cuba. Due to their continued presence in their country of origin, Cubans on the island have not typically been considered principal participants in the Cuban emigration or exile experiences. When the possibility of a non-migrant experience of emigration has been considered by scholars outside Cuba it has often been through the attribution of exile experience, and its subjective conditions, to the population in Cuba: 'exiliados de tiempo' (Rojas, 2006: 32); *insilio* or 'internal exile' (Behar, 1996: 144-145; Pérez Firmat, 1997: 12; O'Reilly Herrera, 2001: 1-48); or 'internally displaced subjects within Cuba' (Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 147). Increasingly, however, transnational approaches to Cuba have highlighted the political, economic, social and cultural significance of cross-border connections and exchanges.[4] Through transnational activities, some scholars outside Cuba have noted the integration of 'diasporas' into daily life on the island (Eckstein & Barberia, 2002: 800).

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[2] A few examples of the numerous works that focus on Cuban immigrants or exiles in the US are: *The Assimilation of Cuban Exiles: The Role of Community and Class* (Meyer Rogg, 1974); *Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami* (Rieff, 1993); *Life on the Hyphen: the Cuban-American Way* (Pérez-Firmat, 1994); *Cuban Americans: From Trauma to Triumph* (Olson & Olson, 1995); *Havana USA: Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959-1994* (Garcia, 1997); *In the land of mirrors: Cuban exile politics in the United States* (Torres, 1999).
[3] Scholarly work on Cuban migrant communities outside the Cuban-American context includes, but is not limited to: Jamaica (McGarrity, 1996), Dominican Republic (Casaña Mata, 2001), Venezuela (Ackerman, 2007), Puerto Rico (Martínez-San Miguel, 2007), Spain (Berg, 2007/2009/2011), France (Navarrete, 2007), Mexico (Weimer, 2008) and Denmark (Fernandez, 2013).
[4] See edited volumes: *Puentes a Cuba/Bridges to Cuba* (Behar, 1995); *Cuba Transnational* (Fernández, 2005); and *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced* (O'Reilly Herrera, 2007); *The Portable Island: Cubans at home in the world* (Behar & Suárez, 2008). Also see the work of Centro de Estudios Migratorios Internacionales (CEMI) at the Universidad de la Habana.

Consuelo Martín Fernández at the Centro de Estudios Migratorios Internacionales (CEMI) in Havana has been one of the few scholars to examine the social, cultural and psychological impact of emigration in the everyday life of Cuban individuals and families on the island.[5] Martín's work will be discussed in detail in later chapters. In the realm of artistic production from Cuba, however, representations of emigration and exile in the lives and imaginations of Cubans have been more prolific. Although analysis of emigration and exile as a theme in Cuban film, music, theatre, literature and the plastic arts has been limited,[6] the artistic production itself has served as an archive of expression regarding the departures, absences and returns of family, friends and compatriots for several generations of Cubans on the island since 1959.[7]

Drawing from transnational approaches to migration, this thesis is grounded in the fundamental understanding of emigration as an experience that is mutually and simultaneously lived by those who leave and those who stay (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Basch, *et al*, 1994). As I witnessed in the case of Alexis, the migrant is not the only person living his migration. Alexis's emigration also formed a part of the daily lives and imaginations of his mother and sisters, all of whom lived separated from him just as he did from them. It is important to clarify that living an experience mutually is not equivalent to living it identically. Clearly, Alexis had lived an experience in Mexico distinct to that of his mother in Cuba. However, the relationship between Alexis and his mother had its own history full of emotions, expectations and desires. His decision to leave Cuba, therefore, formed part of their relationship history

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[5] See Martín Fernández 1995; 1998; 2001; 2006; 2007; 2008; Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002; Casaña Mata, Martín Fernández & Aja Díaz, 2006; Martín, Aja, Casañas & Quijano, 2007.
[6] See Díaz, 2001; López-Cabrales, 2012; Machado Cajide, 2010; Almazán del Olmo, 2007; Díaz & del Rio, 2010. The book *Los que se fueron/Los que se quedaron* (2008) by journalist Luís Báez is one of the only examples of a non-academic collection of interviews with Cubans both on and off the island.
[7] A few examples of artistic production since 1959 in which emigration is a central theme are: films such as *Memorias de subdesarrollo* (1968), *Los sobrevivientes* (1978), *Lejanía* (1985), *Madagascar* (1994), *Video de familia* (2001), *Larga distancia* (2010); songs such as 'Foto de Familia' (1994) by Carlos Varela and 'La Otra Orilla' (1997) by Frank Delgado; paintings and installations by Sandra Ramos; and Wendy Guerra's novel *Todos se van* (2006).

and their respective experiences with regard to his emigration were lived in relation to one another.

By approaching Cuban emigration through the social relationships of the people living that experience, the adaptive processes related to the separation of those who stay from those who left can be observed as an integral aspect of life on the island and, therefore, of revolutionary processes as well. However, in order to explore the processes of emigration as lived by Cubans on the island, the broader social processes involved must be taken into account. Alexis's mother, for example, had been a teenager in 1959 when the revolutionary government was created and Alexis, who was born in 1972, had never lived in a political system other than Cuban socialism. Together, they lived through the severe economic crisis that befell Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. By the time Alexis left Cuba permanently in 2002, government reforms had made it easier for certain migrants, such as those who married foreigners, to travel to and from Cuba. Without this new provision Alexis claimed he would never have left Cuba. If our interest is how his mother, as a non-migrant, has lived and interpreted his emigration, then her emotions and expressions of experience must be examined through the interrelation of these personal and national trajectories.

It is precisely around this interrelationship of histories that this thesis has been conceived and organised. The phrasing of the question that guides this research is important and it is deliberate: How have experiences of emigration been lived by Cubans in Cuba? Emphasis has not been placed on finding a definitive lived experience as an object of analysis, but rather on exploring the complex, and sometimes contradictory, process of *how* the experience has been lived. While it is clearly impossible to collect the experiences of all Cubans on the island whose lives have been touched by emigration, interviews were conducted with 32 Cubans living in Cuba and their personal stories recorded. Each participant was given a straightforward, general request: 'Tell me about your experience with migration'. The responses varied both in

content and form. Some interviewees had been separated for decades, while others had only been separated for weeks or months. For some it was traumatic and the storytelling was emotional and tearful. For others it was portrayed as routine and the storytelling was brief and to the point. There were interviewees who gave very chronological, or even historical accounts, of their experience, and there were interviewees whose stories jumped from one period of life to the next without warning. Moreover, in certain accounts, emigration was framed mostly as an apolitical separation of two individuals, while in others it was portrayed as the politicised division of an entire nation.

Of the 32 interviews conducted in Cuba, eight are featured in this thesis. These selections were made based upon the depth with which their experiences were narrated and the generational positioning of those personal histories in relation to the broader history of post-1959 Cuban emigration. That is to say, that the eight personal narratives featured in this thesis were selected because they represented a varied spectrum of experiences over the past five decades, not any one ideological position or historical period. Again, it is important to reemphasise that the objective of this project is to explore *how* these experiences have been lived. Therefore, the featured narratives do not collectively represent a definitive non-migrant Cuban experience of post-1959 emigration. They do, however, allow us, in a broadly representative manner, to analyse the interrelationships of the various social processes that have constituted those experiences in Cuba.

To facilitate this exploration, the thesis has been designed in two parts. Part One will outline the social and historical processes of contemporary Cuban emigration through the various events and sociopolitical discourses that have articulated those processes. Part Two will present a sample of the data collected in Cuba through biographical narratives of experience with Cuban emigration across several generations. It is worth noting that the conceptualisation and construction of both the research design and written text for this project have followed a grounded theory method of social

inquiry that emphasises the 'discovery of theory from data' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 1). That is to say, that rather than verifying preconceived theories with data, the concepts presented in Part One have emerged from the analysis of the interview material featured in Part Two. In this sense, all the historical context, discourses, concepts, and methods discussed in Part One have been envisioned as the canvas upon which the experiences will be painted through the narratives in Part Two.

The grounded approach to theorising the data collected during fieldwork in Cuba resulted in disciplinary contributions to the analysis ranging from psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, cultural studies, political science, and philosophy. Furthermore, because of the project's goal to explore how experiences of emigration and exile have been lived in Cuba, a sociocultural perspective focused the analysis on 'the process' of social experience, rather than the product. The generational organisation of the thesis was, therefore, not conceived in terms of categories of historical belonging, but rather as a conduit of the social processes of emigration, as experienced over time, and as narrated during the interviews. Because the interviews took place in 2011, many participants oriented their responses to a moment in the past, drawing on their memory and connecting it to the present moment of the interview. However, just as Alexis's emigration did not begin and end when he left Cuba in 2002, neither did his mother's experience of it. She continued to live separated from him and he continued to be physically absent from her daily life in Cuba. In this way, this research approaches emigration as a continuing process of change and adaptation that is marked by a moment in time but not reducible to it, much like revolution.

Indeed, Cuban emigration and Cuban revolution are both envisioned in this thesis as processes of social and cultural transformation, rather than as events.[8] Therefore, the events and discourses of the Cuban revolutionary and emigration

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[8] For this reason, the Cuban revolution will appear throughout as 'revolution' rather than 'Revolution,' except when it has been taken from a text, in which case it will appear as the author has written it, or when it appears in a quote taken from a participant interview, in which case it will appear as 'Revolución' as is customary in Cuban Spanish.

processes presented throughout the thesis are envisioned as constitutive and dynamic threads of the narratives of experience, rather than as indisputable facts or positions. It is not the intention of this thesis to pass judgment on any particular position taken with regard to the Cuban revolution or to Cuban emigration and exile, but rather to explore the interrelationship of these positions in the constitution of those experiences. Each of the discursive threads that run through these personal histories is fundamentally flawed at the same time that it is fundamental. The manner in which the discursive threads are interwoven creates the narrative fabric as well as any holes that might appear in that fabric. To be sure, these narratives could be given analytical readings from perspectives such as race, gender, or ideology and particular associations to this experience could be made. However, when approached from the non-migrant perspective, critical questions emerge regarding conventional categories of post-1959 Cuban emigration, such as political and economic migration, or exile and diaspora.

The chapters of the thesis are designed to, first, introduce the customary historical events and political discourses of Cuban emigration and, then, to critically interrogate those understandings through the experiences narrated from Cuba. As the foundational section of the thesis, Part One is composed of three chapters. Chapter 1 will introduce how Cuban emigration has been generated in constant dialogue with social and political transformations of the revolutionary process from 1959 to the present day. Chapter 2 will discuss how the experience of Cuban emigration has been conceptualised and mediated over the decades through discourses of revolution, exile, *emigración*[9] and diaspora, both on and off the island. Chapter 3 will then propose a sociocultural approach to these interrelated events and discourses within a conceptualisation of mutual absence that will be used to analyse how emigration has been lived by Cubans who remain in Cuba. Finally, the collection, selection and

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[9] Throughout the text, the term *emigración* will be used to refer to a particular political discourse surrounding Cuban emigration (described in Chapter 2) and therefore will appear in italics in that context.

analysis of the interview material will be explained in anticipation of the personal narratives to be presented in Part Two of the thesis.

In accordance with the generational organisation of the analysis, Part Two is divided into four chapters [Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7]. In Chapter 4, will feature the stories of Helena and Alba, two women who both lived through the revolution and the 'first generation' of post-1959 Cuban emigration as young adults. In Chapter 5, Ramón and Emilio share their experiences with successive generations of emigration, first as children in the 1960s and then again as adults, including the mass exodus at Mariel in 1980. In Chapter 6, Milagros and Elisa tell of the difficulties presented in the personal relationships with family members who left during the economic crisis of the 1990s. In Chapter 7, intimate accounts from Diego and Edgar illustrate the social and political complexity of the most current 'fourth generation' of emigration. In the Conclusion, the social generation of post-1959 Cuban emigration will be discussed in terms of its broader implications for contemporary Cuban culture.

The intention of this project from its inception has been to tell the stories of Cubans on the island who, like Alexis's mother and sisters, have lived separated from family, friends, and fellow Cubans that have left the island. However, the narratives presented in this thesis ultimately represent an interpretation of the stories that were told to me, the researcher. This interpretation has undoubtedly been influenced and inspired by my own experience of living away from home for the better part of the past thirteen years. Along this journey, my personal transformations have been emotionally and psychologically entangled in the relationships with my family back home and with the country where I was born and raised, the United States. Therefore, in addition to the intellectual exercise, the spirit of this project resides in the human relationships that are constituted in contemporary Cuban experiences of emigration, and expressed in the complex contradictions and pregnant silences of the non-migrant Cuban voice.

Part One

Chapter 1: Generating Contemporary Cuban Emigration

Yo siempre escuché hablar de la otra orilla
envuelta en una nube de misterio,
allí mis tíos eran en colores,
aquí sencillamente en blanco y negro.
Había que hablar de ellos en voz baja,
a veces con un tono de desprecio,
y en la escuela aprendí que eran gusanos,
que habían abandonado a su pueblo.

Bailando con Celia Cruz, oyendo a Willy Chirino,
venerando al mismo santo y con el mismo padrino.
Allá por la Saguesera, Calle Ocho, Haileah
anda la media familia que vive allá en la otra orilla.

Un día tío volvió de la otra orilla
cargando con su espíritu gregario,
y ya no le dijeron más gusano
porque empezó a ser un comunitario.
Y al fin llegó el fatídico año 80
y mi familia fue disminuyendo,
como años antes pasó en Camarioca
el puerto del Mariel los fue engullendo

Bailando con…

Aun continúa el flujo a la otra orilla
en vuelos regulares y balseros,
y sé que volverán sin amnistía
porque necesitamos su dinero, o su consuelo, yo no sé.
Se hospedarán en hoteles lujosos
y pagarán con su moneda fuerte,
y aquellos que les gritamos escorias, como yo,
tendremos que tragarnos el nombrete.

Bailando con los Van Van, oyendo a Silvio y Pablito,
haciendo cola pa'l pan, o compartiendo traguitos.
La dignidad en la distancia son más de noventa millas,
yo decidí a cuenta y riesgo quedarme aquí, en esta orilla.

Bailando con Celia Cruz, oyendo a Silvio y Pablito…

En mezcla tan informal, merengue con platanito.
No les digas más escorias, que esos son los marielitos.
Esa emisora mi hermano, ponla un poco mas bajito.
Dicen que viene llegando, cuidado con tu optimismo.

- Frank Delgado, 'La otra orilla' (1997)

Introduction

The song 'La otra orilla' (1997) by island-based singer-songwriter Frank Delgado traverses the narrator's lifetime of personal experience with emigration. Through a family-based narrative, a broader social and cultural relationship between Cubans on the island and emigration is communicated. Each verse addresses a different stage of this relationship, not only with his family but also with the changing political discourses and historical events surrounding Cuban emigration since 1959. From learning in school that his uncles were 'gusanos' [maggots], to remembering those who had been 'swallowed up' by the port of Mariel, the ruptures and reconfigurations associated with emigration are expressed via social and cultural experiences. Since his earliest memories, 'la otra orilla' [the other side] had penetrated the narrator's imagination. In the final refrain, images of Cuban exile singers like Celia Cruz and Cuban-populated sections of Miami like La Saguesera and Haileah[10] are put into conversation with cultural figures and practices from the island. Rather than as a static division, the experience of emigration is expressed as a dynamic relationship between Cuban culture on and off the island, over the course of a lifetime in revolutionary Cuba.

As an artistic expression, the lyrics of 'La otra orilla' represent just one example of how decades of family separation and national emigration have been understood and organised in the imagination of a Cuban on the island. This chapter will explore how emigration has been generated through the social and political transformations of Cuban society from 1959 to the present day. By establishing the relationship between the processes of Cuban revolution and Cuban emigration [both political exile and economic migration], this chapter will lay the foundation for the exploration of this experience as a sociocultural process of contemporary Cuba.

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[10] La Saguesera [The Southwest-cera] is slang for a particular stretch of southwest Miami that represents the oldest Cuban enclave in Miami often referred to as Little Havana and includes the famous Calle Ocho. Hialeah is a highly Cuban-populated city on the northwest border of the city of Miami (Aguirre, Schwirian & La Greca, 1980: 46).

Approaching post-1959 Cuban Emigration Across Generations

In scholarly research, Cuban emigration since 1959 has most often been presented in historical-political terms and organised into distinct surges, or waves, almost exclusively from Cuba to the United States. For example, the Pew Hispanic Center's overview of Cuban immigration into the US, published in 2006, was divided into four waves. The first of these began with the establishment of the revolutionary government in 1959 and ended in 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis. The second wave was marked by the first massive boatlift of the post-revolution era at Camarioca in 1965 and the termination of the government administered flights from Cuba to the US in 1974.[11] The third wave began and ended with the singular moment of the Mariel boatlift in 1980. The fourth wave was initiated after the collapse of the Socialist Bloc in eastern and central Europe, beginning in 1989, and had continued up to the date of the Pew publication (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006: 2). Although differences exist among scholars regarding the dates and character of each wave, the wave typology in general has represented a generally accepted historical framework for the study of Cuban migration.

For example, sociologist Silvia Pedraza set the dates of the fourth and final wave as having begun in 1985 with the changes in political leadership in the Soviet Union and new migration accords between Cuba and the US (Pedraza, 2007: 5-8; 180). On the other hand, for Max Castro the fourth wave began with the *balsero* [rafter] crisis in 1994, designating the years from 1981 to 1994 as a period of *resaca* [undercurrent], of lower levels of migratory flow (Castro, 2005: 103). Cuban scholar Landy Machado Cajide identified a fifth wave beginning in the late-1990s and early-2000s until the present day that included new modes of migration and destinations other than the US (Machado Cajide, 2010: 178). Indeed, the wave approach provides a framework to

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[11] The air-lift program that was jointly administered by US and Cuban governments is recorded in some literature as having ended in 1973 rather than 1974 (see Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010; Rodríguez Chávez, 1999; Arboleya, 1996).

explore changing demographic categories [social class, race, country of destination, economic status, etc] of Cuban migrants at distinct moments in the country's history. However, the historical-political focus on migratory trends and government policies tends to pay less attention to the impact of these migrations on the social relationships of Cuban families and communities. Furthermore, because it is often demarcated by abnormal levels of exodus, a wave approach can lead to an analytical perspective more concentrated on the exceptional ruptures than on the continuity of these processes.

In his seminal essay 'The Problem of Generations' (1952), Karl Mannheim addressed the problems of correlating waves of decisive years of birth with waves of cultural changes in order to explain historical and social processes. This approach, he claimed, overemphasised biological factors and ignored the prevailing tempo of social change and its impact on the progression of a given culture (Mannheim, 1952: 310). Mannheim's sociological theory of generations formed part of a wider interest in the dynamics of social knowledge. It was through this epistemological exploration that the generation as a social phenomenon was proposed as a framework through which to approach historical and social processes of cultural continuity and change. According to Mannheim, individuals born within the same historical period and cultural region shared a common 'generation location' that had social implications in terms of the potential experiences, modes of thought, behaviour, feeling, action and self expression (Mannheim, 1952: 303; 291).

It has been argued that social generation theories such as Mannheim's conflate the term 'generation', which denotes the kinship between parent and child, and the term 'cohort', which refers to a population that experiences the same significant events within a given period of time (Glenn, 1977: 2). In fact, Norman Ryder analysed the cohort as a structural unit for the social transformation of a population much as Mannheim had done with the generation. Ryder, however, considered both generation and cohort as terms

belonging to a broader literature on the cohort approach, the former used by historians and sociologists like Mannheim, and the latter used by demographers, like himself (Ryder, 1965: 843). Sociologist Jane Pilcher observed that individuals belonged both to generations of kin and to generations of cohorts and therefore advocated the use of generation when referring to relationships of kin and the use of 'social generation' when referring to any cohort related phenomenon (Pilcher, 1994: 483). This terminological debate over generations and cohorts is grounded in the intellectual endeavour of locating the identity of individuals and groups within social and historical processes. However, it has not been generation as an identity of location, but rather the role of these social locations in the generation of the processes themselves, that has distinguished the sociological conceptualisation of generations.

As opposed to being wholly determined by biological factors, the social phenomenon of generation is grounded in the relationship between the rhythms of biological lifecycles and the rhythms of social change. Although generation phenomena are ultimately tied to birth, ageing and death, Mannheim grounded his theory on the assumption that 'any biological rhythm must work itself out through the medium of social events' (Mannheim, 1952: 286). For Mannheim, social participation was a source of social knowledge and because new participants continuously emerged in the cultural process and old participants disappeared, cultural creation and accumulation were never accomplished by the same individuals (Mannheim, 1952: 1; 292-293). Through the social location of generation, culturally orientating information was transmitted to transcend the limited life span of any one individual or age cohort. As Mannheim described, 'Generation location is determined by the way in which certain patterns of experience and thought tend to be brought into existence by the *natural data*[12] of the transition from one generation to another' (Mannheim, 1952: 292).

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[12] Emphasis in original

For Mannheim, the political, social and cultural changes shared by a population during adolescence and early adulthood formed a reference of meaning for subsequent experience and provided the foundation for a generational consciousness (Mannheim, 1952: 298). However, just as distinct class, race and gender identities in a society produced stratified experiences, the distinctive historical consciousness of each social generation produced different experiences of the same social or cultural phenomenon (Pilcher, 1994: 488-489). In addition, significant or accelerated social change, such as traumatic episodes of war or revolution, may lead to the reconsideration and modification of a previously formed generational mentality (Ryder, 1965: 851). Further stratification of experience might be caused by differences of political ideology, religion, or sexual orientation, among many other possible social locations. Furthermore, across national borders, common experiences are shared and generational belongings formed irrespective of geographical location or kinship (Fouron & Glick Schiller, 2002: 193). In this sense, a generational understanding of social experience is not determined by any one identity of location or sense of belonging. Rather, it is understood as a continuous interrelationship of various locations and discourses of social and cultural generation, change and continuity.

Since the revolution, however, sociological inquiry into Cuban generations has concentrated primarily on the relationship between political transformations and the formation of generational identity and belonging. In her essay 'Generaciones y mentalidades' (1998), sociologist María Isabel Domínguez from the Universidad de la Habana divided the historical generations of Cubans according to the collective mentality and identity formed in early adulthood. Categorised by decade [generation of the 1950s, generation of the 1960s, etc.], each generation was distinguished by its political ideals and activities (Domínguez, 1998: 27-30). Domínguez's generational categories reflected what Maurice Zeitlin observed as 'a relatively high level of

generational self-consciousness', in Cuban society owed to a history of abrupt social transitions that were clearly marked by political intervals (Zeitlin, 1966: 495). Zeitlin noted that Cubans had envisioned their history in terms of political generations long before 1959 [i.e. generation of (18)'68, generation of (18)'95, generation of the (19)'30s]. Because the late teens and early twenties were deemed an age in life that demanded political commitment, Cuban generations were often defined in political terms. Therefore, Zeitlin concluded that the specific historical period in which successive generations of Cubans became politically involved had significant consequences for the formation of their political outlooks (Zeitlin, 1966: 494-495).

Zeitlin's historically grounded approach to the formation of generations in Cuba has been corroborated by more recent sociological research. Domínguez noted that the economic crisis of the 1990s, although felt by all generations of Cubans, was lived most intensely by those who were coming of age at precisely that time. Accordingly, Domínguez claimed that it had a negative impact on the development of a generation that, with high levels of education and elevated expectations, became focused on material consumption and increasingly disengaged from social and political participation (Domínguez, 1998: 27-31). In the aftermath of the crisis, Catherine Krull and Audrey Kobayashi (2009) observed that sociopolitical views among Cuban women varied depending on if they came of age during the revolution or during the crisis. Gender identities and generational identities converged to produce distinct responses to destabilising events that would influence their political orientation toward the future and their shared memories of the past (Krull & Kobayashi, 2009: 183-184).

Memories of lived experience in Cuba have also informed and differentiated the generational identities of Cubans who no longer live on the island. Designations such as the 'one-and-a-half generation' have differentiated those born in Cuba who emigrated as children or adolescents from those who lived most of their lives on the island and

emigrated as adults (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 2005: 8). On the other hand, Cubans born and/or raised outside the island, whose identification with the island and experience of exile does not derive from first-hand experience, have often been classified as 'ABCs' [American Born Cubans] (Pérez Firmat, 1997: xii) or 'the lost generation' (O'Reilly Herrera, 2007: 177). These distinctions have generally attributed to Cubans whose personal experience and cultural inheritance of displacement have been rooted in the emigrations of the 1960s. Further historical differentiations have been made in the cases of later migrant generations, such as the *marielitos* of 1980 or the *balseros* of 1994.

Susan Eckstein (2009) argued that distinct experiences while living in Cuba had led to varied immigrant group experiences in the United States. The Exile cohort, for example, had left the island in the years following the rebel victory in 1959, generally as adults who had grown up privileged in Cuba. In the US, they generally had remained embittered toward Fidel Castro and the revolution and their memories tended to be filtered through pre-and anti-revolution lenses. The New Cubans cohort, on the other hand, had lived in a Cuba that had been transformed both by the revolution and by the economic crisis. Eckstein claimed that the motivation of this new cohort to leave Cuba had generally been mostly related to material need or personal aspirations, although some were also politically disillusioned. A distinctive generational formation on the island had therefore predisposed the New Cubans to build and nurture cross-border ties with the island and to perceive themselves as 'having gone abroad' rather than being 'exiled' (Eckstein, 2009: 2-9). Using a historically grounded generational thesis, Eckstein emphasised the weight of these divergent pasts on the experiences of immigrant adaptation in the US and of transnational engagement with Cuba.

Similarly, Mette Berg (2007/2011) introduced the concept of a *diasporic generation* to shed light on the diversity and complexity of Cuban emigration experiences. Through the life stories of Cuban migrants living in Spain, Berg observed

that distinct migration trajectories, especially the moment and circumstances of emigration, produced particular modes of remembering and relating to home after leaving. More than a mere correlation between biological age and time of departure, the biographical trajectories of gendered, racialised and class-based life experiences both in Cuba and in Spain produced historically grounded diasporic generations (Berg, 2011: 40). Persons of the same age could therefore belong to distinct diasporic generations, or be of different ages and be of the same diasporic generation. In temporal terms, the generations often overlapped. In terms of shared lived experience and imagination of the homeland, however, Berg divided the diasporic generations as follows: Exiles (1960s-1970s); Children of the Revolution (mid-1970s-1990s); and Migrants (1990s-present) (Berg, 2007: 18-24).

Although Cubans within the same diasporic generation did not all interpret events in the same way, they were likely to refer to the same events or historical processes as important. For the Exiles, the revolution was the defining event, whereas for the Migrants it was the economic crisis of the 1990s, the so-called Special Period. From these distinct historical orientations, intergenerational incomprehension arose as their memories of Cuba became increasingly irreconcilable in reference to the different lived experiences (Berg, 2011: 39-46). For example, a man who left Cuba in 1980 would remember a Cuba different from that remembered by a Cuban who lived through the Special Period. Furthermore, Berg noted that the Exiles generation in Spain differed slightly in class background and had not been welcomed in Spain in the way that exiles were in the US, due mostly to the pro-Castro sentiment of the Spanish public at the time (Berg, 2009: 141). Therefore, a distinct lived experience in Cuba, combined with migration to a particular country, at a particular moment in history, resulted in a unique generational memory and identity. In this way, the concept of a diasporic generation historically grounds the experience of emigration across various generation locations of

belonging within the relationship between the historical and social processes of revolution and emigration.

By approaching Cuban emigration through generations of a continuous process of emigration within Cuban society, rather than as waves of exceptional exodus out of Cuba, the phenomenon can be explored beyond the isolation of its own political history. As Mannheim noted, 'the succession of generations provide the basic range of potentialities for the historical and social process. But…a given process of modification cannot be explained in reference to them' (Mannheim, 1952: 312). Therefore, rather than aspire to an explanation of the historical and social processes of revolution and emigration, a sociological approach to their generation provides a framework through which to explore the relationship of these processes. In the literal sense of the verb generate, meaning 'to create or produce', the experience of Cuban emigration has been generated through the continuous political, social and cultural transformations of Cuban society, both on and off the island. In the sections that follow, this production of Cuban emigration will be explored across historical, political and diasporic forms of generation and through the shifts in the relationship between processes of emigration and revolution in Cuban society from 1959 to the present day.

First Generation of post-1959 Cuban Emigration

The first generation of post-revolution Cuban emigration had its historical foundation in those Cubans who were forming their political and social consciousness in the 1940s and 1950s. Born in the 1920s and 1930s, this generation grew up in the political aftermath of a rebellion in 1933, from which Fulgencio Batista emerged as a national figure who would proceed to dominate the era in which this historical generation was becoming politically and socially aware. Charismatic populist figures of

1940s Cuba, such as Eduardo Chibás, with his message of social justice and ending corruption, inspired a younger generation of Cubans who had become disillusioned with the corruption, weak parties, gang violence and perceived moral decline of Cuban politics. This confluence of historical and political factors would set the stage for the revolution that would define this generation of Cubans.

The nationalistic roots of the Cuban revolution were deep in the historic struggles against Spanish colonialism, two wars of independence from 1868 and 1895, the latter of which led to a four-year occupation and subsequent political, economic and cultural interventions by the United States. Batista's 1952 coup d'état and suspension of the country's constitution had sent Cubans across the island into action against the newly imposed dictatorship. The efforts and convictions of Cuban youth were fundamental to the victory over Batista through street protests, clandestine publications, and armed rebellion, both in the urban centres and rural areas. Among the more influential figures to emerge from the movement against Batista were student leader José Antonio Echeverría, of Directorio Revolucionario, and a young lawyer named Fidel Castro, of Movimiento 26 de Julio. These leaders advocated the reinstatement of the Cuban Constitution of 1940, a restoration of morality in Cuban society, and political reforms based in social justice and economic fairness. However, although the creative vision and energy of this generation propelled the revolutionary movement, previously existing class divisions impeded the formation of a unified generational identity and these splits would come to bear after the rebel victory in 1959 (Domínguez, 1998: 27; Pedraza, 2008: 260).

Cubans woke up on January 1, 1959 to a newly liberated nation. Batista had fled into exile under the cover of darkness in the early hours of that morning and rebel forces had taken control of Havana. In the months and years that followed, the political, social and cultural transformations of the emergent revolution would culminate, for many

Cubans, in the decision of whether or not to remain in the country. For the political and ownership classes of Cuban society the revolution had primarily been about removing Batista and restoring the old political order, not a wholesale transformation of Cuban politics. However, political transformations that included aggressive diplomatic exchanges between Cuba and the US served to radicalise the revolution, to strengthen anti-American sentiment in Cuba, and to alienate those Cubans who strongly identified with the previous political and social order. In addition, the expropriation and nationalisation of foreign-owned property and all railways, ports, hotels and cinemas in the country left an estimated 150,000 Cuban employees under new management and others with frozen assets and bank accounts (Silva León, 2003: 18; Pérez, 2005: 346; Pérez-Firmat, 1997: 11). Many who had not imagined ever living outside Cuba began to make arrangements to leave and the first post-revolutionary emigration of Cubans unaffiliated directly with the Batista government had begun.

In this new revolutionary context, Operation Pedro Pan was born in 1960 when a group of catholic families in Cuba contacted the Catholic Welfare Bureau in Miami to arrange for the welfare of their children in the United States until they could join them (Walsh, 1971: 378; Pedraza 2007: 81). With US government support, the program grew and approximately 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children under the age of sixteen emigrated through the program from 1960 to 1966 (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 161; Pedraza 2007: 81). In the eyes of Cuban revolutionaries, Operation Pedro Pan represented, 'un caso de guerra psicológica contra Cuba' (Torreira Crespo & Buajasan Marrawi, 2000: front cover). For many Cuban families who participated, it was an effort to save their children from ideological indoctrination, 'convinced that communists stood in virulent opposition to God, family, free enterprise and the holding of private property' (Vidal, 2007: 44). For some of the Cuban children who composed 'la generación Peter Pan', it was a traumatic experience of separation and adaptation, in some cases without

family reunification or apparent resolution (Spitta, 2005: 47). Operation Pedro Pan mobilised the fear of many Cubans, particularly Catholics, that the nascent shift toward socialism signified a break from what they understood as the moral character of being Cuban.

With the revolutionary leadership's public shift toward a clearly socialist position in April 1961, followed by Castro's declaration of himself as a Marxist-Leninist in December 1961, the exodus doubled and included more middle-class Cubans than before (Pedraza, 2007: 3). Over the next several years, an extensive public debate would determine the direction of a Marxist revolutionary project in Cuba. A national strategy emerged for the construction of a socialist society through the development of a 'moral economy' that would rely upon ideas of volunteerism and the creation of revolutionary social consciousness through education rather than through material incentives (Kapcia, 2000: 134-137; 2005: 405). If the revolution was to create a communist society free of the destructive inequalities of capitalism, argued Ernesto 'Che' Guevara – a major intellectual contributor to the debate – then it had to be achieved through the moral education and social transformation of the citizens into what he called the *hombre nuevo* [new man] (Guevara, 1982 [1965]: 7). While Guevara had provided further clarity to the ideology of the Cuban revolution, he had also conveyed the need for a fundamental transformation of the sociopolitical character of the Cuban citizen in the revolutionary process (Fagen, 1969: 12). In addition to a change of government, the revolution in Cuba aimed to produce a radical shift in the values, habits and motives that had previously defined the most basic and routine facets of Cuban culture. As historian Louis Pérez observed, for some Cubans the fundamental adjustment to their behaviours and mentalities had a negative impact on their sense of belonging.[13]

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[13] Psychiatric consultations nearly doubled between 1964 and 1969, from 5,972 to 10,428 (Pérez, 2005: 350).

In ways perhaps too many and too complex to fully appreciate, from professional standards to personal style, from disposition to demeanor to customs and conduct, including attitudes, gestures, manners and habits, all of the things that Cubans had become – in short, so much of what had signified national identity – were now denounced and despised (Pérez, 1999: 498).

The reconfiguration of the cultural proposition of 'being Cuban' in the new moral order, in addition to the redistributive economic policies of the new Cuban government, became a determining factor for some in the decision to leave Cuba. Guevara noted the impact of the social and cultural revolution on emigration: 'Cuando la revolución tomó el poder se produjo el éxodo de los domesticados totales' (Guevara, 1982 [1965]: 12). Therefore, despite never having been politically persecuted, leaving the country became a very attractive option to Cubans who were having difficulty integrating into the new moral order. However, even some Cubans who had initially attempted to adapt to the new social and cultural order, or those who had previously been wholeheartedly dedicated to the revolution, would later emigrate.

Many Cubans who had decided to leave or who wanted to join their families abroad were left with limited possibilities after the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 caused a suspension of official transport and effectively ended emigration from Cuba to the United States (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 168). In this context, Castro announced in 1965 that anyone who wished to leave the island was free to do so and that any Cubans living abroad could pick up their relatives through the port of Camarioca (Gott, 2004: 213). As a consequence of the boatlift at Camarioca, the Cuban and US governments jointly administered an orderly series of flights, or 'air-bridge', from Varadero to Miami, through which around 3,000-4,000 Cubans migrated each month from 1965 to 1973 (Arboleya, 1996: 14). To facilitate the arrival of these Cubans, the Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA), Public Law 89-732 was enacted in the US, allowing

undocumented Cubans who arrived in that country to stay and adjust to permanent resident status after two years (Wasem, 2009: 2).

By the 1970s, effects from the massive exodus of the previous decade were becoming evident on the island. The absence of predominantly white upper and middle-class Cubans from the island's political process had helped to consolidate the revolutionary project and the redistribution of their property had helped to resolve some of the housing and educational shortages. The massive exodus of the dominant classes throughout the 1960s, and the elimination of the political and economic bases of those classes, had favoured more egalitarian conditions among Cuba's youth and contributed to the formation of a solid generational consciousness based on revolutionary principles (Domínguez, 1998: 28). At the same time, however, the concentration of exiles in south Florida had created a strong political constituency of anti-revolution Cubans with increasing electoral and policy making influence in the US (Kapcia, 2005: 122). In addition, the loss of human resources of that magnitude made it more difficult to carry out revolutionary programs that relied quite heavily on technical expertise and mobilisation of labour (Mesa-Lago, 1978: 117).

After the failure in 1970 of a massive mobilisation of resources to harvest a record surplus of sugar, the Cuban government accepted long-term patronage from the Soviet Union, which would account for 60% of Cuba's total trade, a percentage near that of US trade prior to 1959 (Mesa-Lago, 1978: 56). The increased ties to the Socialist Bloc brought rapid economic growth and the institutionalisation of Soviet-style political mechanisms assured the survival of the revolutionary government. Along with political and economic stability, however, the first half of the 1970s was characterised by a noticeable decline in overall social commitment, which manifested in absenteeism and low productivity rather than as rebellion or protest (Domínguez, 1998: 28; Kapcia, 2005: 149). The voluntarist approach of the early revolutionary process had given way to a

more bureaucratic and institutional approach, evidenced in a period of increased censorship from 1971 to 1976, in which some artists and intellectuals lost their jobs, their work went unpublished, or they were imprisoned (Kapcia, 2005: 154-155). By the end of the decade, a baby boom generation born in the early-1960s was reaching working age and increased internal migration from the provinces to Havana had created stress on housing and the labour force (Díaz Briquets, 1983: 103). Adding to internal pressures, the Cuba-US 'air-bridge' had been removed in 1973, with no new Cuba-US migration policy to replace it, and administrative and legal impediments had made it increasingly difficult for Cubans to leave the country since that time (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 61; García-Montón García-Baquero, 1997: 276).

From 1959 to 1973, approximately 630,000 Cuban citizens had migrated to the United States, but it would not be until 1978 that Cuban exiles would be allowed to return to the island (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 161; Pedraza, 2007: 141). Since the early 1960s, Cuban government policy toward emigration had been characterised by confrontation with both those who had left and with would-be emigrants before they left (Arboleya, 1996: 35). Indeed, from 1959 until the early-1980s, strong social codes of ideological rejection toward emigration and those who emigrated prevailed on the island (Aja Díaz, 2002: 16). The political and social transformations during the final years of the 1970s would represent a significant shift in the relationship between Cubans on and off the island that would set off tension and transformation of the processes of revolution and emigration for the following generation.

Second Generation of post-1959 Cuban Emigration

Cubans born on the island during the first decade after 1959 had been raised within a revolutionary society defined by a nationalist and socialist political project. Sara Rosell, a member of this generation who left at Mariel in 1980, called it the generation of the 'experiment' (O'Reilly Herrera, 2000: 21). Berg labelled them 'Children of the Revolution', due to their distinction as the first historical generation of Cubans to fully benefit from the expansion of education and the first to later study or work abroad in other socialist countries (Berg, 2011: 41). They had grown up listening to stories from their parents and teachers about the revolutionary triumph over Batista, the virtuous literacy brigades and the victory against imperialism at Playa Girón. However, the idealism and hope that had marked what many of this generation were brought up to believe was a revolution that was going to change the world would begin to wane. As this historical generation reached early adulthood in the late-1970s and early-1980s, the discrepancies between revolutionary socialisation and participation began to grow.

Politically, this generation had been formed in a world of socialist cosmopolitanism, which simultaneously co-existed with a territorially based, nationalist political project of Cuban independence (Berg, 2011: 97). Improved conditions in the economy, education and health programs engendered a culture of elevated expectations that equated economic growth with increased consumption and social class divisions began to resurface (Domínguez, 1998: 29). Meanwhile, Cuba's military involvement in Angola [1975-1988] and Ethiopia [1977-1978] marked the most internationally active period of the revolutionary government (Gott, 2004: 245-260). Around this same time, a series of changes began to take place between the Cuban populations on and off the island, as well as between the Cuban and United States governments. After Cuban exile aggressions in 1976 threatened to derail rapprochement, the election of Jimmy Carter to

the US presidency that same year brought the two nations the closest to normalising diplomatic relations since the break in 1961.

As a first step toward full diplomatic recognition, operational offices for each country, known as an Interest Section, were established inside the Swiss Embassy in both Washington and Havana, and both nations increased cultural exchanges between scholars, artists, technicians and athletes (Mesa-Lago, 1978: 141-144). In March of 1977, the US lifted restrictions on travel to Cuba by allowing direct flights to Cuba and by issuing a general licence for travel-related transactions for those visiting Cuba (Sullivan, 2010: 3). Later that same year, a group of Cuban-American university students who were against the US trade embargo and supported the normalisation of Cuba-US relations travelled to the island as part of Brigada Antonio Maceo. The Brigada's visit was just one example of a gradually increasing process of reengagement between the Cubans living on the island and the Cubans living off the island and was followed by a series of meetings between the Cuban government and representatives of the exile community. The 1978 Diálogos between the Cuban government and representatives of the Cuban community abroad resulted in the release of 3,600 political prisoners and an agreement that permitted exiles to return to the island for the first time since 1961 (Pedraza, 2007: 141-142). The tide of goodwill would be stemmed, however, and the flames of political division reignited as a result of the political and migratory events of 1980.

In April 1980, a bus crashed through the gates of the Peruvian Embassy in Havana and Cubans entered asking for political asylum. Castro announced that the embassy would be left unguarded and that those who wished to would be permitted to leave Cuba. In a matter of days, thousands of people converged upon Peru's embassy and occupied it. The overcrowded embassy grounds and delicate political situation provided the conditions for what would become a massive exodus. From April to

September of 1980, nearly 125,000 Cubans were transported to the United States through the port of Mariel (Pedraza, 2007: 151). These *marielitos*, as they became known, represented a different set of demographics from most of the previous migrants, as more young, single, working-class, black or *mulato*, and homosexual Cubans left than ever before, as well as a criminal element that garnered special attention from the US media (Pedraza, 2007: 103, 153; Kapcia, 2005: 124). Mariel was the first massive emigration composed mostly of people who were born and raised in the revolutionary system. This generation of migrants remembered the 'Cuba de hoy' instead of the 'Cuba de ayer' from before the revolution that was so often recounted by the first generation of Cubans who had left Cuba after 1959 (Pedraza, 2007: 154).

Mariel was a migratory event of extraordinary proportions and had profound political and social implications. Demographer Sergio Díaz-Briquets contends that the boatlift may have been a strategy of the Cuban government to alleviate the pressure of the housing shortage and the unemployment problem brought by the baby-boom generation (Díaz-Briquets, 1983: 103). By the 1980s, severe unemployment, long lines for basic goods, a collapse of public transportation and rapidly deteriorating education and health systems, had produced an increase in *balsero*-style emigration (Suchlicki, 2002: 179-180). In addition, since the cancelation of the 'air-bridge' in 1973, administrative and legal impediments had made it increasingly difficult for Cubans to leave the country (García-Montón Baquero, 1997: 276). In that regard, Cuban migration scholar Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez claims that Mariel was 'among other causes the result of a non-existing agreement or mechanism for a gradual and organised migration of Cubans to the United States since the "Air Bridge" ended in 1973' (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 61).

A new migration agreement between Cuba and the US was produced on the heels of the Mariel boatlift. This agreement, signed in 1984, was intended to normalise

the process of granting visas though the US Interest Section in Havana for 'all eligible Cuban citizens, up to the limit of 20,000 annual visas established by US law' (White House Statement, December 14, 1984). The Cuban government interrupted the accord in May 1985 as a response to the US creation of Radio Martí by the Reagan administration before resuming it again in 1987 (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 47). Even after resumption, stable, legal and direct migration was never attained because the US only granted about 2,000 visas per year to Cubans (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 61; Pedraza, 2007: 180). The Cuban government did, however, annually send 12,000 to 15,000 Cuban guest workers to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary during the 1980s and a plan to send an additional 50,000 was conceived but never was realised (Pérez-López & Díaz-Briquets, 1990: 280). Some of the students and guest workers to socialist-camp countries, along with soldiers sent to Angola, decided not to return to Cuba, but overall the decade did not represent particularly high levels of Cuban emigration outside of the singular event of Mariel.

In the years following Mariel, several internal political and sociocultural shifts were shaping future generations of Cubans and of Cuban emigration. At the Third Party Congress in 1986, a policy initiative known as the 'Rectification of Past Errors and Negative Tendencies' was approved. Through the Rectification, popular programs of the 1970s and early-1980s such as peasant farmers' markets, material bonuses for high productivity and small private enterprise, such as plumbing repairs, were abolished (Gott, 2004: 275; Szulc, 1988: 108). At the same time that the political leadership was reinstituting policies of a morally based economy, a gradual change in the attitudes of Cubans on the island toward those who emigrated and the act of emigration was evident. Increasingly, Cubans living abroad were viewed less polemically. As Ambrosio Fornet has commented, although not all Cubans on the island were willing to accept that these 'gusanos' [maggots] had turned into 'mariposas' [butterflies] over night, many realised

that having a family member abroad, who returned with suitcases full of gifts, put them in a privileged position (Fornet, 2000: 133). Significantly, Fornet observed that these emotional reunifications produced profound moments of reflection for Cubans on both sides of the migratory process regarding the relationship between their politics and their families.

The existence of significant separations within many Cuban families over decades made family-reunification, either full or partial, a strong motivational factor for migration (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 48). The temporary character of family visits and the absence of a true option of return for those who had left created a strong predisposition for Cuban families to be reunited abroad rather than in Cuba (Díaz-Briquets & Pérez-López, 1997: 419). The reconnection of these strong familial bonds would prove to be invaluable as the deterioration of the Cuban economy accelerated after the fall of the Socialist Bloc (Rodríguez Chávez, 1999: 48). The future importance of transnational ties was reflected in the decision of many Cuban students to remain without permission in the socialist countries where they were studying after the Cuban government recalled them back to Cuba in 1989 (Berg, 2011: 103). As a new decade dawned, a new species of emigration would be generated from the dramatic political, economic and sociocultural changes that awaited Cuban society.

Third Generation of post-1959 Cuban Emigration

The official dissolution of the USSR in 1991 marked the beginning of what would become known as the Special Period in Cuba. Without advantageous Soviet trade agreements, the Cuban economy declined sharply and quickly, with GDP falling 35% from 1989 to 1993 (LeoGrande, 2002: 5). The caloric intake in Cuba fell 27% from 1990 to 1996; protein intake among working-age citizens was 68% below internationally

recommended standards; enrolment in higher education was cut by 45%; and the quality of medical services declined as medicines became increasingly difficult to obtain (Domínguez, 2004: 21). Daily routines were altered by planned power outages, fuel scarcity saw cars replaced by bicycles and the basic diet was reduced to beans and rice, as most products disappeared from the food rations and were primarily found in the black market (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 94). The crisis disrupted everyday routines and rhythms and the Special Period as a historical moment signified a rupture in the continuity of revolutionary Cuban society.

As noted by social scientists at the Universidad de la Habana at the time: 'este "período especial" no es otra cosa que un cambio en las formas de producción y reproducción de la vida cotidiana' (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 96). For example, the crisis had a negative impact on energy production, which resulted in planned blackouts that could last up to eight hours each day. On the one hand the blackouts created tension and frustration, due to the difficulty of completing basic household tasks particularly at night. On the other hand, social relations also became more tightly knit between family members, friends and neighbours, as the loss of electricity created a time and space for conversations and other types of social gatherings (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 95). Consequently, the social expectations that coincided with the generation of Special Period Cuban society tended to have a certain concentration in the area of material consumption (Domínguez, 1998: 31).

Material shortages of energy, money, food and medicine required responses from Cubans that produced fundamental transformations in the way that everyday needs were perceived and satisfied. The Cuban government passed reforms in an attempt to alleviate the extent of the shortages and at the same time preserve the achievements of the revolutionary project. The first phase of economic reforms lasted from 1990 to 1993 and included reduction in levels of consumption and opening up the economy to external

forces such as foreign investment, foreign trade, and accelerated development of international tourism (Pérez Villanueva, 1998: 25). The second phase of reforms lasted from 1993 to 1994 and included the legalisation of foreign currency, the expansion of self-employment, the reorganisation of the agricultural sector, the creation of agricultural cooperatives and farmer's markets, the reorganisation of the central state administration, as well as a financial stabilisation plan to reduce the national budget deficit and the amount of cash in circulation (Pérez Villanueva, 1998: 34). There were, however, unanticipated consequences of the economic reforms.

As the economic system began to open itself more to external sources for ventures such as the tourist industry, the presence of foreigners and foreign currency in Cuba increased and subsequently so did exterior sources of income, information, entertainment and ideas. The legalisation of the dollar, for example, helped keep the Cuban economy afloat but, as it increasingly became the main currency for services and consumption, behaviours that facilitated access to the dollar-based economy became more common. More small private enterprises, sanctioned and unsanctioned, emerged on the streets, and informal and illicit activities, became more commonplace, particularly in Havana (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 95-96). At the same time, social inequality became more prevalent, as special access to goods and services was achieved through the dollars sent to family on the island by Cubans living abroad.

The extreme shortages in materials and services, the dollarisation of the economy, as well as the increased importance of the world beyond Cuba's borders in the daily welfare of Cubans on the island, all contributed to a surge in emigration. Between 1989 and 1994, more than 46,500 *balseros* reached the shores of the United States alive and 32,385 Cubans were recovered at sea by the US Coast Guard in August and September of 1994 alone in what become known as the *balsero* crisis (Pedraza, 2007: 8). In August 1994, the Cuban government had instructed the Cuban Coast Guard not to impede anyone who wanted to leave by his own means (Pedraza, 2007: 8, 183). This

action came after violent confrontations with Cuban authorities during a demonstration on Havana's *malecón* [seafront] as well as the inundation by the Cuban Coast Guard of the tugboat Remolcador 13 de Marzo, in which over 40 people who were attempting to leave Cuba had died (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 178). After the announcement that the borders had been opened, the building of homemade sea craft spread throughout Cuba, particularly in Havana. By August 19, however, the US government temporarily closed its borders to Cubans and instructed its Coast Guard to intercept all *balseros* and redirect them to the American military base in Guantánamo where the migrants were held, and then eventually transported to the US in a process that lasted over eighteen months (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 178).

Just as in the cases of Camarioca in 1965 and Mariel in 1980, the *balsero* crisis in 1994 prompted the Cuban and US governments to once again revisit policy and sign new migratory accords, first in September 1994 and then again in May 1995. Major changes were made to the status quo of US-Cuba migratory relations with the goal of normalisation. The United States agreed to no longer permit Cubans intercepted at sea to enter the United States and instead would repatriate them to Cuba. Often referred to as 'wet foot/dry foot', this policy meant that Cubans who did not reach the shore [i.e. dry land] would be returned to Cuba unless they cited fears of persecution, in which case a refugee or asylum seeker would be resettled in a third country. Cubans who managed to successfully reach the shore would generally be permitted to stay in the United States and adjust their status the following year under the newly amended Cuban Adjustment Act (1966/1996) (Wasem, 2009: 2-3).

The US agreed to admit no less than 20,000 immigrants from Cuba annually, not including the immediate relatives of US citizens, and implemented a visa lottery system [commonly known in Cuba as the *bombo*] under the Special Cuban Migration Program (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012). Cooperation was short lived,

however, when on February 24, 1996, Cuban fighters shot down two Cessna planes operated by Hermanos Al Rescate (Werlau, 1996: 457). A month later, the US Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act, tightening the trade embargo to unprecedented levels, including the elimination of remittances to Cuba (Dunning, 1998: 213). In 1998, however, the ban on remittances would again be lifted, travel restrictions loosened and direct charter flights to Cuba re-established for Cuban Americans (Blue, 2005: 30; Sullivan, 2010: 3).

In Cuba, the Special Period had brought another official reengagement with the Cuban community abroad. In April of 1994, the first 'La Nación y la Emigración' conference was held between Cubans on the island and 220 representatives of the community of Cubans abroad, an event, which was followed by a second conference in 1995 (Martínez Reinosa & Hernández Martínez, 1998: 32). Furthermore, the Cuban government created new migratory laws that increased the ability to acquire exit visas and, for Cubans abroad whose departure met certain criteria, the ability to enter and exit Cuba as necessary. One type of new permit was the Permiso de Residencia en el Exterior [PRE]*, which represented a drastic change in Cuban migration policy as it allowed for a non-permanent departure from Cuba through work contracts or marriage with foreigners (Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002: 221).

Despite the efforts toward economic and migratory reform, illegal emigration out of Cuba continued into the late-1990s. On November 25, 1999, six-year old Elián González and two other Cubans were intercepted at sea by the US Coast Guard. Instead of transporting them to a third location and repatriating them to Cuba, as the 1994/1995 migration accords dictated, they were brought to American shores. Elián was put in the temporary care of his father's uncle in Miami and an international incident unfolded (Bardach, 2002: 13; Wasem, 2009: 16). For over seven months, Elián was the centre of a custody battle symbolic of the visceral feud between the anti-Castro Cuban exiles and

the Cuban revolutionary government. After US government orders to return Elián to his father were defied repeatedly by the uncle in Miami, his father ultimately regained custody of his son in April of 2000 and together they returned to Cuba. Although by outward appearances the Elián González affair represented a return to the old political divisions between revolutionaries and exiles, it would in fact come to symbolise a new generation of the revolution-emigration relationship for the Cuban government, for Cuban families, and for the Cuban imagination.

Fourth Generation of post-1959 Cuban Emigration

As Cuba entered the new millennium, Cuban society had been profoundly transformed by the crisis of the Special Period, as had the Cuban relationship with the act of emigration, with Cuban migrants who had left, and with the world beyond Cuba's borders. Cubans who had lived their entire lives in the revolutionary system confronted a post-Special Period society that had been radically transformed in its everyday conduct and, in some aspects, its aspirations. Post-Special Period Cuba consisted of an economy reliant upon external sources, such as remittances and foreign investment, and of a political climate that struggled to meet the needs of a populace that had apparently lost faith in the system. Within this new social and political landscape the culture of a new, less politicised generation was emerging that had never known a Cuban reality before the Special Period. For these children of the Special Period, *el exterior* [foreign lands/ world outside Cuba] came to signify in many respects the social mobility that their birthplace could not offer. Above all, in post-Special Period Cuba non-conventional solutions to everyday problems had become the norm, even as the previously established political system attempted to respond and maintain its relevance.

From the campaign for the return of Elián González of 1999-2000, a new ideological program in Cuban politics emerged that would eventually be branded as the 'Batalla de Ideas'. The campaign for Elián had been sustained for six months and this

convinced the Cuban political leadership that 'passionate' mobilisation could still be a powerful mechanism through which to iterate faith in the revolutionary project (Kapcia, 2008: 75, 81). The various manifestations of the Batalla included political vehicles for mobilisation [Tribunas Abiertas; Mesa Redonda], activity and investment focused on the new 'educational revolution' [escuelas emergentes; Universidad para Todos; trabajadores sociales] and the rebirth of internationalism [medical brigades; partnership with Venezuela] (Kapcia, 2008: 82-83). For some, the Batalla represented a rejuvenation of Cuban civil society in relation to the state (Tulchin, *et al*, 2005; Kapcia, 2008), while for others the campaign's employment of combative discourse made it yet one more episode of a symbolic civil war inside the Cuban nation (Rojas, 2006: 14).

The Cuban American political community had ardently supported the election of George W. Bush in the 2000 US presidential elections and his victory brought with it a commitment to hardening the US stance toward Cuba. The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba was created and produced reports in 2004 and 2006. The 2006 report stated the goal of: 'Making migration safe, orderly and a force for change in Cuba' and recommended 'a series of diplomatic efforts to notify the Castro regime of its failure to meet its obligations under the Migration Accords and protesting its efforts to interfere with and disrupt US migration policy' (Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba: Report to the President, 2006: 28). As a result, the US suspended migration talks with Cuba and tightened restrictions on remittances and travel to the island for Cubans living in the US (Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2010: 180). As of 2004, money that could be directly sent to relatives or friends in Cuba was limited to US$1,200 annually, a law that people learned to get around by sending money and goods through third countries such as Mexico (Blue, 2005: 30).

Amidst heightened geographic dispersion, transnational relationships took on heightened importance in post-Special Period Cuban society. Transnational people-to-people ties, such as homeland visits by Cuban Americans, increased from approximately

7,000 in 1990 to over 120,000 in 2003 (Eckstein & Krull, 2009: 330, 332). New transnational families were also being formed at unprecedented levels. The visitation privileges offered to a Cuban who obtained a PRE through marriage to a foreigner. While those who were leaving Cuba through work contracts or tourist visas were considered to have illegally emigrated if they overstayed their exit visa, a Cuban who married a foreigner was allowed to return to Cuba as often as they wished. As a result, marriage to a foreigner provided for more liberal travel and carried its own social value in contrast to marriage to a Cuban.

Cubans migrating to the US also began to do so increasingly by land, crossing the Mexican or Canadian borders, or by air with falsified passports, rather than through the formal processes (Aja Díaz, 2010: 115; Skaine, 2004: 115). Modes and destinations of emigration had become more diverse as remittances had become more vital to Cuban families. In order to capture the remittance money, informally circulating in the economy, the Cuban government created a promissory note with dollar value, called the Cuban Convertible Peso [CUC], in late 2004 and added a 20% surcharge for each dollar sent in remittances (Eckstein, 2009: 217; Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 180). Eckstein (2009) observed that although remittances did help keep the Cuban government stay afloat, they 'simultaneously eroded state legitimacy, state political and moral authority, state control over the economy and society, and the moral precepts on which the revolution had been premised' (Eckstein, 2009: 218).

In Cuba, certain political groups began campaigning for change in the post-Special Period era. A petition of 11,000 signatures demanding freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, amnesty for political prisoners, free enterprise, and free elections (Bond, 2003: 128) was presented to the Cuban National Assembly by the Varela Project in May of 2002. In 2003, 75 dissidents were arrested in Cuba for subversive activities tied to the US Interests Section in Havana under a 1999 gag law [Ley 88], which made it illegal to say, write or do anything that Washington could use against Cuba (Bond,

2003: 120). Poet and independent journalist Raúl Rivero was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Amnesty International declared all 75 to be prisoners of conscience and international figures such as Eduardo Galeano and José Saramago, who had historically been supportive of the revolutionary government, denounced the imprisonments (Bond, 2003: 129).

In the years following the 2003 arrests, Cuban intellectuals, writers and artists would emigrate in significant numbers to Ecuador, Spain, Mexico, France, Colombia, Venezuela, Italy and the United States, among other countries (Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2010: 193). There have been surges in Cuban migration to countries such Spain, where Cuban-born residents have risen from 5,000 in 1985 to 16,556 in 1999, to 23,605 in 2003, and reaching 56,734 by 2009 (Berg, 2011: 12; Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2010: 183). Overall, 407,145 Cubans emigrated from 1994 to 2006, rivalling the number of Cubans who left in the first decade after the revolution (Aja Diaz, 2010: 114). The United States has remained a principal destination of Cuban migrants and a principal actor in the politics of Cuban emigration. The Cuban government has continued to insist that US policy: 'ha alentado, mediante la Ley de Ajuste Cubano y la Política de Pies Secos-Pies Mojados, la emigración ilegal e insegura que ha provocado pérdidas de vidas humanas' (Decreto-Ley No. 302, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, 16 October 2012: 1357). Claims of steadily increasing illegal maritime migration to the U.S, over 21,900 Cuban attempts from 1995 to 2004 (Aja Diaz, 2010: 114), have been countered by statistics from that same period showing only 10,000 arrivals by sea and more than 200,000 legal Cuban immigrants admitted to the US (Henken, 2006: 414). Newly elected US president Barack Obama lifted restrictions on family travel and remittances to Cuba in April 2009 (Sullivan, 2010: 2) and in July 2009 the two governments resumed regular migration talks (Aja Diaz, 2010: 122). In July 2010, Cuba released the remaining 52 political prisoners from the 2003 crackdown and sent them to Spain, in

accordance with the 1995 migration agreements, which stipulated that political refugees must be relocated to a country other than the United States.

Raul Castro temporarily assumed the presidency in 2006, when his brother Fidel became ill, before being elected Cuba's president by the Asamblea Nacional de Poder Popular in 2008. Under Raul, a process of gradual changes in Cuban politics has been initiated that has had consequences for emigration. In April 2011, the VI Congress announced a set of reform processes called *lineamientos* [hallmarks], which would eventually lead to laws allowing more opportunities for self-employment and for the private purchase and sale of homes by Cubans on the island (Piñeiro Harnecker, 2011: 68). These new reforms have not necessarily diminished the desire to emigrate, however, as the most recent Cuban census showed that 46,662 Cubans emigrated in 2012, representing more than in any other year since the 47,844 people who left during the *balsero* crisis in 1994 (Anuario Demográfico de Cuba 2012, Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información, República de Cuba: 5). On 16 October 2012, the Cuban Consejo de Estado approved reforms to the country's migratory laws that, effective as of 14 January 2013, will eliminate the need for permission to leave Cuba for those who wish to travel abroad, but will 'dejar sin efecto el requisito de la Carta de Invitación' ('Actualiza Cuba su Política Migratoria', *Digital Granma International*, October 16, 2012). The impact of these latest changes to Cuba's migration laws cannot be ascertained at this early stage, but they do represent a significant shift in the relationship between the revolutionary and migratory processes.

Conclusion

As evidenced in this chapter, Cuban emigration since 1959 has formed part of broader social and cultural processes that have been in constant dialogue with the processes of revolution. Complex social, political and cultural ruptures and continuities have articulated Cuban emigration throughout its various generations. As Mannheim emphasised, generations provide a framework through which to explore the articulations of social relationships, but cannot provide an explanation of any social process itself. As the revolutionary and emigration processes have intertwined over five decades since 1959, the public engagement with these experiences has reflected these processes. The next chapter will review some of the more important intellectual currents and underlying dynamics of how the relationship between revolutionary and emigration processes has been conceptualised in the post-1959 Cuban context. By examining how this relationship has been articulated through social and political discourses over the generations, Cuban emigration can be understood as a continuous process of cultural transformation rather than primarily as isolated and extraordinary moments of exodus.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Contemporary Cuban Emigration

Si se dice "emigración" suena a paro obrero, a trámite aduanal y a remesa de divisa. Todo irreprochable y civilizado, aunque doloroso. No es eso. Si se dice "diáspora" – y se dice a veces – viene a cuento la Biblia y la historia de un pueblo perseguido por otro pueblo. Tampoco es eso. En Cuba se persigue a la gente para que no se vaya.

- Carlos Alberto Montaner, 1976

Introduction

In his book *Informe secreto sobre la revolución cubana* (1976), exile writer Carlos Alberto Montaner contemplated the appropriate language to use in reference to the phenomenon of Cuban migration since the revolutionary victory. Based on his premise that millions of Cubans were desperately searching for any means possible of fleeing the island, Montaner dismissed the terms 'emigración' and 'diáspora' as inadequate, before ultimately concluding that 'éxodo' or 'exilio' were most appropriate (Montaner, 1976: 210). Montaner's conclusion reflects the experience of a Cuban intellectual who left Cuba in 1970, who self-identified as a political exile, and who considered himself part of a historical exodus directly tied to the violent rupture produced by an authoritarian revolutionary political leadership. In this way, his perspective is typical of the Cuban exile discourse that was formed after 1959 as a result of, and in direct opposition to, the discourse of revolution. However, Montaner's internal debate over the proper semantics for post-1959 migration reflects broader intellectual conceptualisations and discourses regarding that experience.

The phenomenon of Cuban emigration did not begin only after the revolution in 1959. Migration in and out of the island had always formed an integral part of the Cuba's historical and social processes. Indigenous Ciboney people had been displaced and subjugated by the arriving Taíno, all of whom subsequently fled to neighbouring islands, escaped to the interior of the island, or perished during the violent and disease-

ridden conquest by the Spanish (Ortiz, 2002 [1940]: 256). Situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, colonial Cuba was positioned as the 'Llave del Nuevo Mundo' [key to the New World] first as a transient point between Europe and the mainland regions of the Americas and then later as a crucial node in the battle for hegemony over the transatlantic economy (Sosa Rodríguez, 2006: 3, 6; Cervantes Rodríguez, 2011: 42-43). With its thriving port economy connected to highly profitable tobacco and sugar industries, increasing numbers of immigrants arrived to Cuba and significant Cuban migrant communities emerged in the US during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Aja Díaz, 2006: 128; Cervantes Rodríguez, 2010: 48).

From the late-eighteenth century onward, political exile would also become a recurring experience in the history of Cuba as an emerging nation and would be fundamental to the formation of a Cuban national identity (Rojas, 2006: 24; Kapcia, 2000: 54). Indeed, notable Cuban exiles such as Félix Varela, José María Heredia, Antonio Maceo and José Martí were pivotal in the intellectual and spiritual formation of Cuban national identity. Likewise, Cuban communities in places like Key West and Tampa, Florida have endured symbolically in the national imaginary for their role of those Cuban communities in the independence movements (Masud-Piloto, 1996: 8). Over generations, repeated experiences of frustrated independence and generations of reoccurring political exile that would shape the processes of post-1959 Cuban revolution and emigration.

As discussed in Chapter 1, historical and social processes consist of the continuous interrelationship between patterns of experience and thought that are transmitted from one generation to another (Mannheim, 1952: 292). This interrelationship of generations, both co-existing and successive, is negotiated through a history of discourses that articulates the various patterns of experience and thought over biographically and culturally defined periods (Corsten, 1999: 267). For example, in the case of Cuba, a nationalist discourse had been inherited, radicalised and solidified over

time from one generation of Cubans to another within cycles of popular rebellion and political exile since the separatist movements of the nineteenth century through into the twentieth century's revolutionary movements (Kapcia, 2000: 13). In addition to Cuban nationalism, however, a transcultural discourse formulated Cuba's history and identity, not in fixed nationalist terms, but in terms of dynamic processes of population movement, identity transformation and cultural hybridity (Ortiz, 2002 [1940]: 254). Therefore, in order to approach post-1959 Cuban emigration as a sociocultural process in relationship with the processes of a revolution, the history of discourses that compose that relationship must be examined. This chapter will explore how the process of Cuban emigration has been conceptualised since 1959 through intergenerational discourses of revolution, exile, *emigración* and diaspora, both on and off the island.

Discourses of Revolution and Exile

From a balcony in Santiago de Cuba on January 1, 1959, rebel leader Fidel Castro declared the revolution's uncompromising quest for complete sovereignty: 'Esta vez no se frustrará la Revolución. Esta vez, por fortuna para Cuba, la Revolución llegará de verdad al poder. No será como en el 95 que vinieron los americanos y se hicieron dueños de esto…Esta vez sí que es la Revolución' (Castro Ruz, 1959). With this first public speech after rebel victory, Castro outlined a revolutionary discourse of historical redemption within a narrative of continuous struggle for national liberation that dated back to the nineteenth century. The discourse of exile that would develop alongside this discourse, on the other hand, interpreted the revolution as a perversion or destruction of Cuba's national history rather than as a continuation. In his memoir, Cuban exile writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante described what he viewed as the historical death of Cuba that prompted him to permanently leave his homeland in 1965: 'La geografía era la misma, estaba viva, pero la Historia había muerto. Cuba ya no era Cuba.

Era otra cosa' (Cabrera Infante, 1993: 27). Although staking opposing claims to historical authenticity, the cultures of revolution and exile that simultaneously formed in Cuban society after 1959 both had roots in an idea of Cuban nationality that had developed within historical cycles of popular rebellion and political exile.

During the first three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, inhabitants of the island had generally considered themselves Spanish subjects living in the colony of Cuba rather than as members of a uniquely Cuban nationality (Kapcia, 2000: 39). Ascent within colonial Spanish society was generally difficult for those born in the colonies, which made one's land of birth fundamental to *criollo*[14] identity and patriotism (Rojas, 2007: 47). Until the nineteenth century, this *criollo* notion of Cuban *patria*, or homeland, had been expressed mostly in terms of sentimental self-identification with the island's natural landscape in daily life and the arts (Pérez, 2005: 67). *Patria* became imbued with more political meaning when Cuban *criollos* decided to protect the slavery-dependent sugar economy instead of joining other Spanish colonies in the Americas that sought independence from 1808 to 1826. During the first half of the nineteenth century, loyalist, autonomist, annexationist, and *independentista* visions of Cuban *patria* all vied for the Cuban imagination.

By 1868, the intransigence of the Spanish crown, along with the US civil war, had muted the prospects of autonomy and annexation, respectively. The *independentista* vision, on the other hand, proposed the idea of a sovereign nation formulated around the unique qualities of being Cuban and a political ideology based on Cuban solutions to Cuban problems (Kapcia, 2000: 21; Pérez, 2005: 72). This version of a Cuban national identity was predicated upon conditions of political self-determination and possession of territory, as Pérez noted: 'The premise of Cuban was derived from the promise of *patria*, without which the proposition of nationality possessed neither reason nor rationale'

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[14] *Criollo* was a term used to refer to those born in the colonies of pure Spanish ancestry.

(Pérez, 2005: 72). Although the Ten Years' War (1868-1878) ultimately failed to achieve Cuban independence, it did radicalise the liberation movement around a perceived *criollo* betrayal of independence and a more *cubanista* [Cuban-specific] sense of patriotism (Suchlicki, 2002: 64; Kapcia, 2000: 49). The ideal of a *patria* that was to be defended with loyalty and self-sacrifice against external threats and domination is clearly expressed in the declaration of what would become Cuba's national anthem: 'Que morir por la Patria, es vivir' (Figueredo, 1988 [1867]). National destiny and personal transformation had become fused within the territorialised notion of *patria,* from which *destierro* [exile] was a condition of simultaneous agony and civic duty (Rojas, 2006: 26). Indeed, the experience of exile after the first war for independence would leave a profound imprint on how the Cuban *patria* would come to be imagined henceforth.

José Martí's writings from exile in the period following the Ten Years' War converted him into a leading intellectual force of the fledgling independence movement. Exile in Spain, Latin America and the United States had allowed Martí to study, travel and incorporate his experiences into a political philosophy that embraced humanist idealism along with historical progress, both to be achieved through education (Gray, 1962: 7; Kapcia, 2000: 55; Gott, 2004: 88). He was inspired by the Latin American independence movements, disillusioned by Cuba's notable absence from that historical narrative, and alarmed by an increasingly expansionist United States. For Cuban separatists and soldiers that had been frustrated by truncated independence, Martí's unabashed nationalism resonated: 'Crear es la palabra de pase de esta generación. El vino, de plátano; y si sale agrio, ¡es nuestro vino!' (Martí, 2008 [1891]: 59). Within months of helping to launch the second war of independence in 1895, Martí died on the battlefield, solidifying his heroic legacy as the father of the Cuban nation.

In 1898, the Spanish surrendered and handed possession of Cuba, along with

Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam to the United States, whose intervention into the conflict had come only months earlier. The subsequent US occupation eventually led to the creation of the Republic of Cuba under the Platt Amendment of 1902, which gave the US rights to unilaterally intervene in Cuba, followed by the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903, which granted preferential trade between US and Cuba (Suchlicki, 2002: 72; Kapcia, 2000: 61). Now independent from Spain, Cuba had become dependent on US consumers, US manufacturers and US politicians. Among nationalist elements, *patria* was now articulated based on the sensation that Cuban independence as a republic was a fantasy and patriotism became projected as a fight against the meddling United States (Rojas, 2007: 42). During the republican era, use of Martí's notion of *Cuba Libre* [Free Cuba] invoked the most quintessentially Cuban moments as historical moments of *lucha* [struggle], fighting for ideals of liberation rather than submitting to or accommodating external forces (Kapcia, 2000: 65-66).

Contributions of Martí and others to an emergent revolutionary Cuban ideology, however, was not the only legacy of the exiles of the independence struggle. Thousands of Cubans had remained in the US after the war of independence and what began as a temporary exile gradually turned into a permanent Cuban community with a shared political history, as opposed to a scattering of individual labour migrants (Masud-Piloto, 1996: 11). Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Cubans flowed through nodes of Cuban communities abroad to escape political turmoil in Cuba. From 1927 to 1933, for example, those opposed to the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado found refuge and organised primarily in Mexico City, New York City and Miami. After Machado's defeat, most of them returned to Cuba and were replaced in those very same cities by Machado loyalists, as well as by a new generation of political opposition sent into exile, a cycle that would be repeated during all of the republic's presidencies (Suárez Díaz, 1997: 42-50; Masud-Piloto, 1996: 11).

Fulgencio Batista's coup on March 10, 1952 set into motion a series of events that superficially appeared to follow the established pattern of rebellion, exile and return. On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro led an attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba with the intention of securing arms and ammunition to launch a revolt against Batista (Suchlicki, 2002: 123). Although the attack failed, it was viewed as a bold and heroic action and allowed Castro to speak in his own defence at the trial, which would later be re-written and distributed as a pamphlet entitled *La historia me absolverá* (1953). In the manifesto, Castro described the 'orgía de sangre' [slaughter] at Moncada as part of Cuba's valiant history of sacrificing lives for the ideals of the *patria*: 'surge de sus cadáveres heroicos el espectro victorioso de su ideas' (Castro Ruz, 2007 [1953]: 66-67). *La historia me absolverá* synthesised the nationalist values that had developed over generations through the semantics of *patria* and articulated them in a coherent political program that demanded constitutional restoration, political and economic independence, and education and land reforms (Kapcia, 2000: 94; Rojas, 2007: 78). After nearly two years in prison, Castro and the others who had attacked Moncada were released in a general amnesty. On July 7, 1955, like generations of Cubans before him, Fidel Castro left Cuba for exile: 'Me voy porque me han cerrado todas las puertas para la lucha cívica' (Tello, 2005: 13).

In exile, the Movimiento 26 de Julio prepared for an armed revolution in Cuba and, as Martí had done, Castro lobbied the Cuban exile communities in Mexico, Florida and New York for political and financial support for their campaign. In December 1956, Castro's troops landed in Cuba. After initial setbacks, the rebels regrouped and waged a guerrilla war from the unforgiving mountain terrain of the Sierra Maestra on the eastern end of the island. Over two years of living and fighting in the Sierra Maestra, the mostly young, white, middle-class guerrilla fighters gradually formed a bond of trust with the local peasants. By the time they emerged from the mountains in late 1958, the

Sierra rebels envisioned themselves as the authentic revolutionaries, derived from the firm belief that the authentic nation of Cuba was to be found in the rural lifestyle of the countryside. This prolonged contact with the peasantry, along with their isolation from the political mechanisms of Havana, had profoundly transformed the internal dispositions of the rebels and had radicalised their ideological perspectives (Kapcia, 2000: 13, 105).

Once Batista had been defeated in January 1959, a vision for Cuba's future had to be proposed. Because the overthrow of Batista had been the overriding task of the opposition movement, a political consensus beyond achieving his removal and restoring moral order did not exist within the provisional government, which was composed of a makeshift coalition with contradictory motivations (Suchlicki, 2002: 129-130; Morray, 1962: 14). To find its direction, the revolutionary leadership pointed its moral compass toward *el Apóstol* [the Apostle] José Martí, whose liberation project was envisioned by the rebels as the precursor to which their armed struggle represented a continuation (Wilkinson, 2008: 14; Pérez, 2005: 338). Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, a key political figure in post-1959 Cuba, wrote: 'Martí fue guía de su tiempo y anticipador del nuestro' (Rodríguez, 1979: 10). In anticipation of Cuban independence, Martí had written: 'Yo quiero que la ley primera de nuestra República sea el culto de los cubanos a la dignidad plena del hombre' (*Constitución de la República de Cuba*, 1992 [1976]: 3). In this spirit, the new revolutionary government began to take social and economic measures meant to distribute the highest popular benefit without altering the fundamental distribution of wealth or property relations (Silva León, 2003: 10). In the Cuba of 1959, any such political and social transformations guided by the political thought of Martí would necessarily alter the relationship with the United States and with the existing class system in Cuba (Kapcia, 2000: 125).

The politics surrounding a measure from March 1959 to reduce the rates of rent illustrated quite well the tension between the contradictory political discourses in Cuban society at the time. From the perspective of the new government and its supporters, the 50% reduction was commensurate with the goals of the revolutionary project, which were, in the words of Castro: 'llevar a los sectores más humildes y necesitados del país, los beneficios de las medidas revolucionarias' (Buch Rodríguez, 1999: 110). From the perspective of those who had invested in real estate, however, this forced rent reduction amounted to confiscation without compensation and a betrayal of the rebellion against the Batista dictatorship (Morray, 1962: 24). Some Cubans had fought against Batista to destroy bourgeois society, others to preserve it. The outcry over rent reductions provoked a call for elections from the ownership classes, which would reveal a growing conflict between governance and ideology within the new revolutionary political order.

Upon its formation, the revolutionary government had promised a return to the Constitution of 1940 and elections within two years. It had also promised to improve the quality of life for common Cubans, which by their estimation required a revolution. By this time revolutionary leadership was firmly in the hands of the rebel army and, although Castro's popularity was unequalled, the rebel leadership feared that the results of any election would reflect the interests of the elite class calling for elections (Morray, 1962: 27; Silva León, 2003: 10). Determined not to compromise the potential to achieve the revolution, elections were suspended and a new constitution would not be ratified until thirteen years later in 1976 (Pérez-Stable, 1999: 66).

Under these political conditions, thousands of Cubans followed in the footsteps of generations that had gone before them and chose to the leave the country. They too relocated mostly to Miami and New York, and in smaller numbers to places like Mexico, Venezuela or Spain, with a historical understanding of the cycle of Cuban rebellion, exile and return. Although US involvement is often highlighted in historiographies, the invasion at Playa Girón [Bay of Pigs] in April 1961 was also an

expression of this cycle of revolution and exile within the tradition of Cuban exile as a civic duty to return and restore the *patria*. What occurred in Cuba after 1959, however, had not been merely a change of government as had happened before, where one representative of the dominant political ideology replaced another while the alternative ideology was quelled or sent into exile. With the revolution, the republican notion of *patria* as an ideal, the realisation of which had been repeatedly truncated, was articulated in a new political order that was being constructed for the first time upon a foundation of confrontation with the US (Rojas, 2007: 42). In this way, *patria* was discursively conflated with the proposition of revolution and, with emphasis on self-sacrifice as a historical virtue of being Cuban, the duty to die for the *patria* became the duty to die for the revolution (Pérez, 2005: 338-340). Castro articulated this vision of revolutionary *patria* clearly in a 1961 speech to Cuban artists and intellectuals: '¿Quién pudiera poner en duda ese derecho de un pueblo que ha dicho: "PATRIA O MUERTE[15]", es decir, la Revolución o la muerte?' (Castro Ruz, 1977 [1961]: 18).

Whether a deliberate Manichean division of the world into good and evil on the part of the political leadership (Medin, 1990) or a radicalised response from a government under siege both at home and abroad (Kapcia, 2000), the political discourse of the time, had divided Cubans into revolutionary and non- or counterrevolutionary camps. According to Albert O. Hirschman, the actors in any economic, social or political system have three options in response to the mechanisms of the system: exit, voice and loyalty (Hirschman, 1970: 1-4). In the case of Cuba in the 1960s, historian Rafael Rojas has observed these responses as correspondent to three positions regarding the revolution. Loyalty was manifested as non-critical adherence to the revolutionary government, voice as critical support of the revolutionary project, and exit as exile. Rojas then adds a fourth response in which actors silenced their criticism of the revolution in public while expressing it profusely in private. While silence was a

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[15] Emphasis in original

strategy marked by the absence of expression and discernible only to the perceptive observer and a closed circle of confidants, Rojas claimed that exile had become a sustained practice and, in some fashion, a condition of Cuban culture since 1959 (Rojas, 2006: 17-24).

In contrast, Eckstein argued that the condition of post-revolution Cuban exile was questionable in its very conceptualisation: 'While having political grievances and framing their exit as politically induced, for most it was an assault on their lifestyle, not their lives, that led them to leave' (Eckstein, 2009: 4). Edward Said, however, considered that anyone prevented from returning home, as Cubans had been until 1978, was an exile (Said, 2000, 181). Fagen, Brody and O'Leary distinguished the early post-revolution Cuban exodus as 'self-imposed exile' (Fagen, Brody & O'Leary, 1968: 4). While noting a clear difference between opting to flee and forced expulsion, Peter Rose asserted that, although flight may be self-imposed, it was far from voluntary and that the root causes of both types of exile were closely related (Rose, 2005: 2). In his seminal work *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (1972)*, Paul Tabori defined an exile as 'a person who is compelled to leave his homeland - though forces that send him on his way may be political, economic, or purely psychological' (Tabori, 1972: 37). These forces, according to Sznajder and Roniger involved institutional exclusion that 'encompasses both the condition of expulsion and a voluntary act grounded in a radical change of circumstances' (Sznajder & Roniger, 2009: 13). A radical change in circumstances such as, for example, a revolution.

For Cuban exiles, the revolution was their defining life experience and Fidel Castro was the central figure of that experience (Eckstein, 2009: 141). Phrases such as 'escape from the "Cuban nightmare"' or 'fleeing from Castro's revolution' were employed to indicate the extreme causes of an exile's departure (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 1976: 398; O'Reilly Herrera, 2001: 101). This moment of departure from Cuba constituted for exiles, as Berg observed in her work on Cubans in Spain, 'a narrative

turning point that provided the basis for the before and after event that most of their life stories were structured around' (Berg, 2011: 79). Fidel Castro and the revolution represented, for the Cuban exiles, the tragic destruction of what they had always identified as their country and culture and a particular cultural memory was built around this sense of rupture and loss. 'Our beloved Cuba was being destroyed and falling into an abyss', recounted María Antonia Soto, who left with her husband and children in 1960 (O'Reilly Herrera, 2001: 99). Faced with this sense of destruction of their *patria*, Cuban exiles made extra efforts to recover this 'lost' Cuba once abroad. For example, to conserve 'their' Cuba, the Soto family, 'tried very hard to maintain Cuban customs, such as serving Cuban dishes and keeping the Spanish language alive for the kids', and became very politically active against Castro, which was considered a sacred duty in service of the homeland they had been forced to abandon (O'Reilly Herrera, 2001: 99).

In *The Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami* (1993), David Rieff, observed that Cuban exiles in Miami 'continued to live, metaphorically at least, with their bags packed and a strong fantasy alive in their hearts of what they would do in Cuba and for Cuba when, at last, they were finally able to return' (Rieff, 1993: 30). Until recently, those Cubans who chose to emigrate lost their jobs, their property, and most of their citizenship rights upon announcing their decision to leave (Duany, 2007: 164; Scarpaci, 2009: 103). The inability to return had produced the homeland as 'a remembered community' that was reconstructed through a shared history of exile (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 2005: 345). The fantasy of return to that remembered community forms part of a consciousness that was crucial not just for individual exiles, but for the collective identity and shared culture of Cuban exile (Tweed, 1997: 84; Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 145). This shared culture and history of Cuban exile was built around what sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut called the 'dialectic process of loss and reconstruction' (Rumbaut, & Rumbaut, 2005: 338). The irony, as Rieff observed, was that in the process of reconstruction, the Cuban exile narrative actively maintained the agony of loss: 'the

more their defining pain went away, the less they would be able to consider themselves to be exiles' (Rieff, 1993: 158).

Cuban exile memory has been entangled with the revolutionary memory in what Rojas referred to as 'la guerra de la memoria', symbolically waged over two eras of Cuban history, the republican and the revolutionary, and across two spaces of Cuban national life, on the island and in exile (Rojas, 2006: 395-396). Through the mobilisation of a particular politics of nationalist memory, each side has produced selective histories. Rojas noted: 'El memorial del exilio, con la tendencia al olvido del trauma revolucionario, tiene su contraparte en la arqueología selectiva del pasado colonial y republicano que se practica en la isla' (Rojas, 2006: 32). Similar to other historical ruptures, such as the French revolution, the Cuban revolutionary project actively sought to push Cuba's republican past away from its revolutionary present through a new narrative of the country's history (Fritzsche, 2001: 1588). This rupture from Cuba's previous historical narrative necessarily produced a corresponding exile narrative, meant to reconstruct or preserve the very same Cuban historical memory that the revolution had wanted to vanquish. In this sense, the Cuban exile and revolutionary discourses have been mutually constituting and sustaining.

Indeed, the Cuban revolution and Cuban exile cannot be discussed without reference to each other. The nationalism of the revolution arose from a history of discourses that asserted belonging to a Cuban place, to a Cuban way of being, and to a particular Cuban history of struggle and sacrifice for a revolutionary Cuban *patria*. Fortification of this nationalism over the generations came from a strong sense of common belonging and historical truth in response to estrangement from the hegemonic Cuban discourse and to repeated denial of its own realisation. As Said suggested was the case of all successful nationalisms, the nationalism of the Cuban revolution would 'consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to

outsiders…And just beyond the frontier between "us" and the "outsiders" is the perilous territory of not-belonging' (Said, 2000: 176-177).

In a speech from January 2, 1961, Castro discursively mapped the territory of non-belonging along the lines of acceptance of the revolution: 'Los que jamás podían aceptar la Revolución, no están hoy con nosotros. Los que sí comprendían la necesidad de la Revolución…están aquí con el mismo entusiasmo del primer día' (Castro Ruz, 1961: 2). Amid applause and shouts of '¡paredón!' and '¡fuera!' Castro identified the outsiders who did not support the revolution as hazardous to the well-being of the *patria:* 'gusanos, ayudados por sus amos imperialistas…se empeñan en podrir a la patria' (Castro Ruz, 1961: 14). In 1980, Castro reiterated this sentiment and proclaimed that any Cuban who could not adapt to the idea of a revolution or who did not have the revolutionary spirit running through his veins was not of use to the Cuban nation. He declared, 'quien no tenga un corazón que se adapte al esfuerzo y al heroísmo de una revolución, no lo necesitamos en nuestro país,' to which the crowd responded by chanting '¡Que se vayan!' (Castro Ruz, 1980: 10).

As a nationalist culture of revolution solidified in Cuba after 1959, a culture of exile was simultaneously being created. While Said maintained a distinction between nationalism and exile, he also noted that the disconnection from their native land and their past produced in exiles, 'an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people' (Said, 2000, 177). In this way, Sophia McClennen argued, nationalism and national identity were necessary components of the condition of exile because, 'Without the belief that there is a connection between an individual and a place, exile has no meaning' (McClennen, 2004: 26). From this basic cultural connection between a group of people and its land, nationalism as a principle of political and national congruency, as Ernest Gellner defined it, and as an overriding political duty to that polity, as elaborated

by Eric Hobsbawm, were communicated through the identification with a common national history (Gellner, 1983: 1; Hobsbawm, 1990: 9).

The proposition of a common history provides the foundation for the nation as an imagined political community in which, as Benedict Anderson observed, members live the image of their communion without ever having met or even heard of one another (Anderson, 1991: 6). Essential to the formation of this communion is a positive bond between the self and the nation reinforced through the symbolism of flags [under which all are unified] and national anthems [in which all voices are heard in unison] as well as music, film, literature and the fine arts (Anderson, 1991: 141-145). This cultural nationalism presents certain elements of national culture as authentic and, therefore, excludes other cultural manifestations as deviant and anti-patriotic (McClennen, 2004: 28). McClennen argued that, in this way, one nation-state could provoke contradictory nationalisms based on the same essentialist argument that a nation's culture is inextricably bound to its geography and its historical narrative (McClennen, 2004: 26-27). This dynamic can be seen in the competing territorial and essentialising cultural nationalisms of the Cuban revolutionary and exile discourses after 1959.

Cuban revolutionary and exile discourses both envisioned Martí as their national hero and considered the *patria* and *tierra* [land] as things to which they were naturally tied. Revolutionary discourse excluded all other nationalisms by declaring the natural rights of the revolution as *patria*: 'dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada. Contra la Revolución nada, porque la Revolución tiene también sus derechos y el primer derecho de la Revolución es el derecho a existir' (Castro Ruz, 1977 [1961]: 17). For exiles, the revolution had proven that the meaning of *patria* could be altered in its interpretation and therefore the exile discourse emphasised a sacred connection to the fixed *tierra* of Cuba that countered the revolution's appropriation of *patria.* Cabrera Infante described Cuba itself, rather than any patriotic belonging, as the permanent source of the Cuban essence.

Cuba es más bien nuestra madre aunque la llamen patria. Una madre hecha de tierra como Adán, pero de tan entrañable sangre como Eva. No nuestra propia madre, cierto, pero evidentemente mas duradera, eterna, si por eternidad entendemos lo que ha estado antes y estará después y es inalterable. A esa eternidad le debemos no solo la existencia, le debemos la esencia (Cabrera Infante, 1992: 475).

Over time, the essentialist nationalisms of the Cuban revolutionary and exile discourses came under scrutiny through a gradual process in which Cubans on and off the island began to challenge the conceptual dichotomy of 'los de adentro' and 'los de afuera' (Fornet, 2009: 248; Behar, 1998: 142-144). Through the 1970s and 1980s, the public conversation about what it meant to leave Cuba underwent a process of depoliticisation that continued into the 1990s.[16] As the Socialist Bloc began to falter and forces of globalisation increased, the 'straightforward correlation between territorial-nationalistic and psychological-ideological (dis)locations' was increasingly questioned (Mishra, S. 2006: 16). Off the island, the concept of *diaspora* was increasingly employed to scrutinise territorial-based notions of *patria* and *cubanidad* [Cuban-ness], while on the island the language of *emigración* served as a mechanism to discursively normalise and depoliticise the phenomenon of Cuban emigration.

Discourses of *Emigración* and Diaspora

Days before new Cuban migratory reforms took effect in January 2013 the newspaper *Granma* published a series of articles by migration scholar Ileana Sorolla Fernández from the Universidad de la Habana. Just like any other country in the region, she insisted, the economic, family and personal motivations for Cuban emigration were associated with historical-cultural factors linked to a tradition of migration 'que está en

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[16] It has been argued that the depoliticisation of language regarding emigration that began in the mid-1970s was not, in fact, disrupted in 1980 and actually continued during the Mariel episode (Port, 2012).

la raíz misma de la conformación de nuestra nación' (Sorolla Fernández, 2013b: 1). This dynamic history of migration has also informed recent intellectual conceptualisations of 'being Cuban' off the island. For example, Andrea O'Reilly Herrera posited Cuban culture as a 'moveable tent' of multi-sited belonging as opposed to the 'stationary house' built upon the notion of an 'authentic' Cuban identity tied exclusively to the territory of the island (O'Reilly Herrera, 2011: 13). Since the early 1990s, intellectual currents grounded in the migratory roots of Cuban nationality, culture and identity have conceptually crossed the fixed ideological and territorial borders of revolutionary and exile nationalism through discourses of diaspora and *emigración*.

During the 1990s in Cuba, the historically negative charge that had been attached to the phenomenon of emigration since 1959 was discursively transformed. Amid the social and political transformations of the Special Period, a discourse of *emigración* among Cuban government officials, journalists and scholars deliberately reframed leaving Cuba as a non-political act. As daily Cuban life was reconfigured by economic crisis, emigration was viewed as a response to these realities and analysed in comparison to other Caribbean and Latin American migrations within broader global economic and political processes (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 97; Barberia, 2002: 1). In turn, migration acquired a singular importance and was approached from intellectual perspectives ranging from, among others, psychology, law, economy, political science and cultural studies (Almazán del Olmo, 2006: 273). While migration was emphasised as an important part of Cuba's history as a Caribbean society, it was also noted that actual Cuban migration did not rank among the highest in the region or in the world (Aja Díaz, 2006: 8; López-Calleja Hiort-Lorenzen, 2008: 3). Emigration, therefore, became conceived as fundamental to understanding Cuba but also as unexceptional in its magnitude and, just like in other countries, conditioned by national and international socioeconomic and political realities (Álvarez Acosta, 2005: 154; Aja Díaz, 2002: 1).

Social normalisation of legal and illegal traffic in and out of Cuba throughout the 1990s and 2000s reinforced the act of emigration as a legitimate and effective alternative, particularly among young Cubans, to confront economic difficulties and to realise personal and professional goals (Martín, Casañas & Aja, 2006: 122, 129). In this way, the decision to emigrate from Cuba was framed within the discourse of *emigración* as a personal decision negotiated between the realms of the known and the unknown, discovery and loss, hope and fear, and risk and doubt (Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002: 219). Accordingly, the figure of the contemporary Cuban migrant was re-envisioned as motivated by personal and economic reasons unrelated to the revolution. Martín observed the political implications of this discursive reconfiguration: 'De tal forma, cambia la noción de "irse del país" que existía como representación social después del año 1961. Ya emigrar no significa una ruptura necesaria con la Revolución, ni con el país' (Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002: 221, 234).

In contrast to the direct politicisation of Cuban migrants in the revolutionary discourse, the discourse of *emigración* held US policy responsible for politicising Cuban migrants through the pressure created by the embargo and the encouragement of illegal emigration (Álvarez Acosta: 154-155). Cuba's own migration policy, therefore, took on a 'carácter defensivo y restrictivo' and any restrictions therein become questions of national security in response to intense counterrevolutionary activity and US manipulation (López-Calleja Hiort-Lorenzen, 2008: 3; Aja Díaz, 2010: 114). Most recently, President Raúl Castro's introductory declaration to the 2012 migration reforms stated that US policies and actions: 'obliga a establecer, a la par de las medidas de flexibilización, determinadas regulaciones que limiten los efectos del citado accionar' (Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, 16 October 2012: 1357). According to Martín, this use of migration as a political instrument by both Cuba and the United States has had implications on the nation's collective memory and everyday social representations.

El conflicto bilateral entre Cuba y Estados Unidos ha existido y existe con una beligerancia tal que se afectan las relaciones sociales en todos los órdenes: político, económico, jurídico, ideológico, social, cultural, familiar. Y, particularmente, se ha visto atrofiada esta emigración, no sólo en cuanto a las regulaciones migratorias en el plano objetivo sino en la subjetividad cotidiana, pues la memoria colectiva establece determinadas relaciones simbólicas entre pasado, presente y futuro, donde las representaciones sociales devienen determinantes y determinadas por el contexto para cada momento histórico concreto (Martín Fernández, 2007: 207).

Through the selectively politicised memory of *emigración* discourse, the decision to leave Cuba and the motivation behind it have become understood as normal or exceptional, as economic or political, according to the historical moment of departure. Only those who left Cuba during the first generation of exodus, through discursive ties either to Batista or to the United States, are imbued with political motivations. All others have been cast as migrants who are subject to the same challenges of unequal resource distribution that have mobilised millions of people all over the world to cross national borders (Sorolla Fernández, 2013b: 1). In this way, the phenomenon of Cuban emigration was normalised through a vision of the phenomenon as historically fundamental to the formation of sociocultural realities in Cuba (Almazán del Olmo, 2007: 235; Martín, Aja, Casañas & Quijano, 2007: 137). Throughout Cuba's history, circular flows of people, capital and information throughout the Caribbean, from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, had produced encounters of languages, customs, and myths that formed 'la riqueza de nuestro ser nacional' (Gómez Navia & Chailloux Laffita, *et al*, 2005: 3).

It was precisely Cuba's history of cultural confluence that prompted Fernando Ortiz to introduce the concept of *transculturation* to express the various phenomena that had arisen from the complex cultural transformations in Cuba. For Ortiz,

transculturation represented all the different phases of a transitive cultural process in which cultural dimensions were acquired [acculturation], others displaced or lost [*desculturación*], and still others created as a result of these very processes [*neoculturación*] (Ortiz, 2002 [1940]: 260). He argued for a Cuban identity and history produced by an island that served as a conduit, as a site of confluence and transformation, rather than as a place of mythical and unquestionable origin: 'La verdadera historia de Cuba es la historia de sus intrincadísimas transculturaciones…sin conocer las cuales es imposible entender la evolución del pueblo cubano' (Ortiz, 2002 [1940]: 254).

Antonio Benitez Rojo proposed that Ortiz's book *Contrapunteo cubano* should be read, not as an uniquely Cuban text, but as a Caribbean text that poses a postmodern 'question of voices that come from different centers of emission, from differing moments and discourses, which coexist beside each other in a complex, critical relationship, on that is impossible to clarify entirely' (Benitez Rojo, 1996: 174-176). This postmodern reading of Cuba and its history served to deterritorialise the context in which the national and cultural identities were formed and conceptualised them in their multiple interrelations rather than in their binary opposition. Cuba, therefore, floated within the Caribbean geography as an archipelago, a 'repeating island', whose discontinuous configuration was connected by the everyday 'processes, dynamics, and rhythms that showed themselves within the marginal, the regional, the incoherent, the heterogeneous' (Benitez Rojo, 1996: 2-3). Once Cuba's history was related as a conglomeration of influences, of discontinuities, of rhythms, the bounded identities of nationalist discourses of Cuban revolution and exile became untenable.

The constitution of the island of Cuba as a site of convergences that has produced a dynamic history of contradictions, movement, dispersion and hybridity has been a hallmark of Cuban diaspora discourse (O'Reilly Herrera, 2011: 2). Some Cuban

intellectuals outside Cuba have claimed that use of the term *diáspora* first emerged in Cuba from the discursive depoliticisation of emigration on the island in an attempt to diffuse the political charge of the term *exilio* (Armengol, 2012: 1; de la Nuez, 1998: 30). Despite its currency off the island, however, the concept of diaspora remained noticeably absent from intellectual discourse on the island. For some Cuban intellectuals, linking post-revolutionary Cuban emigration to the historical plights of the Jewish people or to the forced removal and dispersion of Africans through slavery amounted to a misuse of the term diaspora (Fornet, 2009: 259-260). Director of the journal *Temas* Rafael Hernández, for example, took exception to its use in the Cuban context: '¿Acaso seremos los judíos de estos tiempos? ¿Otro "pueblo elegido", que paga la culpa por sus pecados?...el lenguaje no es totalmente inocente' (Hernández, 2012: 4).

Hernández's comments reflected an orthodox understanding of diaspora, derived from the concept's historical formations and early development within the theoretical discourse. The term diaspora first appears in Greek biblical translations of Deuteronomy 28:25 around the third century to describe the Jews living in exile from their homeland of Palestine: '*esē diaspora en pasais basileias tēs gēs* [thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth]' (Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 1). From this initial reference, therefore, the concept of diaspora was endowed with religious and political significance, the latter of which would be reinforced by the African diaspora, which was set into motion initially by the transatlantic slave trade (Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 2). These two foundational historical references firmly established diaspora as involuntarily displacement.

As the term diaspora became increasingly used in the social sciences and humanities to refer to mass migrations and displacements in post-colonial contexts, more historical and postmodern trajectories of the intellectual discourse developed (Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 4). The concept of diaspora, therefore, began to contain

various themes such as ethnicity and identity, gender and sexuality, and cultural production that are grounded in the economic assertions of modernity, globalisation and transnationalism (Sideri, 2008: 34; Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 13; Mishra, S. 2006: 19). The concept has become widely theorised to the point of reaching what Rogers Brubaker referred to as the diaspora of the term diaspora in which its meanings have been dispersed across 'semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space' and 'stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas' (Brubaker, 2005: 1).

It has been the various cultural and political agendas that have made the term diaspora a source of debate among Cubans abroad, as well as among adherents to revolutionary discourse. For example, Max Castro claimed that because of the concentration in one geographic location, namely Miami, the case of post-1959 Cuba was an exile rather than a diaspora: 'El destierro cubano, sobre todo desde 1959 al presente, no se caracteriza precisamente por su dispersión sino por todo lo contrario' (Castro, 2005: 99). In contrast, Rojas asserted that, although diaspora and exile held distinct meanings and should not be used interchangeably, the concepts were not mutually exclusive.

> No veo, pues, una relación excluyente entre los conceptos de diáspora y exilio, ya que la primera quiere significar el conjunto de todos los espacios migratorios, mientras que el segundo se refiere a un tipo específico de emigración: aquella que concibe el éxodo como destierro nacional, como viaje hacia la oposición política. Dicho gráficamente: Miami es un lugar de la diáspora, pero la mayoría de sus habitantes aun vive en el exilio (Rojas, 2006: 419).

Supporting Rojas's claim, John Durham Peters conceded that the concepts of exile and diaspora both involve displacement but in addition to being uniquely political, 'exile is always solitary, whereas diaspora implies a collective dimension' (Peters, 1999: 19-21). Furthermore, Sznajder and Roniger contended that the dynamics of displacement

produced by revolutions exist within a 'wider spectrum of phenomena of individuals and groups moving across space, time and culture' including migrants, exiles, refugees, and diasporas (Sznajder & Roniger, 2009: 16). These assertions that exile is one manifestation of a broader experience of diaspora would seemingly be supported by early scholarly work on diaspora that was quite exilic in its characterisation.

Early scholars of diaspora such as John Armstrong (1976), Gabriel Sheffer (1986), Walker Conner (1986), William Safran (1991) and Robin Cohen (1997) sought to identify the defining characteristics and psychic identities of uprooted ethno-national groups that found themselves between the native homeland and the foreign hostland (Mishra, S. 2006: 16). In one of the earliest texts on modern diaspora, Armstrong established an emphasis on ethno-national entities and territory that would become a hallmark of this strain of diaspora theory (Armstrong, 1976: 393). Sheffer's *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986) would later frame the sentimental and material relationship of those groups with the homeland as the defining characteristic of diaspora (Sheffer, 1986: 3). The connection to one's homeland would be further reinforced in William Safran's seminal essay on the Jewish experience, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return' (1991). Safran built upon Sheffer's triadic construct (homeland-subject-hostland) but rather than focus on the forces of the homeland and hostland, he created a typology for the diasporic entity itself (Mishra, S. 2006: 37).

Diasporas, according to Safran must fulfil several of the following six characteristics: 1) dispersion from a specific original 'centre' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions; 2) collective memory or myth regarding their original homeland; 3) alienation or insulation from the host society; 4) view of their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and desire to eventually return; 5) collective commitment to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its

safety and prosperity; and 6) continued relation to their homeland that importantly defines a ethno-communal consciousness and sense of solidarity (Safran, 1991: 83-84). According to Safran, the intellectualisation and internalisation of one's own existential, diasporic condition would thus produce what he termed a *diaspora consciousness*, the dimensions of which are negotiated in direct relation to an original, naturalised, and fixed homeland and ethno-national identity (Safran, 1991: 86; Sideri, 2008: 34).

Safran's conceptualisation of diaspora reflects many aspects of the Janus-faced concept of the Cuban exile discourse that oriented Cuban identity and belonging toward the inside/outside relationship to a fixed territorial Cuban homeland (Rumbaut & Rumbaut, 1976: 396). In contrast, the contemporary discourse of Cuban diaspora has sought 'a more nuanced, malleable paradigm that moves away from essentialist, and territorially and linguistically based, concepts of racial, national, or cultural identification' (O'Reilly Herrera, 2011: 3). In this way, it has followed the framework of more contemporary diaspora theory that directly challenges the 'rigid, pseudo-biological definition of national culture which has been introduced by ethnic absolutism' (Gilroy, 1987: 154). Through this discourse, Cuba was historically placed firmly in the 'black Atlantic', which Paul Gilroy conceptualised as a fractural and transnational space of traversal cultural exchange, production, and belonging (Gilroy, 1993: 4; Braziel & Mannur, 2003: 49). Cuba was therefore understood as fundamentally transnational, rather than as an exceptional case of a geographically and politically isolated nation that existed beyond the reach of the forces of global capitalism (Fernández, 2005: xiii).

While its location in the Caribbean provided the grounds for a history of Cuban transnationalism, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 affected the expansion, transformation, and creation of transnational social fields between Cuba and the United States as well as other countries (Cervantes Rodriguez, 2010: 11). This reconfiguration of spaces, social relations, and psyches through transnational activity such as financial

remittances, cultural exchanges, family communication, and *long distance nationalism* (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001: 4) has diffused the territorial boundaries of the nation-state as the exclusive location of the national culture, language and identity (Basch, *et al*, 1994: 28). As Iván de la Nuez observed, 'los cubanos en los últimos cuarenta años han cancelado el contrato entre cultura nacional – sea esto lo que sea – y territorio. Se ha perdido el centro' (de la Nuez, 1998: 28).

With the Cuban nation conceptually deterritorialised, the established notions of *cubanidad* and *patria* that have formed the basis for that nation also have become unbound through the Cuban diaspora discourse. Conflictive identities have become negotiated through fluid responses rather than the rigid 'lógica del cierre' (Rojas, 1998: 11) at the core of the nationalist revolutionary and exile identities. The authority to a Cuban cultural and national identity has become problematised and *cubanidad* has been proposed as 'una condición del alma' rather than a territorial birthright, while *patria* has been mobilised as a 'homeland within' (Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 150). Therefore, rather than Safran's ethno-national cluster desperately trying to return to their long lost homeland, the contemporary notion of Cuban diaspora corresponds more with Walter Zenner's vision of the Jewish culture and its ability to 'transmit its heritage and reproduce itself all over the world' (Mishra, S. 2006: 53). Envisioned this way, Cuban culture has engaged over generations in a perpetual process of decentring and re-centring that reflected Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity as a production, 'which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (Hall, 1990: 222, 235).

Therefore, post-1959 Cuban diaspora, reconstituted over time, has developed, not as a single immutable diaspora or exile, but, as various representations of diaspora processes. Generational transformations of diaspora have been documented in various national and ethnic contexts including the Indian (Mishra, V. 1996), Italian (Gabaccia,

2000), Jewish (Boyarin & Boyarin, 1993) and African (Koser, 2003). In the US-based Cuban context, Susan Eckstein (2009) has observed cohorts of diaspora similar to what Vijay Mishra identified as two interrelated diasporic conditions that he referred to as the 'old' Indian diaspora of *exclusivism* and the 'new' Indian diaspora of *border* (Mishra, V. 1996: 422). Born from indentured labour migration within the British imperial economy, the old Indian diaspora replicated the homeland within self-enclosed 'little Indias', complete with transplanted spiritual icons (Mishra, V. 1996: 422). This is echoed in Miami's 'Little Havana' and the retention of pre-revolutionary Cuban values, cultural practices and ideologies by the Exile cohort (Eckstein, 2009: 3-5). On the other hand, the new Indian diaspora of the modern era of advanced capital and the Special Period-defined New Cubans cohort both developed more pragmatic relationships with the homeland and family-focused views on life. Within cultures of mobility and 'selected discontinuities', these relationships are negotiated on and across the borders of 'here' and 'there' (Mishra, V. 1996: 433, 441, 442; Eckstein, 2009: 3-5). As in the case of India, Cuban society has provided an example of diaspora identities and practices that have emerged within specific historical circumstances and have been transformed across several geographies, phases and generations, 'refurbishing themselves as they go along' (Cohen, 1997: 16).

Over generations of post-revolutionary Cuban society, the Cuban diaspora consciousness (Safran, 1991: 95; Clifford, 1994: 308) has been transformed from one of fixity to one of fluidity, but has remained a *diasporic imaginary* that 'defines itself as a group that lives in displacement' (Mishra, V. 1996: 423). However, Percy Hintzen claimed that, more than merely a subjectivity of displacement, diasporic identity 'rests in representations and practices of cultural citizenship that were pitted against national identity under conditions where belonging was denied' (Hintzen, 2006: 107). In this sense, the 'diasporization' of Cuban migration reached beyond the discourse of exile by

deterritorialising national and cultural belonging (Hernández-Reguant, 2005: 277). The Cuban nation, then, was reconstructed as 'meta-islands' created within imaginative space (Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 151) and Cuban culture became a 'moveable tent' (O'Reilly Herrera, 2011: 13), through which a person can exercise his or her *cubanidad* independent of location, place of birth, residence, or nationality.

Such malleable conceptualisations of Cuban identity allow for multiple locations of cultural belonging through a dialogical process of negotiation and constitution of a *diasporic self* (Bhatia, 2002: 57). Expressions of this new mapping of identity were found in testimonials from Berg's work on Cubans living in Spain (2011). One artist who left Cuba in 1991 expressed a global sense of belonging that reached beyond being Cuban, and in some ways, despite being Cuban: 'I was born in Cuba, but I don't feel I am a Cuban…I feel I am fundamentally transnational' (Berg, 2011: 98). Diaspora discourses, however, are not produced solely in terms of displacement but also in tension with the assimilationist ideologies of the nation-state (Clifford, 1994: 308). While the artist's response reflected a new way of feeling Cuban, another of Berg's interviewees offered a new way of experiencing diaspora. When asked whether or not he considered himself to be an exile, he responded by deterritorialising the nation and, further, by de-nationalising the condition of exile: 'I see myself as a Cuban…Nobody can exile me…You can only compare that with death, with abandoning your body, nobody can exile me from my body unless they kill me' (Berg, 2011: 121).

According to de la Nuez, generations of Cubans, both on and off the island, have lived a 'vida dañada', confiscated by nationalist politics and saturated by the constant demands of self-definition in relation to a national project of 'Patria o Muerte' and 'Socialismo o Muerte' (de la Nuez, 1998: 31). The conceptualisation of a Cuban nation of diaspora breaks with these extremes: 'La Nación de la diaspora es una nación en fuga – física, cultural – donde la supervivencia nos remite, en directo, a un escape' (de la

Nuez, 1998: 33). De la Nuez clarified that this 'fuga generalizada en la cultura cubana' was not merely economic migration or political exile, but rather it represented the cultural phenomenon of diaspora as a Cuban condition (de la Nuez, 1998: 31-32). To be sure, contemporary Cuban diaspora discourse had incorporated Cuba's history of movement, hybridity, and displacement, to recast the transcultural Cuba of Ortiz as a 'diaspora culture' (Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 151; Gil, 1998: 34-35). De la Nuez distinguished the diaspora since 1959 as having had an unprecedented impact on Cuban culture because of its relationship with the nationalist politics of the revolutionary and exile projects. Prefixed identities such as '"postcomunista", "excubano", "excomunista", "postcubano"', expressed an emancipatory process of postnational and transterritorial possibilities for a Cuban culture that now found itself 'entre la patria y la muerte' within a nation of diaspora (de la Nuez, 2010: 13, 36; 1998: 165).

Conclusion

Since 1959, both the Cuban revolutionary and exile discourses have excluded, censured, and expelled other Cubans from their respective visions of the Cuban nation. On the other hand, the discourse of *emigración* allowed leaving the island to be politically normalised within the Cuban national identity. In addition, Cuban identities of diaspora served as cultural mechanisms of resistance against the contradiction of exclusion and inclusion produced by exclusive nationalisms and the notion of an original identity (Hintzen, 2006: 108). From the politicised discourses that permanently separated families to the discourses of normalised family separation, the dialogue between revolutionary and emigration processes has produced structural, functional, psychological and cultural changes in everyday activities, family relations and Cuban identities (Martín, 2008: 368). Framing emigration as a sociocultural process that is not

necessarily predicated upon mobility or territorial dislocation, allows for an exploration of how it has affected Cuban society over time. The next chapter will explore the theoretical and methodological frameworks through which to approach the sociocultural processes of emigration, exile and diaspora in the lives and imaginations of generations of Cubans on the island since 1959.

Chapter 3: Living Contemporary Cuban Emigration from Cuba

En Cuba sucede así. Un día te levantas y te enteras de que tu familiar más querido, tu gran amor o tu mejor amiga, decidieron marcharse. En el momento, casi parece natural, pero en la medida en que los años pasan, esas ausencias crecen y establecen un desesperado intervalo de imposibilidades entre los que quedan y los que parten.

- Marilyn Bobes, excerpt from 'Julia' (2004: 34)

Introduction

In April 1961, Eloísa Lezama Lima moved from her native land of Cuba with her husband and son. Only months later, her older sister Rosita followed suit and emigrated with her family. Shortly thereafter, Eloísa received a letter from their brother José back in Cuba, in which he wrote: 'Si morirnos es separarnos de todo lo nuestro, la separación de todos los nuestros es también morirse' (Lezama, 1998: 54). A poet by trade, José's melodramatic sentiment expressed a fatal fragmentation of the Lezama Lima family as imagined by the brother who had chosen to remain in Cuba along with their mother and who lived in the family home in Havana until his death in 1976. He never saw his sisters again and the correspondence with them became a vehicle that allowed him to cope with the separation and maintain some sense of family unity. Later published by Eloísa, these private letters from the Cuban poet and intellectual figure José Lezama Lima grant unique access to the emotional experience of his sisters' exile, from José's perspective on the island.

Lezama's letters illustrate an example of what Félix Masud-Piloto has observed as a fundamental element of post-1959 Cuban emigration: 'despite its predominantly political character, the Cuban migration has been and remains a deeply personal and emotional experience for all Cubans' (Masud-Piloto, 1996: xviii). Through years of separation, Lezama struggled, in his own solitude and suffering, to adjust psychologically to the absence of his family as a permanent feature of his life in Cuba.

Although Lezama's interpretation and expression of experience were specific to him, his words conveyed in general terms the mutual constitution of any separation: when one person leaves, another person is simultaneously being left. The significance of the mutual separation produced by the emigration was in the reconfiguration of the relationship between José and his sisters, conducted in the absence of the other and through the imaginations of each.

In the previous two chapters, contemporary Cuban emigration has been discussed in terms of how it has been historically generated and discursively mediated over the past five decades. This chapter will address the principal question of how emigration has been lived by Cubans in Cuba. Because they have not themselves left Cuba, any non-migrant experience with emigration involves other people leaving the island and, therefore, will necessarily be lived in relation to the absence of those who have left. However, although José the non-migrant and Eloísa the migrant would both have lived their separation, each would have lived it distinctly and other Cubans may not have perceived the absence as tragically as José had. In this way, the particular histories of personal, familial and national relationships, articulated with broader events and discourses of Cuban emigration since 1959, give force to the absences of those who have left in the lives and imaginations of those who have stayed. To that end, this chapter proposes a biographical approach to the social and cultural processes of separation and absence that have been lived mutually by Cubans who have emigrated and by Cubans who, like Lezama, have lived those emigrations from the island.

Exploring Cuban Emigration through Sociocultural Relationships

In 2002, the Cuban journal *Temas* dedicated one of its monthly roundtable discussions to the topic of emigration as a social and cultural phenomenon. Moderator Rafael Hernández deliberately focused the debate on the social and cultural implications of contemporary Cuban emigration, rather than viewing it as a demographic, economic, or political phenomenon. Sociologist María Isabel Domínguez opened the discussion by claiming that migration was in essence social and cultural, because it always involved an interrelation of the personal context with at least two distinct social contexts. Therefore, she added, the process of identity formation would consist of a disconnection from the context of origin and an insertion into a new social and cultural space. Within this process, psychologist Consuelo Martín stressed the interruption of established daily rhythms, the reconfiguration of spaces, and the social development of each individual, family and nation involved. Theatre critic Omar Valiño further noted the representation of these experiences in an impressive body of artistic production about migration produced since the early 1990s (Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002: 73-91). By considering Cuban emigration as a social and cultural phenomenon, the panellists highlighted the social relationships within that context as constitutive elements of contemporary Cuban culture.

Since 1959, the interpersonal, familial and national relationships that have been formed under circumstances of separation represent a critical element of Cuban social and cultural processes. From a sociocultural perspective, the images, symbols, and languages [corporeal and verbal] that have mediated these social relationships in specific cultural contexts are studied in their historical development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996: 191). Grounded in the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and reflecting many of the same principles that guide the social generation framework of this thesis, sociocultural theory emphasises the analysis of processes over the analysis of objects or

events in and of themselves. For Vygotsky, to study something historically was not the study of a slow accumulation of past events as separate objective changes, but rather it was the study of something in the process of change (Vygotsky, 1978: 64-65). Processes that made up seemingly incompatible forms of development, such as revolution and evolution, were viewed as mutually related and interactive. All social and cultural development, he argued, operated within 'a complex dialectical process characterised by periodicity, unevenness in development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes' (Vygotsky, 1978: 81, 73). The experiences of emigration lived in contemporary Cuban society can be explored socioculturally through analysis of the mutual, interactive, transformative and adaptive processes of interpersonal and collective separation.

As previously mentioned, a dynamic relationship between processes of revolution and processes of emigration have generated cultural separations and political divisions in Cuban society since 1959 that have been mediated through intergenerational discourses. Over time, certain aspects of nationalist revolutionary and exile discourses selectively adapted into discourses of *emigración* and diaspora that espoused less politicised and less essentialised notions of Cuban culture and nationality. The discourse of *emigración* has been limited, however, in its sociocultural scope by its fundamental understanding of two separate historically defined categories of emigration: political and economic. This unitary change of Cuban emigration history is predicated on belonging to a territorial nation-state, without which the act of emigration ceases to be a social and cultural phenomenon and is reduced to a mere population movement (Hernández, Domínguez, Martín & Valiño, 2002: 73-75). In turn, the process of depoliticising emigration in Cuba resulted in necessarily drawing historical lines around categories of political and economic emigration. Rather than promoting the notion of a continuous and dynamic process of adaptive transformation within Cuban society, this divided

conceptualisation has created the perception of 'an insurmountable barrier between historic study and study of present day behavioural forms' (Vygotsky, 1978: 64). In this sense, efforts by Cuban migration scholars to take a sociocultural perspective have often been hindered by the historical and discursive foundation upon which the conceptualisation of post-1959 Cuban emigration has been built.

On the other hand, in its attempt to produce a fluid and hybrid identity in resistance to the territorial nationalism of the Cuban nation-state, Cuban diaspora discourse has often substantiated itself as a distinctive community with a distinctive identity [e.g. the Diaspora] (O'Reilly Herrera, 2007). To overcome this 'groupism' in the broader international debate, Brubaker proposed thinking of diaspora as a category of practice involving stances, claims and idioms. However, he confined that practice to clearly defined diaspora projects that responded directly to nationalist projects, thus returning to an edified notion of diaspora that he had intended to critique (Brubaker, 2005: 12-13). Despite its efforts to deterritorialise the notion of Cuban belonging, many scholars of Cuban diaspora have maintained historical, political, territorial and conceptual divisions between Cuba and 'the diaspora'. By approaching diaspora in this way – as an object or event – much of Cuban diaspora discourse has not adequately explored the dynamic relationship of social and cultural processes within individual and collective experiences of displacement, dispersion, difference and distance in contemporary Cuban society.

Although each of the various discourses of post-1959 Cuban emigration presents challenges in terms of analysing the social and cultural processes of experience, it is precisely through their relationship with one another that those processes become visible. From essentially anchoring Cuba as a place to be either won or lost, to selectively depoliticising the act of leaving one's native place or selectively deterritorialising the condition of being displaced, social discourses regarding Cuban

emigration have negotiated identifications with a place called Cuba. Independent of any geological sense of permanence that might be perceived in the landmass of the archipelago itself [the immutability of which can be disputed through science], Cuba as a place has not always existed. The place known as Cuba has been continuously created and re-created in particular spatial relationships that have been conveyed through pre-Columbian, colonial and national histories. Such productions of place involve processes forged relationally both within and beyond perceived spatial boundaries and through contextual engagements and interactions that are both material and discursive in practice (Massey, 1994: 153; 2004: 5; Appadurai, 1996: 178). Within this sense of place, the meaning of displacement also becomes a 'multivalent complexity' of relationships and experiences grounded in dynamic histories (Bammer, 1994: xiii). From this perspective, identifications with the place called Cuba, and consequently with the displacement from Cuba, have been established and reproduced as much in relation to one another as they have been in relation to the physical space of the island.

By 'thinking place relationally', experiences of place and displacement are envisioned as a series of negotiations that are simultaneously emotionally laden, politically charged and fundamentally conflictive in their mutual constitution (Massey, 2004: 7). Abandoning essentialist identities in favour of less coherent understandings of belonging, relational approaches draw from feminist and postcolonial thought in an attempt, 'to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments and processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences' (Bhabha, 1994: 2). Through a focus on the sociocultural processes that articulate experiences, rather than on fixed notions of experience, a relational approach attempts to deliberately avoid universalising assumptions of authenticity. Indeed, the experiences are approached as contingent insofar as they are grounded in dynamic and changing human relationships rather than being grounded in abstract notions of

'everyday life' or 'lived reality'. As Doreen Massey poignantly asked, 'Where would you draw the line around "the grounded reality of your daily life"?' (Massey, 2004: 7). Rather than attempt to draw lines around a definitive lived experience of emigration, a relational approach lends visibility to multiple lines of experience, however blurred they might be, as drawn by those whose lives are connected through them.

Through a sociocultural lens focused on the dynamics of behaviours, thoughts and values, the question of how experiences of emigration have been lived can be viewed in the light of social relationships undergoing processes of separation. For migrants, a sense of displacement is underpinned by cultural adjustments, questions of return, and exclusion from important life-cycle events back home, such as weddings, births and funerals that would normally serve to strengthen and renew relational connections (Álvarez, 1999: 13-16). The relationships that migrants establish and maintain with the country of origin necessarily implicate those who have remained, individually as people and collectively as place. When emigration is approached in this way through sociocultural relationships, the non-migrant experience becomes paramount to understanding the mutual processes of displacement. As psychologists León and Rebeca Grinberg observed: 'The reactions of those who remain behind when others emigrate, and the nature of their feelings, depend upon the quality and intensity of the bonds that unite them with those who are leaving' (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989: 67). For migrants and non-migrants alike, their specific relational histories – interpersonal, familial, national, generational, racial, gender, sexuality or class – serve as emotional, intellectual and, therefore, psychological bearings for how their relative experiences of emigration are lived.

Using a relational approach, Martín has studied Cuban emigration as a complex, dynamic and dialectical process, realised in the concrete historical context of everyday life through family relationships (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 1; Martín

Fernández, 2008: 339). In a body of research that has spanned nearly two decades, Martín has explored the relationship between the individual and society through the relationship of Cuban families with Cuban emigration during and since the Special Period crisis. Envisioned by Martín as the central axis of contemporary Cuban migratory processes, the family has multiple roles of a mediating social institution, a dynamic social group, a primary agent of socialisation, and a space of socio-psychological learning in the sphere of daily life (Martín Fernández, 2007: 210). In this way, as Mary Chamberlain and Selma Leydesdorff observed, 'Families themselves become sites of belonging, part of the imaginary unity through which a transnational family may seek its identity' (Chamberlain & Leydesdorff, 2004: 227). Similarly, Martín has argued that migration networks of Cuban families have been crucial not only in the decision and act of emigration, but also in the transformation of social knowledge, emotions, behaviours and identities on and off the island (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 31).

In the context of today's Cuba, Martín and her colleagues at CEMI have argued that the impact of external migration on Cuban society has been particularly relevant in terms of the dynamism of identity construction and re-construction. The interactions of migrants with Cuba and with their place of settlement have an impact on social identities and values, inevitably modifying the lives of those who leave, of those who stay, and of both societies involved (Casañas, Martín & Aja, 2006: 134). In addition to its economic and sentimental role, Martín claimed that it has been primarily through relationships with family in Cuba that migrants have maintained relations with the island, and this has affected the transformation of cultural identity of place and Cuban national identity (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 31). For the non-migrant Cuban family, this relational transformation becomes salient in the perceived role of, 'la familia cubana emigrada' in life on the island, the value placed on emigration as a strategy to resolve everyday needs and the social connotations of leaving the country (Martín Fernández &

Pérez Bravo, 1998: 5-6). In the exchange of what Peggy Levitt has termed *social remittances* (Levitt, 1996: 2), ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital from Cubans abroad have modified previously established cultural references and integrated new ones into the sense of belonging and national identity on the island.

By virtue of studying Cuban emigration through family relationships, Martín has insisted on the non-migrant's mutual participation in the associated processes of social and cultural transformation. Following a relational notion of mutually constituted experience, non-migrant and migrant experiences of emigration and separation are posited in relation to one another and therefore are understood to shape one another. Just as the migrant must adapt to new surroundings, the family in Cuba also must restructure its everyday life and adapt to the new circumstances resulting from the emigration of one or more of its members (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 34). However, the processes of mutual reconstruction are not isolated solely within family relationships and the social and cultural impact resonates throughout Cuban society. As Martín and her colleagues have noted: 'La migración externa deja un vacío donde ella se origina que, en consideración a la magnitud y características de este evento, puede reconfigurar la identidad del lugar del que se han marchado los actores sociales implicados' (Casañas, Martín & Aja, 2006: 133). In the next section, experiences of emigration will be discussed regarding the various shapes given to this *vacío* [vacancy] by Cubans living in Cuba who must socially reconfigure in relation to the absence of those who have left.

Mutual Experiences of Absence

Thirty-nine years after leaving, Cuban writer and scholar Uva de Aragón returned to the country of her birth. In her book *El caimán ante el espejo* (2000), she describes the reunion with her family, some of whom she met for the first time, as a 'largo y apretado abrazo que destruyera el tiempo de la ausencia' (de Aragón, 2000: 116). During this journey back to Cuba, so often dreamed of by exiles, a young cousin told her: 'Es que mi abuela en vez de leernos cuentos, nos enseñaba todos los días los álbumes de fotos y nos hablaba sobre los que se habían ido, para que supiéramos quiénes somos' (Aragón, 2000: 116). In her work on Cuban artists living abroad, Andrea O'Reilly Herrera observed in their artwork an 'understanding of self [that] is always measured inadvertently against the "absent presence" that is the island' (O'Reilly Herrera, 2011: 14). The comments of de Aragón's cousin reflected a non-migrant understanding of self, measured against the 'absent presence', not of the island, but of people who had left the island. This mutual relationship with absence and its presence in the daily lives and imaginations of Cubans, both on and off the island, is crucial to understanding the complexity of contemporary experiences of Cuban emigration.

De Aragón's first-hand observations of how her family in Cuba had lived the absence of her family in the US challenged her perception of exile: 'En el exilio a menudo hemos pensado que llevamos las raíces al aire porque nos falta la tierra, olvidando acaso que también la familia es la raíz' (de Aragón, 2000: 116). The tendency of exiles to emphasise their experience of territorial displacement is not unique to the post-1959 Cuban context. Matthew Frye Jacobson noted in the American context that migration was historically expressed as arrival and settlement and, thus, any notion of exile was weighted with 'the sensibility of those for whom a lamentable absence from the Old World was among the most salient aspects of life in the New' (Jacobson, 2002: 1). In addition, as Vijay Mishra observed, the trauma associated with the moment of

rupture forms in the imagination of the exile as fantastic memories in which, 'the homeland appears as the imaginary haven, as the sublime sign, an absence, to which diasporas return for refuge' (Mishra, V. 1996: 442). For de Aragón's family in Cuba, the images in family photos had proven a refuge of absence that had emerged in the homeland as a result of the same rupture that had produced her exile.

Beyond merely confronting the dominance of the migrant or exile narratives, approaching the experience of Cuban emigration from the non-migrant perspective sheds light on a mutually constituted social and cultural experience of separation and absence in Cuban society. As Paul Ilie recognised in his work on political exile following the Spanish civil war: 'The more we reflect on what is being separated, the plainer is the fact that values, not geography, make the difference' (Ilie, 1980: 12). Using what he called the *reversibility principle*, Ilie subverted the territorially based paradigm and proposed a single exilic domain of psychological and cultural stress that produced inner and residential exiles in addition to territorial exile. Two fundamental propositions guided the *reversibility principle*. The first was the existence of a bilateral relationship between the migrant population that left its homeland and the resident population in the homeland (Ilie, 1980: 2). The second proposition was that, just as the migrant segment must remodel or reinvent itself while away from its familiar, native environment, the resident segment also remodelled their native place around the absent shape, or 'hollow', left by the departed migrants (Ilie, 1980: 5). Although argued by Ilie in a specific national, historical and political context of Francoist Spain, the *reversibility principle* provides a conceptual foundation from which to examine experiences of emigration, whether in the form of exile or other types of migration, as lived by the non-migrants of a family or nation.

Ilie's primary interest had been the study of how the homeland population had evolved after an exodus and how it had remodelled and compensated for the absence of

a large segment of its population. In a culture 'at war with itself', Ilie argued that a permanent sense of absence had powerfully affected the perception of collectivity in Spanish culture, as the 'mutually excised' segments became incommunicative, culturally incohesive, and increasingly isolated from each other (Ilie, 1980: 11, 28, 45). Outside the context of political exile, and in the contemporary context of Canada, Jenny Burman observed material, economic, spatial, social and psychical reverberations within host communities in the wake of immigrant deportations. The removal of people who formed part of everyday activity, she noted, had reconfigured the understanding of daily realities in relation to that which had been constructed when they were present. Similar to Ilie's imagery of a 'hollow', Burman concluded that, 'when people are removed from one's life, their absence leaves an imprint; the intimates they have left behind restructure their everyday lives around that imprint' (Burman, 2006: 281).

If the 'imprint', or 'hollow', or *vacío* left by emigration is to be considered a formative element of non-migrant life, then the sociocultural process through which these absences materialise must first be addressed. In his essay *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Jean-Paul Sartre posited an existential absence that is produced by social actors involved in everyday negotiations of expectations and possibilities, in relation to space, at any given moment in time (Cox, 2006: 29). To illustrate the concept, Sartre depicted a hypothetical meeting in a café with a friend named Pierre. When Sartre arrived at the café, however, Pierre was not there. Rather than a mere negation of his presence, Pierre's absence served as a contradiction to his actual presence in a place other than the café. Sartre emphasised that the perception of Pierre's absence was grounded in the organisation of the café and all its elements around the expectation of Pierre's figure in that space. 'But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact, Pierre is absent from the whole café', Sartre explained (Sartre, 1969 [1943]: 10). The café served as the ground, or foundation,

for Pierre's absence and supposed an actual, concrete relation that had been established between Sartre, the café, and Pierre that did not apply in relation to other people or places or moments in the abstract. Through the anecdotal scenario in the café, Sartre affirmed the specific conditions under which Pierre's absence was produced, 'I expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to happen as a real event concerning this café' (Sartre, 1969 [1943]: 10).

The *presence of the absent*, a concept dating back to Plato and Aristotle, emerges from both the imagination and the memory, according to Paul Ricoeur, in the form of representations, or traces, of perceived knowledge that attempt to articulate the past with the present and future (Ricoeur, 2004: 415). In Sartre's scenario, therefore, Pierre became absent at the moment his figure was recalled in the memory. This recollection was then treated as the recognition of an imprint, producing the presence of the absent figure in the imagination and thus giving new meaning to that space, to that moment, and possibly to Pierre as well (Ricoeur, 2004: 10). As Victor Turner observed: 'Meaning arises when we try to put what culture and language have crystallised from the past together with what we feel, wish, and think about our present point in life' (Turner, 1986: 33). This process of articulating moments with meaning is, Stuart Hall further noted, 'never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings' (Hall, 1990: 229). The meaning endowed to absence, therefore, depends on how the memory and the imagination recall certain knowledge and perceive certain material realities over time. In this way, the presence of absence becomes as dynamic as the social relationship it represents.

According to Anthony Giddens, any relationship with those who are physically absent must transcend the material limitations of individual presence through the '"stretching" of social relations across time and space' (Giddens, 1984: 35). That is to say, as Stuart Sigman would suggest, 'relationships are "larger" than the physical

presence' and can be considered continuous, despite an absence of face-to-face interaction (Sigman, 1991: 108). In the gaps between moments of co-presence, however long they may last, relational continuity is maintained to varying degrees, based on behavioural expectation and obligation between participants. For example, the relationship between door-to-door salesman and customer is defined purely by interactional presence and requires little or no continuity, while spouses constantly negotiate interactional presence and absence and therefore require the construction of an overall relational continuity (Sigman, 1991: 110). This continuum of *relational presence* is cultivated by participants, according to their physical and psychological engagement with each other, ranging from fully present to fully absent (Maguire & Connaughton, 2006: 35). In practice, therefore, the senses of connectedness and separateness, of emotional closeness and distance, and therefore of presence and absence, are fluid and constructed simultaneously within a relationship's history (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996: 97; Baxter, 2004: 10).

Under conditions of separation, such as the case of emigration, the perception of distance becomes a particularly key component of how absence emerges and develops within a particular social relationship. More than merely the absence of closeness, Jon Hess has broadly defined distance as 'a feeling of separation from one another' that manifests in a noticeable disruption of an ongoing relationship's interconnections (Hess, 2002: 664; 2003, 198). Examples of relational distance as a social force in experiences of emigration are evident in a variety of emotional responses from non-migrants, ranging from ambivalence to a sense of betrayal, from envy to melancholy (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989: 69-70). In cases of prolonged separation, the sensation of being forgotten can represent a particularly resonant quality of distance in the way that the experience of absence is perceived and lived within the relationship of those who leave and those who stay. As psychologist Sheldon Bach observed, 'just as we keep people

alive by remembering them, so we sustain feelings of our own aliveness not only through the ongoing awareness of our actual physical beings, but also through feeling that we exist and are remembered in the minds of others' (Bach, 2001: 740).

During de Aragón's return trip to Cuba, a comment from a friend illustrated a strong relational articulation of memory and meaning through the materialisation of absences in the daily environment of the non-migrant Cuban. '"Ustedes piensan que tienen el monopolio de la nostalgia"', her friend said, '"¿Cómo crees que yo me sentí cuando uno a uno se fueron yendo mis compañeros de estudio, mis primos? Hay calles por las que no puedo pasar porque sólo veo los fantasmas de los que están fuera"'. (de Aragón, 2000: 116). For de Aragón's friend, memories of those who were no longer physically present had cast multiple shadows of absence on her surroundings in Cuba. Such expression of ghostly absences, not through metaphysical apparitions but through the social experience of haunting, has been described by Avery Gordon as a 'structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition' (Gordon, 1997: 8). Beyond representations of the dead, disappearances, such as those studied by Gordon, from Argentina in the 1970s, produce haunting absences through the social force of memory in the material world: 'Disappearance was all around them' (Gordon, 1997: 113). With this understanding of absence as socially transformative, anthropologists Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, and Tim Flohr Sørensen claimed that, 'Absence is therefore not just a theoretical concept implied as the default logical antonym to presence; it is also a corporeal, emotional and sensuous phenomenon articulated in distinctly concrete, political and cultural registers' (Bille, Hastrup, and Sørensen, 2010: 13).

The social experience of absence, therefore, can provide for a different understanding of how emigration, in all its forms, can be temporally and spatially perceived in the psyche of individuals and societies. In the physical and spiritual

absence of those who have left, inhabitants of a particular place continuously define, negotiate and understand themselves and the societies they live in. For example, in her study of women living in Kerala, India, whose husbands, sons or brothers had emigrated, Leela Gulati observed how each woman chose coping strategies that suited the particular circumstances created by the absence of the men in her life (Gulati, 1993: 7). Feelings of loneliness and dependency on immediate family coexisted and contrasted with the unexpectedly improved communication with the migrant and a general sense of empowerment that came with increased responsibility, mobility and self-reliance on the part of many of the women (Gulati, 1993: 143-44). In the absence of the men, the women who Gulati studied had reconfigured their daily lives and relationships in a manner that might have traditionally excluded them had the migration not occurred. Personal histories, tactics and everyday practices such as these reveal how the absence produced by emigration can simultaneously transform and sustain 'dwelling' communities, thereby challenging the notion that the repercussions of mobility are exclusively experienced by the migrant or traveller (Morley, 2000: 13).

Absence as an experience of emigration, therefore, is conceptualised as a social reconfiguration, mediated in the memory and imagination under conditions of separation, and in relation to particular people, particular places and particular moments in time. The extent to which the absences of those who have left, in today's Cuba, constitute a fundamental element of the interpersonal, familial and national relationships for those who remain on the island must be understood in relation to the mutual processes of emigration and revolution. The historical events and social discourses of post-1959 Cuba have converged in the concrete context of everyday Cuban life in the form of collective memories, identities of place and family relationships (Martín Fernández, 2008: 367). Just as these social processes have not been one-dimensional, the processes of emigration have also been the result of multiple factors, whose coherence

has been expressed in the configuration of personal histories (Martín Fernández, 2007: 208). The absence of those who leave, as a non-migrant experience of that emigration, has therefore represented a mutual reconfiguration of personal and collective histories. In the following section, a methodological approach will be outlined precisely to explore the social relationships of separation and absence through the personal histories of Cubans living in Cuba.

Biographical Methods for Exploring Experiences of Emigration in Cuba

As has been discussed thus far, contemporary Cuban emigration has been generated in contexts of historical transformation, mediated through social discourses, and lived by Cubans, both on and off the island, as mutual separation and absence. The purpose of this thesis, however, is not solely the contextual identification of emigration experiences, but how experiences of emigration have been lived by Cubans in Cuba in that context. 'The difficulty with experience, however, is that we can only experience our own life', Edward Bruner observed, 'We can never know completely another's experiences' (Bruner, 1986: 5). Furthermore, in the words of John Dewey, 'Every experience is a moving force' (Dewey, 1938: 31). A method of inquiry into how such an elusive but elemental force as experience is lived must therefore focus simultaneously on its internal, existential and temporal processes of constitution (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998: 158). Such a proposition involves certain emotional and psychological complexities that are not readily apparent for observation. How, then, might visibility be given to the processes of an experience as opaque as absence? Furthermore, how might knowledge of those processes be used to ascertain the manner in which such an experience has been lived?

It is important to reiterate the emphasis that has been deliberately placed in this research project on exploring the variations of how experiences of Cuban emigration have been lived, rather than on identifying a definitive lived experience. In order to approach the non-migrant experience of Cuban emigration in such terms of its quality or manner, human experience itself must be envisioned in terms of 'events as experienced', rather than as an objective event itself (Carr, 1986: 47). Following Dewey, such a qualitative study of experience is necessarily grounded in everyday human interaction with material and subjective environments and the continuity given to those interactions over time (Dewey, 1938: 27, 41). Experience, therefore, is neither conceptualised as occurring exclusively in one's mind, nor solely as an objective force that imposes itself upon humans, but as interplay between them (Dewey, 1938: 39). Pierre Bourdieu posits how the complex processes of this interplay lend structure to experience through the concept of *habitus*. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* can be understood as 'a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*'[17] (Bourdieu, 1977: 82-83). Lived through *habitus*, experience takes the form of 'regulated improvisation' that is permeable and responsive to its environment but whose continuity resides in the dynamic communication of memory to action over time, both as product and producer of history (Bourdieu, 1977: 72, 78, 82; Reay, 2004: 434; Tonkin, 1992: 108).

The temporal orientation of social experience, as conceptualised by both Dewey and Bourdieu, can be considered a process of 'biographical work' through which life is self-relationally configured (Fischer-Rosenthal, 2000: 115). Although often referring to the account of a person's life in written form, the concept of biography applies to institutions as well as individuals and fundamentally conveys a process of self-descriptive and self-observational structuring of life both before and after events

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[17] Emphasis in original

(Fischer-Rosenthal, 2000: 115). Events as experienced by humans can range from something as localised as feeling a breeze on your cheek to something as globalised as a world war (Carr, 1986: 47). Biography, therefore, is composed of a series of experiences, or events as experienced, and is informed by one's relation to these experiences (Rosenthal, 1997: 22). For example, the moment a Cuban leaves the island is lived as an event of experience in relation to the previous experiences of physical co-presence with others on the island, prior to departure. Through the separations and absences it produces, therefore, their emigration forms a compositional element of that Cuban's life as well as the lives of their family, friends and fellow Cubans on the island. In this way, emigration constitutes a relevant biographical experience (Breckner, 2003: 205), not only for the migrant, but also for the non-migrant.

At this point, there is a critical distinction that must be made between the concept of biography, as it will be applied in this research, and the concept of identity, which has been central to Martín's work regarding the impact of emigration on Cubans in Cuba. While relational and sociocultural in approach, Martín's primary focus has been on identities of place, family and nation that form in Cuba in relation to the decision to emigrate, to the perceived roles of migrants, and to the perceived functional utility of emigration in daily life on the island (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 31; Casañas, Martín & Aja, 2006: 134; Martín Fernández, 2008: 340). While certainly an invaluable scholarly contribution, studying Cuban emigration through the concept of identity puts certain limitations on an exploration of how the experience has been lived. In short, identity focuses on the question of 'what?' while biography represents the question of 'how?' As Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal phrased it: 'Biography refers to an interpretatively open process of "becoming." Identity, on the other hand, focuses on a fixed state of "being" or "having"' (Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995: 258). Although not always conceptualised as 'fixed', even when posited as malleable and dynamic, the analysis of

identity repeatedly confronts experience either as a reinforcement of, or challenge to, its existence. Analysis of biography, on the other hand, allows for the reconstruction of 'lived-through' experiences of self-definition and action as well as the analysis of the reconstruction process itself (Rosenthal, 1997: 23). The concept of biography, therefore, provides for a more fluid exploration of how the experience of emigration has been lived by Cubans in Cuba.

Biographical approaches to the study of experience are, as described by Daniel Bertaux, 'simultaneously focused on human action, social contexts and historical trends, all embedded within one another and shaping each other' (Bertaux, 2003: 50). To that end, biographical methods employ 'documents of life' (Plummer, 1983: 13), including letters, diaries, obituaries, autobiographies, photographs, and personal artefacts and stories, in an effort to elicit and analyse the complexity of experiences through the perspective of the people who are being studied (Denzin, 1989: 7; Wengraf, Chamberlyne & Bornat, 2002: 247). As part of a broader practice of qualitative methods focusing on social practices, biographical research seeks to understand experiences of daily life and social change through personal interpretations of past, present and future experiences (Roberts, 2002: 1). The rich description of personal experience obtained through biographical methods is valued by researchers interested in accessing the internal processes of social relationships that are not visible through the use of other methods (Espin, 1992: 10; Bertaux, 2003: 40).

For all the virtues of biographical texts in the study of human experience, however, Norman Denzin cautioned that they were composed of narrative expressions, which were structured by conventions regarding how lives were told and written about. These conventions, according to Denzin, involved certain assumptions that, while serving to define biographical methods as distinct, were problematic if not accounted for in the analysis. First, Denzin noted that biographical narratives were produced with

another in mind and that the presence of this 'other' influenced their direction and purpose. Also, he added that narratives were told from specific social positions such as gender or class and were generally presumed to have beginnings or starting points in families. Furthermore, biographical accounts often suggested a reflection of the 'real' lives of 'real' people, which relied on the assumption of an author, 'who can record and make sense of the life in question' (Denzin, 1989: 17-19). Echoing the distinction made by Bruner between life as experienced and life as told (Bruner, 1986: 7), Denzin urged practitioners of biographical methods to be sensitive to these structuring conventions and to avoid creating the illusion that they have captured 'real' life experiences. 'The point to make', he said, 'is not whether biographical coherence is an illusion or a reality. Rather, what must be established is how individuals give coherence to their lives when they write or talk self-autobiographies' (Denzin, 1989: 83).

In terms of biographical coherence, the experience of migration presents particular challenges for those who live through its processes and for those who study it. Indeed, as Roswitha Breckner observed, migration has generally been considered an experience of discontinuity, 'which, on a biographical level, is expected to have a relatively deep impact on the subject's sense of life-continuity' (Breckner, 2003: 191). However, she argued that experiences of biographical discontinuity were formed distinctly through migration processes that affected various life-spheres and temporal orientations at the same time. For this reason, the relationship between biographical continuity and discontinuity in migration processes could not be derived solely from the type of migration [e.g. work migration, forced migration, marriage migration]. The important methodological question, Breckner claimed, was not so much whether migration was a process of continuity or discontinuity, but rather how the continuity and discontinuity of biographical information interacted within the processes of migration in

relation to one's current circumstances and long-term perspectives (Breckner, 2003: 192-193).

If migration processes are to be explored as a biographical experience for non-migrant Cubans, then the methods employed in that exploration must reflect how those individual and collective experiences have been articulated as a part of social life. In the previous sections of this chapter, a conceptual framework was outlined for absence as a social and cultural experience of emigration that is lived mutually by those who leave and those who stay. As has been discussed in this section, this experience as it is lived is understood as contingent, relational, continuous, interactive, conventionalised and fundamentally contextual. Just as connections to a broader social context provide insight into how individual experiences have been lived, so too can the details of personal lives generate insights into larger social processes, while avoiding abstractions and overgeneralisations (Chamberlayne, Rustin & Wengraf, 2002: 3).

In this sense, interviews that elicit biographical narratives or life stories can be particularly useful in making visible the otherwise invisible lines that articulate social relationships (Bertaux, 2003: 40). Fischer-Rosenthal noted that biographical work originates during face-to-face oral communication and the manner with which one person tells their experience to another in the present moment can help to elucidate – to the extent that it is possible – how that person has lived the experience (Fischer-Rosenthal, 2000: 115). By engaging in the living, telling, reliving and retelling of personal experiences through interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998: 160), we can begin to approximate how generations of absences of those who have left Cuba have been lived by those who have stayed, as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation.

It was with the intention of eliciting personal stories of experience with emigration from Cubans on the island that I travelled to Cuba in January 2011 to

conduct face-to-face interviews. When I arrived to Havana, I went directly to the apartment of friends that I had known since my first visit to Cuba in 2005. From their home in the Cerro neighbourhood of Havana, I began making contact with possible research participants using a snowball sampling technique where one participant would lead me to other possible participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). The only criterion used for the selection of participants was their current residence in the national territory of Cuba and their willingness to tell me about their experiences with emigration. It was not a requirement that the participant had family that had left Cuba. Some participants had entire families that had emigrated, while others did not have a single family member living abroad and chose to tell of their experiences with friends leaving or to discuss emigration in more general terms, as part of national history or Cuban culture. Participants were also not chosen based on their attitude toward emigration or their attitude toward the revolution. Again, the objective of gathering stories was to qualitatively explore any and all non-migrant experiences with emigration rather than to limit that exploration to a particular type of experience or attempt to capture a universal experience.

Because my hosts played a key role in making many of the initial contacts for the snowball sample, the majority of the interviews for this research were conducted with residents of Cerro and the proximate neighbourhoods of Plaza, Vedado, and Centro Havana. The only interview that occurred outside of that vicinity took place in Rancho Boyeros on the outskirts of Havana. Considering that all of the interview participants lived in and around Havana, it should be noted that residents of Havana account for around 20% of the total Cuban population but represent nearly 60% of all the Cubans who emigrate, many of whom originally migrate internally to the capital from other provinces (Martín Fernández, Aja Díaz, Casaña Mata, & Martín Quijano, 2007: 151-155). Therefore, in addition to differences in rural and urban lifestyles and attitudes, the

presence of migration processes in the daily life of Havana residents represents a specific contextual force that must be taken into consideration regarding how the experience of emigration has been lived. Indeed, one's location relative to Havana produces particular positions to transnational activities and major migratory events. For example, in the case of Ramón (featured in Chapter 5), his perspective from the town of Santa Fe, located on the coast between Havana and the port of Mariel, figured prominently in how he lived and narrated his experience. Although I did contemplate the possibility of travelling outside Havana to collect data, it proved unnecessary, considering the scope of the project and the number of narratives collected in Havana.

From January 11 to March 11, 2011, I conducted 35 interviews with 32 different participants, with three granting my request for a second interview. Because the interviews were intended to elicit storytelling of personal experience with emigration, I followed a narrative interview design that attempted to avoid a battery of questions or interventions by the interviewer (Rosenthal, 1993: 8; Wengraf, 2001: 111). Techniques such as surveys, word association and semi-structured interviews, used by Martín, elicit opinions and positions from the non-migrant participant regarding the migrant's decision to leave Cuba, Cuban migratory policy, the desire to emigrate, and the relationship with the migrant family (Martín Fernández & Pérez Bravo, 1998: 72-73; Martín Fernández, 2007: 211). Rather than search for the answers to particular questions, the interviews for this research were designed to explore more broadly how experiences with emigration have formed part of the biographies of Cubans in Cuba. The interviews I conducted in Cuba, therefore, began with a single prompt for the participant: 'Cuéntame de tu experencia con la migración'.

An interview method such as this operates under the assumption that spoken responses to such a broad request would be expressions of the conscious concerns of the respondent and also of the underlying sociocultural and personal processes that compose

the biographical experience (Roseneil, 2012: 130). In this way, the interviewee was given the floor to speak and express their experience as they saw fit, without interruption or interference from me, the interviewer. This is in no way to imply, however, that my presence both as researcher and as a participant in the interview experience had no effect on how they chose to tell their stories. Rather, the objective of using this method was to minimise my intervention and control as researcher over how the biography was narrated (Wengraf, 2001: 113). If the participant was unsure about where to begin, the only guidance they were given was assurance that wherever they wished to start was fine with me. As I actively listened to their story, I would note down observations, questions, and topics of interest to be addressed after the participant had finished telling me about their experience. Once the interviewee had clearly indicated that he or she had nothing more to say, I would then address my questions, ask for clarifications, and further probe into repeated themes and particularly interesting or contradictory aspects of the narrative (Wengraf, 2001: 119-120). After each interview, which ranged in duration from twenty minutes to five hours, I would write down my own impressions about the interview.

Additionally, I kept a journal, while I was in Cuba, of general observations and recollections of casual conversations, paying attention to how emigration might have been relevant in the day-to-day activities that I found myself involved in. The woman who lived across the hall, for example, would often mention her son, who lived in Orlando, Florida, in casual conversation with neighbours. I also took note of entire conversations, or the rare occasion of an entire day, without mention of the family abroad, Miami, emigration, or news about someone who was preparing to leave, or who wished to leave, the country. One woman who lived in the building seemed to be confronting difficulties on almost a daily basis in her efforts to emigrate to Chile with her infant daughter and would regularly seek advice from the friends that I was staying

with. One day, the nephew of one of my friends came by the house to say goodbye, because he was leaving the next day on a medical mission to Bolivia and had decided not to return to Cuba. Although I did not sit down to interview any of these people, their experiences with regard to emigration, as I observed them, informed my research at all stages of analysis.

After I left Cuba in March 2011, I travelled to Mexico, where I spent two weeks with Alexis [from the Introduction] and a small group of Cubans living in Puebla. Although I did not interview any of them, listening to them and observing their interaction served as a reminder of the Cuban migrant side of the migration experience, after months of listening to the experiences of Cubans on the island. The decision to not interview any Cubans who had emigrated in Mexico or anywhere else was a deliberate effort to avoid undertaking a comparative study of migrant and non-migrant experiences. To study something relationally and to study something comparatively are not equivalent. Rather than focus on value estimations of similarity and difference of experience, a relational approach indicates the way in which those involved in migration processes are connected. Because the connection, or disconnection, of the Cuban exile or migrant has been extensively studied, I have chosen to study the participant within the Cuban migratory relationship that has been heretofore neglected: the Cuban who remains in Cuba.

With over fifty hours of recorded interviews containing the personal experiences told to me by Cubans living on the island, I began the arduous process of transcribing the interviews in full. Although I transcribed each interview word-for-word, each text that I produced from those interviews was at once an interpretative representation and a transformation through which expression was lost or added through my own deciphering and grammatical practices (Mishler, 1986: 48-49). Furthermore, despite my high level of proficiency, Spanish is not my first language, and therefore a good amount of the

transcription process involved language interpretation. As I listened to the interview recordings and searched for meaning within the texts, I became increasingly aware of my own relationship with the participants and their stories and, most importantly, of my collaboration in their production. My own life experience, my previous research experience, my experience with the participants in Cuba, and my experience working with the recorded interviews all shaped the research texts that have been used for analysis in this thesis (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998: 171).

Never was I more aware of how my own hand shaped the stories told by the Cubans I had interviewed than during the reconstruction of their narratives from the transcripts. As I began that process, my primary obligation, as Denzin reminded, was to the people that had entrusted me with their stories and to the integrity of the experiences expressed through them (Denzin, 1989: 83). With that in mind, I have followed a thematic field analysis method of narrative reconstruction, developed by Fischer-Rosenthal and Gabrielle Rosenthal, that attempts to reconstruct the form and structure of the narrated life story, according to how it was temporally and thematically ordered by the participant in the interview (Rosenthal, 1993: 8). From the 32 accounts of personal experience, eight were chosen to be reconstructed into biographical narratives for analysis, although the remaining interviews will inevitably also have informed analysis indirectly. Because each transcribed interview contained between 12,000 and 20,000 words, the texts were condensed into third-person narratives with selective use of the speaker's words. These interpretive narratives were constructed in strict adherence with the order of events as presented by the speaker and in consultation with the audio recording in an effort to account as faithfully as possible for the tone of the speaker. [18]

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[18] Special efforts were made to maintain the integrity of the overall oral presentation of the narrator. For example, if the narrator mentioned the migrant by name, then the name is mentioned in the text accordingly. However, if the narrator never mentioned the migrant's name (see the case of Edgar in Chapter 7), then no name will appear for that person in the text. All participants and any person mentioned by name by the participants appear under pseudonyms.

In this way, the method of narrative reconstruction used in this thesis has paid particular attention to the narrative choices as representations of a particular autobiographical orientation. For example, Irma opened her interview with an exhaustive history of Cuban emigration from since before the revolution until the present day, failing to mention the event of Mariel in 1980 and only mentioning the recent emigrations of her niece and nephew after having finished her account of national migration history. Victor, on the other hand, began by asking me whether I would give a 9-year-old child the choice to leave the country or not as his way of introducing the case of his cousin who left at that age with her parents in 1966. Victor then proceeded to give the opinion that his cousin would have never left had she been given the choice and, aside from having lost her ability to write in Spanish, he believed that she regretted not having remained in Cuba, because she never really felt 'at home' in the United States. Although neither Irma's nor Victor's narratives are featured in this thesis, they provide good illustrations of how the biographical trajectories of each participant's narrative responded to a single request and how the orientation of those responses have been incorporated into the reconstruction and analysis of those narratives.

The determination of which stories of personal experience would be reconstructed into biographical narratives for analysis was made based on two criteria. First and foremost, the narratives featured in this thesis were chosen for the depth with which the narrators expressed their experiences of emigration. This did not necessarily mean the narratives needed to be overly complicated or highly emotional, or even particularly lengthy. However, they did need to contribute not only to an understanding of how each participant had lived the experience individually, but also of how, through a rich description of personal experience, emigration had been lived in Cuba over time. The second criterion for inclusion of a narrative was the generational positioning of the narrative, which should not be conflated with the generational belonging of the narrator.

Although the speaker's sense of generational belonging certainly was a factor in the narrations, the experiences were temporally oriented by the focus on emigration around moments of departure and therefore the storied experiences tended to focus more on how relationships were positioned in relation to that moment. Other social positions such as race, gender, ideology and sexuality were integrated into the narratives within the context of those relationships with the emigration, which were, in turn, contextually positioned within an interrelationship of generational belongings.

Following these criteria of experiential expression and generational positioning, the biographical narratives featured in this thesis have been organised into four chapters, categorised by generation and containing two narratives. The framework of social generations outlined in Chapter 1 provides a historically grounded structure through which the social and cultural generation of separation and absence in the everyday lives and imaginations of Cubans in Cuba can be articulated over time. Each of the narratives featured in the chapters represents an example of how some Cubans on the island have given biographical significance and social visibility to the absences of those who have left. For this reason, each participant narrative is divided into two parts. The first part is the reconstructed biographical narrative. The second part is analysis of their narrative through the sociocultural lens of absence as a non-migrant experience of emigration. In this way, the biographical meaning given to the absence of the migrant or migrants can be explored both for its individual specificity and for its social and cultural relevance within the historical context of contemporary Cuba.

Conclusion

In a letter sent in April of 1962, exactly one year after Eloísa had left Cuba, José Lezama Lima attempted to make sense out of what had become the permanent absence of his sisters' in his life in Cuba. 'Ahora es cuando la ausencia se hace más terrible, más sin sentido, más destructora y trágica', he wrote, '¿Qué sentido darle a esa ausencia? ¿Cómo llevarla? ¿Se dilatará aún más, al extremo de que llegue a enternecernos?' (Lezama, 1998: 63). Through these words, Lezama provided a window for Eloísa into how the absence of the family had gained force in his daily life and imagination, while then reflecting on his own hand in granting meaning to their absence through the process of coping with its impact. Eloísa would later describe her brother as 'un hombre que la destrucción de la familia dejó despavorido porque necesitaba vivir rodeado de una muralla de madres' (Lezama, 1998: 36). Indeed a sentiment of despair permeated Lezama's letters, with his mother's death in 1964 exacerbating the absence of his sisters and leaving him consumed by solitude and suffering in the years leading up to his death in 1976.

Lezama's experience with his sisters' emigrations raises several important questions of the meaning, management and magnitude of the absences of Cuban migrants in the lives of Cubans who remain on the island. What meaning do those who stay give to the absences of those who leave? How do Cubans in Cuba cope with absences due to emigration and what mechanisms are used? What impact do these prolonged separations have on the relationships of Cuban families and Cuban society? While recognising the specificity of Lezama's individual experience with emigration and the particularities of the historical period in which it occurred, it is important to remember that it has not been so individual to have been lived only by one person. Indeed, as evidenced by de Aragón's friend, personal experiences with Cuban emigration have not been limited to any one moment of departure, or to any one

historical event, or to any particular set of political or economic circumstances. Across a continuum of separation and absence since 1959, generations of Cubans have grappled, as Lezama had, with those same questions of how to intellectually, emotionally and psychologically cope with the absence of migrant family, friends and compatriots.

What, then, in this social relationship of separation and absence has been specific to the non-migrant Cuban experience of emigration? Questions regarding how personal experiences are socially connected become particularly pertinent. For example, Lezama's experience with emigration occurred from 1961 to 1976. As noted earlier, between 1961 and 1978, Cubans who chose to emigrate were not permitted to return according to official Cuban migration policy (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2010: 161; Pedraza, 2007: 141). Therefore, if a condition of no return can be considered a type of exile for Eloísa, then to what extent is her exile lived by José from Cuba? What of Ilie's notion of a single exilic domain in which experiences of exile are lived in the homeland? In the post-1959 Cuban context, Rojas has echoed aspects of Ilie's theory by observing a peculiar national experience of exile in which, 'Los cubanos de afuera son exiliados del espacio; los de adentro, exiliados de tiempo' (Rojas, 2006: 32). Concepts such as *insilio* and *exilio interior* [internal exile] have also been proposed as conditions of exclusion or marginalisation in relation to the nationalist revolutionary project while living on the island or as a period of isolation just prior to territorial exile (Behar, 1996: 144-145; Pérez Firmat, 1997: 12; O'Reilly Herrera, 2001: 1-48).

Similarly, the criteria of exile experience have been applied to the island population with regard to the concept of diaspora. For example, the arrests in 2003 of writers who were critical of the government prompted Adriana Méndez Rodenas to ask: 'Can diaspora refer to internally displaced subjects within Cuba?' (Méndez Rodenas, 2007: 147). Within conventional understandings of 'diaspora's borders' as the nation-state and the homeland population, Clifford determined that 'dwelling' cultures could

not be considered diasporas because, 'their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost' (Clifford, 1994: 307-310). At the same time, however, Clifford conceded that the placed-displaced or homeland-diaspora oppositions were not absolute: 'all or most communities have diasporic dimensions [moments, tactics, practices, articulations]. Some are more diasporic than others' (Clifford, 1994: 310). Building on Hall's notion of diaspora as an articulation of similarity and difference, Brent Hayes Edwards emphasised the diasporic engagement in simultaneous cultural and political practices of connection and separation. Like the joint of a human body, Edwards argued, an articulation of diaspora 'is always a strange and ambivalent gesture, because finally, in the body, it is only difference—the separation between bones or members—that allows movement' (Edwards, 2001: 66).

Such ambivalent relationships of displacement could produce blurred lines in the migrant/non-migrant dichotomy, as Breda Gray observed in the context of Irish diaspora: 'Globally mediated lives mean that staying in one place can produce similar experiences of "displacement" to that of the migrant, so that all lives take on the characteristics of migrancy' (Gray, 2004: 85). Similar to what Gray noted in Ireland, Eckstein and Lorena Barberia observed that Cubans on the island were increasingly influenced by family and friends living abroad and by new institutions and practices, such as use of media, on the island, that integrated 'diasporas' into daily life (Eckstein & Barberia, 2002: 800). Although utilising neither the concept nor the terminology of diaspora, the work of Martín has clearly indicated that emigration is a social and cultural experience that has had an impact on both the individual and collective psyches on the island (Martín Fernández, 2007: 210).

In contrast, a biographical approach to diaspora might allow for the non-migrant to be considered as forming part of a mutually lived process of social and cultural dispersion rather than being impacted by it. Envisioned in this way, traces of diaspora

experience could be detected in the emotional charge evidenced in Lezama's remark to Eloísa: 'Al punto que nuestra familia ha llegado, su total dispersión, sólo cabe llenar y buscar consuelo en las lágrimas' (Lezama, 1998: 54). Do emotions associated with the dispersion and displacement of a group of people constitute an experience of diaspora? To what extent have these experiences of emigration over time constituted a cultural *fuga* [flight/escape] as de la Nuez has suggested? Then, would it still be considered diaspora if the experience of this dispersion and displacement is lived by a non-migrant population? If so, then in the case of contemporary Cuba, what relationship would exist between that non-migrant experience of diaspora and the processes of revolution and emigration?

As discussed in this chapter, the absences and separations that have been lived by Cubans through processes of emigration from 1959 to the present day have been mutually constituted both on and off the island. To this end, Part Two of this thesis will present biographical narratives spanning four generations of experiences with emigration as told by Cubans currently living on the island. After each reconstructed narrative, an analysis of the biographical configuration of absence will provide a manner through which to explore how the various social relationships at play have been stretched over time. Connecting personal biographies with a collective biography, or history, will serve to give visibility to links of non-migrant life experiences with broader social and political discourses and sociocultural processes of revolution, exile, diaspora and emigration that have been generated over time. In this way, the absences of those who left, as articulated by those who stay, will provide a vehicle through which to address the fundamental question of how the experience of post-1959 Cuban emigration has been lived in the lives and imaginations of Cubans in Cuba.

Part Two

Chapter 4: First Generation of Non-migrant Cuban Experiences

Introduction

After the revolution of 1959, polarising political discourses produced narratives within Cuban society that left little room between the extremes. The representation of emigration became defined by 'quien se va' in the official discourse and echoed by the voices of revolutionary supporters chanting '¡que se vayan!' (López-Calleja Hiort-Lorenzen, 2008: 2; Castro Ruz, 1980: 10). Fornet has reflected on the social climate at the time: 'El que se iba dejaba de existir, simplemente; desaparecía de mi vista y de mi vida, se convertía en un fantasma' (Fornet, 2002: 131). This divisive atmosphere was not limited to the public sphere. Divided along political lines, entire nuclear families left Cuba, leaving younger generations of extended family separated from their aunts, uncles and cousins, and an older generation from their brothers, sisters and even their parents.

The manner with which Cubans who have remained on the island during that first generation of emigration after 1959 have coped with these familial and national splits can provide visibility to the social and cultural transformations of revolution and emigration. In this chapter, the life histories of Helena and Alba will be explored, with each focusing on the narrator's account of personal experience with that first generation of post-revolution emigration. These personal histories will then be analysed with regard to the meaning given by each of the narrators to the absences of those who left. Finally, the narrated absences will be reflected upon in relation to what they might indicate about experiences of emigration and revolution during this first generation. An examination of these biographical narratives will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which the processes of revolution and processes of emigration left their mark on the imaginations of who lived that first generation of experiences with post-1959 Cuban emigration.

Helena[19]

I didn't become a revolutionary because the revolution gave me anything. The only thing the revolution gave me was, what it gave…it gave to the majority of Cubans and to many Latin American countries: dignity. I believe in that. So, if I am a revolutionary and I am in this country it is because I love this country from the bottom of my heart.

-   Helena, 26 January 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Helena's Experience with Emigration

As we sat at the dining room table of Helena's home in the Vedado neighbourhood of Havana and conversed over coffee, the English colleague who had brought me to meet Helena commented on an aerial photograph that he had recently seen of Miami from the 1930s. It seemed desolate, he observed. Helena responded, 'It was the Cubans, the Cuban émigrés, the early ones, the ones, the moneyed ones, the ones who left in, who made Miami what it is today'. I asked her which period of Cuban emigration she was referring to. 'In the early 60s', she clarified, 'What my…um…my generation…my family…because Cubans…for forty…for forty-two pesos, Cuban pesos, at that time, you could fly from Habana to Miami'. What distinguished Cuba from other underdeveloped countries at the time, Helena claimed, were the strong middle class and professional class. 'This is the opinion of somebody who is not an expert', she clarified, 'This is what I learned from what I've lived through'.

Just as in all underdeveloped countries, there were poor people in Cuba, particularly in the countryside, Helena noted, 'but it was not that stark misery you see in Central America, or in many countries of Latin America today'. Plenty of people lived under bad conditions, she said, but at least everyone knew that there were good doctors

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[19] Because of her native-level proficiency in English, Helena chose to give the interview primarily in English, although she did switch to Spanish on occasion, generally when recounting something said by another person. All quotes appear in the language in which they were spoken.

in Cuba and, as far as she knew, the country had always had a long tradition of compassionate and humane treatment in the field of medicine. Public hospitals suffered from supply shortages and the unequal access to high quality health services had created a system of corruption where hospital beds were paid for with political favours. However, Helena insisted, the 'stark ignorance' that existed as a rule in other underdeveloped countries did not exist in the Cuba she grew up in. Born in 1937, Helena admitted having lived a comfortable life growing up in Cuba as the only child of parents who were both from affluent Cuban families.

> I lived off the fat of the land. My parents weren't rich. They were, I would say, upper middle class. Here we had two cars, a chauffeur, a cook, and a maid. I went to the best schools. I went to the best clubs. That is to say why I am here is because I love my country and I believe in the essential goodness, in spite of whatever mistakes have been made and will be made, I believe in the inner goodness otherwise I wouldn't be here. Perhaps if I had been selfish I would have had a much more comfortable life in the States. I knew the language. I had a good education. My family was well off in the States. My father, as a retired employee of Esso Standard Oil, could have started working again for Esso Standard Oil. And I said I wouldn't budge. And I'm not sorry. The only thing I miss is my family because we were really close. That's the part that hurts. Because after forty years, after fifty years, you see, I've seen them once or twice or three times. Now all of my uncles and aunts have died. A cousin is not the same as an uncle, or an aunt. They're more distanced than that. It's not the same and I'm very much alone now. But, to take me away from this country you would have to kill me.

Her mother's family tried to convince Helena and her parents to join in their migration to the US, but Helena claimed it was her own refusal, as a 22-year-old woman, that was the decisive factor. 'My mom would have left', she conceded, 'She loved her brothers very much. They had…they all left. But they loved me more'. Her father had never wanted to leave because of his belief in the revolution, but would have had Helena and her mother decided to leave. 'I wanted to stay! I did stay! I still want to stay!' she declared, 'I'm not being neurotic or hysterical. I feel it deep inside me. I feel it in my bones. I need Cuba! I need the air we breathe in Cuba'. This love of country

was deeply embedded in her family history. 'It has more to do with things that I saw in my family', she explained. For example, no member of her extended family ever spent the five cents to buy the *Diario de la Marina* newspaper 'as a matter of principle' because of the role it played in favour of Spain during the wars of independence and later in support of the Machado dictatorship. 'I believe in principles. And the day I'm not principled, I want to die', she declared and then paused to contemplate the weight of the words she had just spoken before adding, 'which doesn't mean I'm blind. Which doesn't mean I'm blind. I'm aware of mistakes'.

Helena then qualified her next statement by addressing me directly. 'Patrick this is not against you as a human being', she said, 'I love the American people. I love the United States. I tell you that from the bottom of my heart'. Both of her parents were Cubans that had both been born in the United States and raised there until they were adolescents. Helena herself speaks native-level English and holds a US passport to this day. To illustrate her affection for the culture of the United States, Helena explained that her mother used to give her a bath every day as a child and sing *Johnny Get Your Gun* to her in English, a song that she then proceeded to sing without missing a beat. The United States 'breathed in this house', she said, as she sat in the same house she had lived in since she was six years old. 'How can I not love your country?' she asked, 'But I will not be bullied by it. I'm sorry. I don't intend to hurt your feelings'. She said that she resented the US government's treatment of Cuba, citing examples such as their support for the atrocities committed by Batista, their aggressions toward the revolutionary government, and their occupation of the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. 'I think it's highly unfair. What damage except moral damage can we do to the United States?' she argued, 'Who pushed us or made us depend totally on the Soviet Union? Was it Britain? No. It was your government'.

Cuba's ability to resist aggression from the United States has made Helena proud

of the courage of the Cuban people, a trait for which she said she also admired former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. After herself noting that Churchill was an ardent anti-communist, she proclaimed, 'A person is not good or bad because of his political beliefs. It is because of the way he acts in life. And I don't care if you quote me. I've never been a Party member. I am a revolutionary and I believe in socialism'. She claimed that being in the Party was never important to her, but that Cuba most certainly was, 'to the point of lunacy if you want to'. Through its revolution, Cuba had given dignity to people all over the world, she said, noting again that she was someone who had grown up with the best of everything. 'I would have gone to university with or without a revolution', she reiterated, 'I would have had the chance to become whatever I wanted to become with or without a revolution'.

The revolution put Cuba on the map, Helena explained, and she rejected the claim of opposition to the revolution based on principles of liberty. She exclaimed, 'If you're starving what good does it do you to be able to say in the middle of the street, "¡Fidel es un hijo de puta!" Will that solve your problem?' She expressed a firm belief that the anti-Castro Cubans in the US continued to be the source of the problematic relationship between the two countries. 'Why does the government of the most powerful, richest nation in the world have to cater to the whims of a bunch of slimy bastards, who founded this Fundación Nacional Cubanoamericana?' she asked. Among those who left Cuba in the 1960s and 1970s, Helena recognises that there were many that simply did not agree with the revolutionary system and wanted to live their lives peacefully somewhere else. 'Perfect. They decided to stay on. It's their life', she said. She then slapped her hand on the kitchen table and emphatically declared, 'But those that had been involved in politics here before in Cuba, who left because they had blood on their hands, because they were, that's the way they were, those were the ones who made up this, the mafia anti-cubana!'

Among those identified by Helena as 'mafia anti-cubana' was the Díaz-Balart family, Fidel Castro's former in-laws and first cousins to Castro's son Fidelito. This mention of Castro's family connections to Cuban exiles in the US prompted me to ask again about her family that had left Cuba, the details of which had been omitted up to that point in the interview. She responded: 'Before the revolution. At the beginning of the Republic, and before, during the war of independence, my grandfather was a "migrado revolucionario". He came and fought for Cuba, Comandante del Ejercito Libertador, Martí's friend.' Her other grandfather had gone into exile, also in the US, and therefore virtually all of her aunts and uncles on both sides of her family had been born in the United States. Today, the members of Helena's family in the United States, from before and after the revolution far outnumber those who live on the island. 'I'm an only child. Unfortunately. Very unfortunately, I'm an only child,' she explained, 'but I really did have, a very closely-knit family'. Particularly in her mother's family, holidays like Christmas and New Year's were very big affairs. The family was also a very present force in the activities of daily life such as eating dinner together nearly every night and regular family poker games.

> That's what I miss the most. Sometimes I think that if I had been selfish, at the beginning, because whenever I go to the States my cousins ask me, '¿Pero si tú hubieras tenido que vivir tu vida otra vez, te hubieras quedado en Cuba?' And I…yo le contesto, 'Por principio, ¡claro que sí! Claro que me hubiera quedado en Cuba. Por haberme querido ir, me hubiera podido ir. ¡Ah! Si yo hubiera sido más egoísta', if I had been more selfish, 'a lo mejor me hubiera venido con ustedes. Porque según mi vida hubiera sido…hubiera estado más cerca de ustedes'. They were the brothers and sisters I didn't have. 'Egoístamente mi vida hubiera estado mucho más llena, si hubiera pensado distinto a mi manera de pensar'. But my deepest problem is that I don't trade principles.

When I asked her to clarify her use of the word selfish, Helena answered, 'I would probably have lived better than the way I'm living in Cuba now. Economically, materially, and I would have had a rich family life'. Since leaving, some members of

her family have remained in contact with Helena over the years, but some of them have rejected her because she was in favour of the revolution. On occasion, she has become the source of conflict between members of the family living in Miami. One of her cousins's daughters once declared that she would denounce Helena as a communist if she ever travelled to the United States. Helena's uncle Pepe, who was also her *padrino* [godfather] became incensed and retorted explosively in his goddaughter's defence: '"¡Si tú lo que eres es una cojona comemierda! ¡Qué no te puedes parar al lado de mi sobrina, y mi ahijada, y tú no eres quien para acusar a nadie de nada! ¡Ahora mismo te largas de aquí! ¡No te quiero ver!"'

Her *padrino*'s passionate defence of his goddaughter in Cuba from his location in Miami illustrated the lasting affective bond between them. 'He worshiped me', she recalled, 'and his wife did too because they had lost their only daughter'. When he still lived in Cuba, Helena could at a moment's notice ask special favours of her godfather, who had a small farm just outside the city: 'Whenever I wanted to have a picnic in the farm I just, "¡Padrino! Queremos que tú le digas al jamaiquino que cuida la finca que mate un puerco, que vamos con todo el grupo del colegio para allá"'. Her uncle and father would then get in their cars and pick up all of her classmates and take them for a huge lunch on the farm. 'You see. I was the daughter. I was it. I was it. I was cherished', she emphasised, before noting that she now felt more cherished by a group of young students from England than by what remained of her family in Cuba, 'I'm being very honest about it. I honestly think that they worry more'.

The close-knit family that she had enjoyed on her mother's side decided to leave Cuba in 1960 because they disagreed with what they perceived as the radical direction of the new government. Two of her male cousins would later return to Cuba as part of the Bay of Pigs invasion. One of these cousins had been very actively involved in the Directorio Revolucionario insurgency movement against Batista. In fact, Helena's

entire family had been staunchly opposed to Batista during his dictatorship and supported the resistance. 'I did my little bit too', she recalled, 'I didn't belong to it never, but I transported weapons and medicines and things. We all did, to a greater or lesser degree'. However, her mother's family had always hoped that the revolutionary movement would lead to the removal of Batista, the restoration of the Constitution of 1940, and a return to established republican politics of Cuba. In fact, her uncle Pepe, who had had a price on his head for his activities against Machado and went into exile in the US, had been the head of the port authority in Havana under the republican-era governments of Ramón Grau San Martín (1933–1934, 1944–1948). 'They wanted something, an establishment like the establishment they had before', she explained, 'They didn't want anything so radical'.

Helena did not regret her decision not to emigrate, but she did acknowledge the affective consequences of separating from her extended family. Helena instead chose to be a *miliciana* [militiawoman] and work for the literacy campaign in the early 1960s, before spending a career teaching English at the university level. She insisted that her decision to remain in Cuba despite the emigration of the entire family she had grown up with was not motivated by ideological dogma, but rather was guided by strong moral convictions and a passionate need to live in her native country. Did this mean that she viewed her family that chose a more comfortable life in the US over revolutionary struggle in Cuba as less principled or less patriotic? 'I believe they acted according to the way they believed', she responded, 'I think they have been essentially honest. They saw things one way. I saw things another way'.

Absence in Helena's Narrative

At first glance, Helena's narrative appears to exemplify the assertion made by Fidel Castro in 1961 that those who understood the need for a revolution in Cuba had enthusiastically remained on the island. An exploration of how she frames her encounter with emigration through the biographical meaning she gives to her absent family, however, illustrates the complications presented by the rigid discourses of revolution and exile in the everyday practice of social relationships. Although Helena self-identifies as a revolutionary who believes in socialism, the patriotic principles that motivated her decision not to emigrate are attributed to the values taught to her by her family. Therefore, the meaning she endows to the absence of her family illuminates how she has lived and understood their exile, the experience of her separation from them, and how she has lived and understood the experience of revolution. Helena's narration of revolution, of the Cubans in Miami, and of the absence of her extended family provides an example of the discursive knots that are tied while negotiating positions of exclusive nationalism that do not account for the intimate complexities of human relationships under conditions of separation.

If Helena's narration of her experience with emigration is to be approached as the biographical work of orienting the temporal process of her life and of social change, then it is not insignificant that it begins with an observation about early-1960s Cubans in Miami. Although it had emerged in response to a seemingly unrelated comment made in conversation, it is, in fact, the point of orientation for Helena's entire experience with emigration. She immediately searches for a way to contextualise her remark, stumbling from 'my generation', to 'my family', before landing on the national subject of 'Cubans', to explain the Cuba she had grown up in. While providing this context, Helena engages with notions of pre-revolutionary Cuban exceptionalism and positions herself as privileged within that society. In this way, she establishes the terms for what

will be the centrepiece of her narrative about her experience with emigration: her own decision not to emigrate.

In one revealing statement regarding her decision to stay in Cuba, Helena endowed her family's absence with meaning before she had even mentioned them: 'Perhaps if I had been selfish, I would have had a much more comfortable life in the States'. This comes immediately after she had professed her love for Cuba as the motivation behind her decision to stay and immediately before describing her family as 'the only thing I miss'. Together with her privileged class background, the biographical element of a tight-knit family, allows Helena to produce a narrative that reinforces her continued presence on the island as one of sacrifice. By staying in Cuba all these years, she has chosen to give up her upper class lifestyle and the possibility of better material living conditions in the US than her current ones in Cuba and she has also chosen to give up her 'rich family life'.

While the biography of someone who 'lived off the fat of the land', and was 'cherished' by her family establishes the emotional and material sacrifices involved in Helena's decision, her declared motivation provides those sacrifices with virtue. Echoes of '¡Patria o Muerte!' can be heard in her declaration that only death could separate her from her native land, a corporeal manifestation of patriotism that resides in her bones and is expressed in her need to breathe the air in Cuba. A physical and territorial conceptualisation of *patria*, therefore, is vital to her understanding of her experience with emigration and of the separation from her family. Helena's physical presence in Cuba is paramount to her story. The absence of her family is only given presence through her own decision to not emigrate, and the principles that motivated that decision form the prism through which she interprets her experience with emigration.

Faced with the disarticulation of her family, the thread of her own moral and

patriotic conviction offers coherence to Helena's narrative. By framing the family separation as a choice made by her and based in principles taught to her by that same family, Helena actively attempts to reconcile the moral contradictions of their separation while simultaneously drawing the narrative focus away from their decision to leave. Through the biographical practice of memory and imagination, Helena manages to produce a relational presence of her family that maintains them as less absent. The anecdotal references to poker games and picnics at the farm are prefaced by references to their family history of patriotic conviction and political activity. These are not merely fond memories of a bygone era. They represent an effort on Helena's part to negotiate the rupture by continuing to cast her family as good, principled, patriotic Cubans, rather than traitors to the revolution. It is difficult to pin the label of 'gusano' on a man who was 'Martí's friend'.

Helena's favourable narration of her absent family is one example of how Cubans of that generation who self-identified as revolutionaries lived and coped with the social rupture of that time. When her family who had fought so hard to remove Batista decided to leave in 1960, Helena's decision not to leave with them was accompanied by various narrative decisions that would reconfigure the present and future, as well as the past, of her life story. Exiles were not the only Cubans that experienced a break in their historical narrative. Despite the apparent narrative continuity for those who remained in Cuba and declared allegiance to the revolution, their life stories were also re-routed. Some chose to cut-off their family, friends and countrymen who chose to leave Cuba and to silence certain aspects of Cuba's republican history, or of their family's history. At the same time that Helena engages with certain aspects of her family's history to endow their absence with a patriotic significance, other aspects of its history make the integrity of her narrative difficult to maintain, and are therefore purposefully avoided or diverted.

The delicate equilibrium between the elements of exclusive nationalism within the revolutionary discourse and the memory of intimate family relationships are most exposed when Helena embarks on an indictment of the US government and Cuban exiles in Miami. Helena identifies the 'mafia anti-cubana' as the source of the problem between the two countries and defines them as Cubans who had been 'involved in politics before' and 'had blood on their hands'. Despite her family's involvement in Cuban politics before the revolution and its direct involvement with exile plots to overthrow the revolutionary government, Helena never associates her family in Miami with the elements of the 'mafia anti-cubana'. After she mentions Fidel Castro's family connection to the politically powerful Díaz-Balart family in Miami, I ask again about her family and she responds by transporting us back to 'before the revolution'. It is only after an hour into the interview that it is discovered that her aunts, uncles and cousins left in 1960, that they live in Miami, and that two of her cousins participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion, a fact that is only mentioned in passing and never revisited.

After touching on the less convenient details of her family's emigration, Helena steers the narrative back to stories of her 'very closely-knit family'. Helena brings the story back to how much she misses them and, in turn, brings it back to the virtue of her decision not to migrate with them to the United States. The narrative focus turns back to her decision to stay as a moral triumph rather than their decision to leave as a moral failure. This strategy frames her presence in Cuba as a sacrifice based in moral and patriotic conviction and the dignity of the revolution is reinforced each time she tells the story about deciding to stay in Cuba. At the same time, however, this strategy provides continuity to her family narrative and avoids antagonistic rhetoric toward her émigré family in the process, as the narrative of "they're dead to me" was not emotionally available to Helena due to her close relationship with her family.

The manner in which Helena plots her biographical account of experience with

emigration and the meaning she gives to the absence of her family illuminate how she has lived and understood the experience of emigration. Despite a seemingly haphazard structure, Helena's narration moves across themes and time periods to produce a consistent representation of herself in relation to her experience with emigration. The absence of her cousins, aunts and uncles is crucial to this representation in that it provides the contrast for her own physical presence on the island, which is the centrepiece of the narrative. Helena has lived the experience of emigration very much in terms of her decision to stay in Cuba, which itself is understood as an adherence to certain patriotic and moral principles. These principles are, however, attributed to her mother's family, the emigration of which she characterises as being in accordance with their beliefs. In this way, Helena's personal narrative offers the opportunity to explore the negotiation of the very real tension between the nation and the family within the revolutionary and exile discourses during the first generation of post-1959 emigration experience.

Alba

¿A dónde se fueron tus pregones y tus "aires libres," tus balcones floridos y tu olor a mariposa y a yerbita "buena"?

¿Qué se hizo de tus nobles hijos y de tus mujeres hermosas?

¿A dónde se fueron tus playas y tus noches caribeñas, y tu mulata criolla, mezcla de "chancleta" y gaita, de "chato" y de guaguancó?

¡Mi Habana! ¡Qué linda eras con tu traje deslumbrante de rumbera tropical.

¿A dónde te fuiste, mi Habana, con tu cielo sin fronteras y tus mares de coral?

¿Por qué tu aire se hace ahora, tan difícil de respirar?

¿Por qué me siento extranjera sin moverme de mi lugar?

¡Mi Habana! ¿Qué me pasa que camino y camino y no te puedo encontrar?

- Alba, 'Mi Habana' (unpublished poem)

Alba's Experience with Emigration

In virtually every way imaginable, Alba was not prepared for life in revolutionary Cuba. She was born in Havana in 1939, the only child of middle-class, Catholic parents who had isolated themselves from their respective families and had raised their daughter in a socially protected environment, home schooling her until she was a teenager. 'Yo me crié absolutamente sola', she remembered. Her intense interest and high level of ability in foreign languages eventually convinced her parents to enrol her in the Alianza Francesa. She remained, however, on the outside of the Cuban school system and on the outside of the social milieu of her contemporaries. After classes every day, Alba would immediately get in her father's car and he would take her directly home. 'Me faltaba el roce social. No me vinculaba con niños de mi edad. Me quedaba todo el tiempo con mis dos padres que cada vez estaban más viejos', she said, noting the impact of this sheltered upbringing on her social integration, 'una educación

completamente anormal, atípica, o sea un ser humano no se cría así'.

Due to her social isolation, Alba had no extensive network of friends, family or colleagues to help her cope with the radical transformations happening around her in revolutionary Cuba. 'Triunfa la Revolución y es un vuelco total de la manera de pensar, de la manera de actuar, de la manera de…todo, es una revolución verdadera', she explained. Alba's already limited support network became even smaller as life-long neighbours, family friends, and classmates joined the exodus out of Cuba. Although, in her case, Alba's parents had already cut-off contact with their respective families, she emphasised the toll of emigration on Cuban families at the time and its legacy in Cuban society even today. 'Es raro el hogar en Cuba que no tenga esa…eh…es…ese lastre, esa herida abierta', she noted, 'Y se arrastraron las familias cubanas, porque no es fácil de romper con, con familiares muy allegados'.

Whether a family member, friend, classmate or work colleague, Alba claimed that every Cuban lost someone to emigration in the years following the rebel victory in 1959. 'Aquello era una sangría todos los meses', she remembered, 'Pero era una cosa increíble. Bueno, Miami, se…nosotros llenamos Miami, los cubanos'. The most memorable loss for Alba was that of a young man who had become a constant source of moral support. He had been studying psychology at the Universidad de la Habana, but as a Catholic, he began to have problems with the new revolutionary administration. Alba claimed that Catholics were stigmatised at the time, 'Él que diga lo contrario está mintiendo. La Revolución persiguió la religión ferozmente. Muchos sacerdotes tuvieron que salir echando de aquí. Salir echando es irse'. She recalled the day in 1963 when her friend left Cuba permanently, never to return:

Cuando yo vi despegar el avión ese, y tuve que regresar. Vaya para mí lo que veía no era igual. Había sucedido algo en el entorno que me cambiaba el paisaje que me…la depresión era tan grande porque sabía que yo no lo iba a volver a ver más. Las salidas entonces eran para siempre. Porque aquí no se pensaba que la Revolución fuera a fallar en ningún momento, es decir, aquí se hizo una revolución para toda la vida. Y por lo tanto aquella no era una situación transitoria. ¿No? Era enterrarlo en vida.

Although Alba did make new friends over time, she found herself becoming paranoid about engaging in social relations amid the internal political pressures and collective paranoia of revolutionary Cuban society in the 1960s and 1970s. Panic would set in every time Alba would talk to someone, whether professionally or socially, because she was never sure what implications her words might have on her life. 'No me atrevía a tener ningún tipo de...de expresión. Salir del corazón, vaya, ser sincera, decir lo que pensaba. No, para nada', she explained, 'Entonces, lo mejor era no hablar y no hacer relaciones con nadie y no vincularse con nadie. ¡Pero es que así no se puede vivir!' Eventually, she found work in international telecommunications for the Cuban state. 'Veinticinco años de sufrimiento', she declared, '¿Cómo un ser desafecto totalmente a la Revolución va a trabajar entre revolucionarios?'

In the few cases where Alba developed enough trust with another person, usually a fellow Catholic, she was emotionally reluctant to invest too much of herself in any new friendships, because inevitably that person would soon leave Cuba. 'Tienes que estar haciendo perennemente amistades porque se te van las viejas', she noted. The constant flow, over the decades, of people leaving Cuba, and thus disappearing from her life, has resulted in the sacrifice of a certain sense of community and of a shared history. 'Porque cuando se van tú no sabes más de ellos', she explained, 'Eso no es compartir una historia'. The exodus continues today, Alba observed, although to a lesser degree, and in the process Cuban society has lost enormous values and unforgettable people, whose footprints can never be erased. 'Está impresa en nuestros corazones. Y bueno,

para mí el éxodo ha sido traumático. Pero bueno, es que para mí la Revolución fue traumática', she concluded, 'todo el mundo guarda una huella lacerante de esa etapa'.

Although she said that certain acheivements of the revolutionary political project, such as free and universal education, should be preserved, Alba said that the cost of imposing these values has been the sacrifice of an entire *pueblo*. 'Porque incluso este éxodo que ha sufrido el pueblo cubano no hubiera existido si no hubiera sido tan fuerte la presión', she insisted, 'el precio ha sido muy alto. Para mi el costo ha sido demasiado alto'. In her case, the cost of Cuba's new political and social trajectory after 1959 was the disorientation in relation to her cultural surroundings. Her parents were devout Catholics, with only a primary level education, but her father had managed to work his way up to department head for an American telephone company. 'Mis padres vivieron en el capitalismo. Me infundieron valores…valores, creo que buenos', she explained. The worldview instilled in Alba was grounded in values that would be fundamentally challenged by the new revolutionary order. As someone who identified with the lifestyle of pre-revolutionary Cuba, Alba recounted a moment of personal crisis from her militia training, in which she found herself participating in exercises, armed with an AK-47 and being trained to shoot at the Americans. '¡Dios mío!' she exclaimed, '¡Pero ayúdame! ¡¿Qué hago yo aquí?! ¿Yo manejando una AK-47? Tirando a los americanos que no me han hecho nada, que me mantuvieron toda la vida!'

Alba's parents briefly considered moving to Puerto Rico, through a transfer within the American company that her father worked for. However, her father feared having to begin a new life in a new country at his age and decided to stay in Cuba, and then retired shortly thereafter. 'Por parte de madre tenía unas cuantas primas que sí se fueron para los Estados Unidos pero como no teníamos vínculos familiares pues se fueron y yo ni me enteré,' she added. For her part, Alba often thought about leaving the country and at one point in the 1990s she considered crossing the Florida Straits in a

fishing boat. Fear got the better of her, however, and, at the age of 71, and with no active family or other personal contacts outside Cuba to sponsor her, she no longer saw the logic in emigration for her. Alba claimed that increasingly poor living conditions, such as crumbling buildings, overcrowded housing, and lack of professional opportunity, have created an 'olla de presión' that has maintained a constant emigration over the decades. 'Los jóvenes que se van no es solamente por pensar en la musaraña, la bobería, no, no, no, no', she assured, 'Es que no ven camino. No ven futuro. No ven horizonte. No ven nada'.

The manner in which Alba envisioned her own future and that of her family in revolutionary Cuba profoundly affected the decision by her and her husband to purposefully avoid having children. One reason for this decision was Alba's own lack of confidence in her ability to raise a child at that particular moment in her life, as a young woman. The second reason was related to the social climate of revolutionary Cuba in the 1960s and 1970s and was explained by Alba in the following manner:

> Entonces ¿qué voy a criar yo? Un individuo que no tiene nada que ver conmigo y que en cualquier momento puede convertirse en mi enemigo. Porque si se vuelve a ser un revolucionario con toda la fuerza de la ley yo voy a ser una desafecta y yo voy a ser la que no tenga lugar en su vida. El elemento extraño, externo. Voy a ser yo precisamente. Si lo educo con los principios que me enseñaron a mí, estos mitos, estas creencias religiosas, eh…mis criterios personales, aunque él sea capaz después de hacer lo que le dé la gana, corro el riesgo de que el muchacho, o caiga preso, o le dén un paredón como sucedió aquí mucho, paredón. O se vaya del país y me quede yo sola. Entonces ¿para qué voy a tener un hijo?

Her deliberate decision not to raise a child in revolutionary Cuba underscored Alba's unwillingness to accept, and adapt, to the revolutionary social order in Cuba. 'Jamás', she affirmed, 'Ni me asimilaré'.

Since the age of nineteen, Alba has perceived herself as 'sufriendo la revolución'

inside Cuba, without the option of emigration taken by many Cubans over the years, who preferred to live their lives outside the revolutionary social order. 'Si hubiera alguien querido que me llamara, ah bueno. Pero no tengo a nadie afuera entonces, bueno…' she conceded, before adding defiantly, 'Además yo no soy la que me tengo que ir'. Independently of the way she was brought up by her parents, Alba claimed that the revolutionary process had made her feel as if she was not a normal human being. 'El cubano no es un ser humano normal', she declared. The freedom to leave her country, along with the freedom of expression, was a human right that Alba claimed was normal in any other country of the world and had been denied in revolutionary Cuba. As a result, she either had to say what she believed and risk losing her job or going to prison, or she had to live amorally and say one thing while believing another. 'Eso, a la postre es un trauma para el individuo. No. Todas las cosas que a mí me gustaron, me estaban vedadas. Ser intérprete de extranjeros, ¡horror!' she exclaimed, '¿Cómo voy…cómo voy yo a recibir extranjeros? ¿Qué les voy a decir? Una serie de mentiras'. Alba asserted that the political needs of the revolution denied Cubans the rights of normal human beings to realise their potential and lead honest lives in accordance with their values. 'Una marioneta. Eso es lo que somos', she stated emphatically, 'Seres sin alma. Porque no nos podemos expresar'.

Absence in Alba's Narrative

Before moving into the analysis of Alba's narrative, there are a few clarifications that must be made. The above excerpt was reconstructed in strict accordance with the methodology outlined in Chapter 3. However, at minute 01:45:30 of the interview [where the narrative ends in the text above], there was an intervention by the interviewer [the author of this thesis] that must be taken into account in the analysis of Alba's

narrative. It did not alter the topic of discussion, but it did venture into more analytical territory and away from the biographical narrative that Alba had been constructing up to that point. In the light of her expression of alienation and loss throughout the interview, I asked Alba if she considered her experience as some sort of *insilio*, a term that has been employed and debated within Cuban intellectual circles, but with which Alba was unfamiliar. What was initially a methodological error on my part would produce immense insight and reflection from Alba during the rest of the first interview and during a subsequent meeting with Alba, in which she analysed her own poetry. For this reason, all information that emerged out of our conversation from that moment forward will be treated as additional material for analysis rather than as her reconstructed biographical narrative.

Alba's initial response to the request that she recount her experience with emigration provides insight into how she has internalised the experience of the Cuban revolution as a sociocultural process of emigration. Beginning her story with her isolated childhood, Alba characterises her early life as atypical, but on the road to normalcy. Precisely at the moment in her life when she is making acquaintances with young people her own age, and nurturing her passion for foreign languages, the Cuban revolution irrevocably interrupts this life trajectory. In the process of charting a new path for a collective future, the Cuban revolution had also altered the path of Alba's own privately anticipated future. In her second interview she phrased it in the following manner: 'Me han troncado mi vida. Me han desviado del camino que…que a lo mejor debía de seguir'. The entire biographical account that Alba produces revolves around the various social ruptures provoked by the Cuban revolutionary process. In this sense, Alba's is a narrative of unfulfilled potential that has been frustrated by the traumatic experience of a seemingly imposed revolution, in which the exodus of some and the empowerment of others stand in contrast with her own perceived immobility and

impotence.

Toward the end of the first interview, I asked Alba if she considered her experience since the revolution as some type of exile. She responded in the following manner:

> Yo le puedo decir que yo vivo en un exilio mío, interno. Es decir, yo nunca salí afuera. No pude. No pude. Esa es la única explicación verdadera. Pero yo he vivido un exilio interno mío aquí, en mi propio país. Incluso yo tengo un…unos versos. La única vez que he hecho versos yo.

Several days later, Alba presented me with twelve unpublished poems that she had recited into a tape recorder during the 1990s and painstakingly transcribed on a typewriter, just nights before she read and analysed each of them for me. The first verse of her poem 'Mi Habana', is featured in the heading of this section, prior to her narrative. In the poem, Alba laments the disappearance of 'her' Havana. This is a pre-revolution Havana, bursting with the sounds of liberty, where creative street vendors call out their slogans and sales pitches for everyone to hear. This is the Havana where unique combinations of beauty graced every balcony and every street corner. This is the Havana where noble men and women walked with purpose and desire and where people stood up to say what they believed without fear in their eyes. The poem longs for the Havana that once was, before the revolution, and bemoans what it has become, since the revolution. The idealised expressions of nostalgia that permeate 'Mi Habana' are typical of someone writing from exile, despite never having left Cuba.

From her own relative position of perceived immobility, each classmate, neighbour, Catholic priest, artist, or public figure who emigrated, represented an effective relocation of the Cuba in which Alba had grown up. Her inability and unwillingness to assimilate to the emergent revolutionary social order in Cuba resulted in an emotional dislocation and feelings of cultural disconnection. Over the years, Alba

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internalised an aberrant sense of not belonging to the only place that she has ever known as home and is reminded of the Cuba of the past every day that those cultural references became more irrelevant to the Cuba of her daily existence. 'De la Cuba que es, puede ser que alguien me diga que es magnífico; pero de la Cuba que yo conocí, este es un país completamente anormal', she explained. Faced every day with this 'abnormal' Cuba, Alba has made concerted efforts to recover the 'normal' Cuba of her past through the practices of imagination and nostalgia, conserved in her memory. The absence of this place, this Cuba where she learned to 'be Cuban', along with the notable absence of the people who once comprised it, forms the legacy of this first generation of revolution and emigration for Alba.

For Alba the process of revolution had broken Cuba off, not just from the influence of the United States, but also from the rest of the world. 'Era como si el planeta Tierra hubiera dejado de hacer su…su revolución propia de planeta Tierra y hubiera cogido otra…otra trayectoria distinta', she commented. By breaking away from the world of its past, Cuba had ceased to be the place that Alba had always lived in and this left her feeling socially dislocated from the Cuba in which she found herself presently living. Faced with a sense of destruction of her Havana and her Cuba, Alba has made concerted efforts to recover this lost place through the practices of imagination and nostalgia. The absence of a shared history that Alba perceived as broken within her personal relationships also translated into her perception of ruptures within the overall cultural coherence of Cuban society. 'No solamente se rompe con los amigos', she noted, 'con los vecinos, con los conocidos, con los artistas, con lo que le da a uno la sensación de que uno sigue viviendo y de que la vida continúa'. Pre-revolutionary cultural references, such as popular Cuban artists, musicians and public figures, disappeared from the social landscape upon leaving Cuban territory.

Traumatic memories of Alba's experience with revolution, along with nostalgic

memories of pre-revolutionary Cuba, have become the legacy of the first generation of revolution and emigration for Alba. Culturally disconnected and emotionally dislocated Alba from the Cuba of her past, present, and future, Alba's experience of exile is found in the absence of a place, conserved in her memory and depicted in her poem 'Mi Habana'. In fact, it has been precisely her location on the island [both territorial and social] in relation to this lost Havana, this lost Cuba, and to the people who once comprised it, that have produced a sensation of exile, despite having never left Cuba.

Conclusion

For Cuban revolutionaries and exiles alike, a particular cultural memory formed around the divisive sense of social rupture that accompanied the revolutionary processes of the 1960s. While hundreds of thousands of Cubans left during this period in opposition to the revolutionary government, millions of Cubans stayed in support of it. Rifts that would last generations were created between Cubans who chose to leave and Cubans who chose to stay at that historical moment. As evidenced in this chapter, however, not everyone who remained in Cuba held disdain for those who chose to leave, nor did all who opposed the revolution uproot and leave the island. Some Cubans of this generation remained critical of the revolution throughout their lives and never adopted revolutionary values, but for one reason or another never left Cuba (Eckstein & Krull, 2009: 325-326). Indeed, independently of whether one chose to leave Cuba or chose to stay in Cuba, this generation would be defined by adaptation to the political and social realities within an emerging revolutionary Cuba.

In this chapter, Helena and Alba both mark the revolution of 1959 as the narrative starting point for their emigration-based biographies. Each woman expresses distinct absences in relation to their experiences with emigration, and those distinct experiences with emigration are expressed in direct relation to their experiences with the revolution. Helena compensates for the absence of her past family life with a narrative of moral and patriotic conviction. Alba, on the other hand, produces an absent Cuba through an exilic narrative fed by nostalgic memory and a sense of estrangement. The absences narrated by each give visibility to the social relationships within processes of adaptation, amid the divisive political and social climate of the time. For the self-described revolutionary, Helena, her experience is oriented around the moment she decided not to leave Cuba. For the self-described internal exile, Alba, the experience is oriented around her suffering within the revolutionary process. In both cases, the

narratives of emigration are all firmly rooted in their position regarding the revolutionary project.

Helena and Alba's divergent perspectives provide a rich illustration of what Rojas referred to as 'la guerra de la memoria' (Rojas, 2006: 395). Both women engage in a selective archaeology of memory while passionately defending their ideological positions regarding the revolution, and therefore, regarding emigration. In Rojas's version of Hirschman's 'exit-loyalty' model, it would seem that Helena has responded to the revolutionary system with 'loyalty', while Alba has responded with 'silence'. From these ideological positions, each narrative demonstrates the effects of the 'mutual excision' – as Ilie (1980:11) conceptualised it in the Spanish context – of the Cuban nation during the 1960s in the present day. As each woman discursively configures her story to create biographical continuities from cultural discontinuities, the narratives seem to confirm Ilie's contention that what is being contested here is not geography, but values. Helena's vociferous defence of her decision to stay in Cuba is based on her moral principles, while Alba's sense of internal exile has been created through the perceived loss of cultural values in Cuba. However, Helena's claim of revolutionary values and Alba's claim of social displacement are both intimately related to their physical presence in Cuba.

From their distinct sociopolitical positions, and from their shared territorial residence in the island, Helena and Alba's narratives serve to problematise any simplified notions of the revolution-exile relationship. Despite their opposing ideologies, these women have imagined Cuban nations, in the sense of Anderson's imagined communities, which have been differentiated by the style in which they are imagined. Helena's is built upon territorial notions of *patria*, while Alba's is built upon territorial (dis)-locations of *cubanidad*. Interestingly, however, is that both women present transnational imaginaries of Miami that reflect the mutuality and simultaneity of

these relationships that Glick Schiller and others have observed in other contexts. This poses a curious question, then, with regard to Vijay Mishra's concept of a *diasporic imaginary*: Can the imaginary still be diasporic if the displacement is lived from the homeland? Does this indicate, as Ilie suggested, a single exilic domain of psychological and cultural stress? These are questions that will be repeatedly be raised in the subsequent chapters as we continue to examine the significance of this first generation of emigration and its legacy in contemporary Cuban culture. In the next chapter, for example, we will explore the narratives of Cubans who had grown up witnessing the emigrations of the 1960s and 1970s and had already begun to cope with its repercussions long before reaching adulthood.

Chapter 5: Second Generation of Non-migrant Cuban Experiences

Introduction

A new historical generation of Cubans, born and raised in the 1960s, was coming of age on the island during the mid-1970s and 1980s, with an identity and memory distinct from the previous generation. They were, in fact, the sons and daughters of those Cubans who had decided to stay in Cuba since 1959, many of who had been, to varying degrees, committed to the revolutionary project. However, various social, cultural and political shifts had been set into motion among the population on the island by the mid-1970s. Increasingly, these 'children of the revolution' expanded their cultural horizons and opened up personal and professional opportunities beyond the borders of Cuba. This diversification of the Cuban revolutionary experience was accompanied by a new generation of experience with emigration on the island that began to call into question the revolutionary argument against those who chose to leave Cuba.

As attitudes were transforming inside Cuba, a more reconciliatory and fraternal atmosphere was developing within highly politicised family and national relationships. By 1978, the hard line stance of the revolutionary discourse had softened and Cubans who had chosen to leave after the revolution were once again allowed to return to Cuba. As Fornet observed: 'los que volvían no eran extraños; eran nuestros hermanos e hijos, nuestros tíos y primos, viejos amigos, a veces hasta nuestras madres' (Fornet, 2002: 133). However, the migratory episodes of 1980 would represent a symbolic punctuation to this generally hopeful, but also highly conflictive and contradictory, transition of attitudes and aspirations of many Cubans on the island. In this chapter, biographical narratives will explore the profound but nuanced absences left in the Cuban imagination by the particular experiences with this second generation of post-1959 Cuban emigration.

Ramón

Ramón's Experience with Emigration

'Bueno, vamos a empezar entonces, un poquito más atrás', Ramón said, responding to the request that he recount his experience with emigration, 'O sea cuando yo me tropiezo, cuando me encuentro por primera vez con la migración, que no conocía'. Ramón vividly recalled the anxious atmosphere of one night in 1968, when his aunt and cousins slept at his house: 'ese ambiente que… que es… que están hablando los mayores lo que tienen que hablar y que yo…que no te das cuenta de nada pero tú sabes que está pasando algo'. In fact, his aunt and her family were leaving Cuba the next day for the United States, and watching his mother say goodbye to a sister with whom she had a very close relationship left an impression on seven-year-old Ramón. 'Yo por primera vez con esa edad. Está la familia del momento, empieza…empiezo a ver que la familia comienza de alguna manera a desintegrarse', he said. Several of his mother's siblings had already left Cuba, both before and after the revolution, and she kept abreast of their lives in the United States through their correspondence with Ramón's grandmother, who had refused to leave Cuba as long as one of her children remained on the island. Ramón grew up observing the impact of the separation on his mother. 'Porque yo que no sufrí, y eran ellos, yo en definitiva era muy pequeño. Y…y mi familia estaba aquí, que eran mi mamá y mi papá', he remembered with a small laugh, 'pero sabía que eso era malo. De alguna manera era malo'.

A few years after her sister left in 1968, Ramón's mother reinitiated contact with two half-siblings who lived in the province of Matanzas. For several years during the summer, Ramón and his mother would travel the eighty kilometres from Havana to Matanzas in order to visit her brother and sister, which Ramón believed had helped his mother compensate for the already absent siblings. However, two of these siblings would soon leave Cuba as well in the mid-1970s. 'Mi mamá se quedó acá sin hermanos', he noted, 'Siempre estuve viviendo en ese período hasta los 70, del 60 hasta los 70. El período, viviendo la soledad de mi mamá y la ausencia de sus hermanos, en esa, siempre en esa necesidad de encontrarnos'. An opportunity for Ramón's mother to reunite with her brothers and sisters came in 1980 when her oldest brother arrived in a boat at the port of Mariel, ready to take her and her family to the United States. Just as in the 1960s, however, Ramón's mother was in no position to leave Cuba. 'Y mi mamá dijo de que…que si mi hermana no se iba, y mi papá, ya ella no se iba a ir', he explained, 'Y entonces, bueno pues, no nos fuimos. Con el dolor del alma de ella de no poder estar con sus hermanos', Ramón speculated that perhaps his aunts and uncles became bitter from having invested the time and money to go to Cuba to get his family, only to be turned away, because after 1980 they cut off communication with his mother in Cuba. 'Volvimos a estar ausentes de…de noticias', he noted, 'Ya mi abuela no estaba. Ya no había forma de comunicación de ningún tipo. No sabíamos el teléfono. No sabíamos nada'.

His mother's separation from her siblings formed part of a relationship with emigration that Ramón was also developing simultaneously within the context of his personal experiences. Ramón was raised in a coastal town just eighteen kilometres east of the city of Havana, called Santa Fe, that he likened to the town portrayed in the *Jaws* films: 'Tiburón, Tiburón primera parte, segunda parte, tercera parte, ¿estás ubicado? ¿Ese pueblecito que tú ves? Eso era Santa Fe'. In the summer, the town became flooded

with American tourists who would go to the casinos, cabarets, clubs and beaches, and therefore the town developed 'muchas raíces americanas'. After the revolutionary victory in 1959, the American tourism ended, he recollected, 'Pero se quedaron esas cosas. Existía el "weekend". Existían nombres así'. As young children, Ramón and others his age were socially insulated from anything outside of their little world in Santa Fe and never talked about leaving the country. They spent every day together from morning until night, effectively growing up 'como si fuesen tus hermanos'. These relationships strengthened as they passed through adolescence together until, when Ramón was eighteen years old, the town and his life would dramatically change. 'Llega el ochenta, comienza a quedarse aquel pueblo prácticamente vacío', he remembered, 'Era como un pueblo desolado. Las familias empiezan a emigrar. Tus amigos empiezan a irse. O sea, y nosotros estábamos ahí, sin movimiento de ningún tipo'.

Ramón considered the people leaving in 1980 as fundamental to his life and he struggled to adapt to their absence, unlike the separations in the 1960s from his mother's family that he had scarcely known. 'Y me afectó tanto que yo estuve de certificado médico un año. Que me liberaron de la…de los estudios porque yo no lograba concentrarme', he recalled. Ramón did eventually return to his studies and made new friends, but generally, within six months time, these new friends would also leave. 'Eso a mí me hizo sufrir mucho', he recalled, 'Me marcó mucho'. Among these new friends was a young man with whom Ramón had a romantic relationship: 'Y un buen día, llega y me dice así, "Mañana me voy". Imagínate. Yo llegué a pensar que, que el culpable era yo'. He would later realise that each person had their own private motivation for leaving, but, even so, throughout the decade of the 1980s Ramón deliberately avoided forming intimate relationships and isolated himself socially in order to avoid suffering more personal losses.

The loss that Ramón's mother had suffered in the 1960s and 1970s was briefly given relief in 1991 when Ramón's aunt who left in 1968 called his mother on the telephone. 'Esa hermana llamó por ahí, eh…es…te podrás imaginar cómo fue esa llamada que…mmm…bueno la primera vez mi mamá no pudo hablar', he remembered. This emotional first call ended with his mother crying so profusely that she was unable to regain her composure and Ramón had to pick up the phone and explain the situation to his aunt. It was an awkward moment for him, by this time a 30-year-old man, trying to decide how to address his aunt. 'Estuvimos tan desconectados tanto tiempo que tú no sabes ni que nombre decir', he explained, 'Pero bueno decidí decir 'tía' que era más común'. Ramón emphasised that any feelings he might have had toward his aunts and uncles were not grounded in his own sense of loss, but rather were a function of his desire to complete his mother's dream of reconnecting with her siblings. His mother's longing to reconnect lingered in one particularly intense memory that Ramón recounted from his childhood of listening to a radio program called *La Voz de las Américas* with his mother, a regular practice Ramón believed made her feel connected with her siblings from a distance.

> Y yo recuerdo una ocasión que estábamos acostados en la cama, eh…y ella oyendo La Voz de Las Américas, que siempre se le…se escuchaba por la noche…Y ella un día me preguntó: '¿Tú quieres…tú, tú quisieras irte y vivir con tu tía?' Y yo le dije: '¿Si tú no vas a estar? No.' Pero imagínate, preguntarle a un niño. Yo hoy ni…yo hoy ni encuentro una respuesta. Preguntarle a un niño: '¿Tú quieres vivir con tu tía?' Que ya había pasado tiempo, ya yo de mi tía casi ni me acordaba…Y no, nunca supe porque ella me hizo esa pregunta. Tal vez porque pensó que yo podía tener más oportunidades. No sé. Nunca, nunca me dijo por qué me hizo esa pregunta. No, y yo nunca más pregunté por qué me había hecho esa pregunta.

The idea of leaving his mother, and Cuba, never became an issue again for Ramón, despite the fact that the act of emigration would repeatedly surface as a factor in his life. In 1980, when his uncle had called from Mariel with an offer to take them to

the United States, Ramón was inclined to seize the opportunity. 'En aquel momento sí', he confessed, 'Porque también en…el ochenta estaba muy reciente de todas las personas y amistades que había perdido. Y entonces era una forma de volver a encontrarme con un pasado'. After the decision was made as a family not to leave, despite his own latent desires, he never felt the need to emigrate. In 1995, he would have the opportunity to travel outside Cuba, through a Portuguese tourist friend who sponsored him to do his religious work of *santería* in Portugal. For thirteen years he travelled once or twice a year to Portugal, but he never thought about staying there. In fact, it was precisely his ability to do seasonal work in Europe and return to Cuba, rather than relocating permanently, that had provided a relatively stable lifestyle for his family during the Special Period and continued to still today. 'O sea todo lo que tú ves hoy, que tenemos nosotros, en la forma que vivimos, se lo debo a Portugal', he confirmed.

By his own estimation, Ramón's experience as an 'inmigrante gitano' provided him with an understanding both of the world beyond Cuba's borders and of the experience of emigration itself. Ramón told of a particularly vivid memory from the very first time he entered a supermarket in Portugal. 'Me quedé en la puerta parado y no podía entrar', he remembered, 'Y ahí mismo…comencé a llorar. A llorar, porque cuando, desde la puerta todo lo que yo podía ver. La…en la mente fue así en, en segundos, "¿qué están comiendo?" "¿cómo lo están pasando?"…Los que estaban aquí'. With time, and self-reflection, Ramón was able to perceive the happiness that he brought to his family in Cuba each time he returned. '¡Viví, sentí, y entendí al inmigrante! Lo entendí', he declared. As the migrant, he explained, he represented the hope to resolve economic problems, but he also represented a bit of capitalism, a bit of the world outside Cuba.

Experiences of travelling outside Cuba, of having been separated from his family, and of having returned home further have informed Ramón's perspective

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regarding the impact of emigration on relationships. He had watched as the effects of his mother's solitude worsened following the death of her mother, Ramón's grandmother. 'Cualquier asunto trataba de la familia y del momento ya decía, "No. La familia, nosotros somos muy pocos. Tenemos que estar unidos"', he recalled, 'Ella tenía mucho miedo que…que…que nos fuéramos a desunir'. Through his own experience, Ramón has come to understand the reasons behind his mother's fears. Over the years he has served as *padrino*, or godfather, to hundreds of practitioners of *santería*. Of those hundreds, he identified fourteen as 'los más importantes'. Of those fourteen important *ahijados* [godchildren], only four still live in Cuba today and of those that have left, he has only had contact with three, one of whom he contacted himself. 'Pero fíjate tú, lo que es la distancia', he said, 'Que no tenemos nada que contarnos'. The distance brought by emigration, Ramón claimed, produces a set of emotional dynamics that are damaging to relationships over time. He explained: 'el problema de la emigración es simplemente, llama a cada tanto, por la ausencia de convivir, de amarse las personas, unas al lado de la otra. Es eso lo que ha creado el conflicto. Y es eso lo que hace que las cosas se enfríen'. Conviviality forms part of the Cuban idiosyncrasies, he claimed, and the very dynamics of emigration, regardless of motivation, have produced a gap in the understanding of the emotional needs and conditions among Cubans on and off the island. 'El acto de emigrar, que significa distancia, es sinónimo de separación', he asserted, letting out an exasperated laugh, 'Se pierde todo. Absolutamente todo…emigración trae frialdad'.

For Ramón, emigration had been associated as much with the memory surrounding the moment of separation as it had with the subsequent separation. From the beaches of his hometown of Santa Fe, located en route between the city of Havana and the port of Mariel, Ramón watched the boatlift as it happened in 1980. 'En Santa Fe nosotros veíamos…que las embarcaciones venían recto a la costa de Santa Fe y de allí se

des…doblaban, y se les desviaban a buscar el Mariel', he remembered, 'Y ellos salían bordeando toda la costa otra vez, hasta Santa Fe y cogían rumbo recto a Cayo Hueso. O sea, yo vi todo'. The boats would come in empty and leave full of people and Ramón remembered seeing people crying on the beach, unsure if their loved ones might have been onboard. 'Porque a cierta distancia tú no logras ver caras', he noted, 'Cosas así. Lo vivimos'.

The trauma of the exodus was exacerbated by a popular assault on those very friends and family, and others like them that had decided to leave at Mariel. Ramón remembered a particularly elevated sense of panic, fear, terror, aggression and hate during that time. People stopped speaking in the streets and groups were mobilised to vandalise the homes of would-be migrants and harass them, including the use of physical violence. Feeding this atmosphere of doubt and suspicion was a lack of public information regarding what exactly was happening or why it was happening. Ramón recalled, 'Solamente aquel discurso: "¡No los queremos! ¡No los necesitamos!" Ya más nada. Pero… ¿por qué estaba pasando?' Ramón never understood the political argument behind the aggression against those who left through Mariel. '¿Por qué esa agresividad con alguien que simplemente quiere irse?' he asked himself, 'Bueno, si quiere, que se vaya. Nosotros podemos seguir, eh…nuestro camino con nuestra política'. According to Ramón, the pain and fear that was infused into the Cuban population in "el 80" will remain in the collective cultural memory for generations to come.

> Quedará para generaciones. Porque todavía los…los que tienen mi edad estamos a…que…que se fueron allí…están allí. Y cuando yo veo los documentales del lado de allá de cómo ellos cuentan lo que les pasó al salir de aquí en el ochenta, lo entiendo porque yo estaba aquí y vi que lo hacían. No porque me lo dijeron. No. Que vi que lo hacían. Y leí la prensa diaria. Bombardeando y siendo agresivo e incitando la población a eso. No sé. Ese es el momento más difícil y que quedará así. En los sentimientos, la psicología de las personas, en el miedo.

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Ramón's traumatic memories of the events surrounding Mariel were punctuated by the ghost town that Santa Fe later became and the disappearance from his life of those who used to populate it. In 2002, he returned to his hometown and found that it had been abandoned in every sense of the word: 'No tiene nada que ver con lo que, con lo que, con lo que yo viví. En nada. Ni en personas, ni en lugar'. Because of Santa Fe's location as a town, well located in relation to Miami, Ramón believed there was a deliberate strategy at work to erase the town from existence. 'Allá no ha levantado más nada', he observed, 'Desaparecerlo. Y con el tiempo va a desaparecer. No se cuida.' Of the families in his neighbourhood from when he lived there, only one remained. Ramón has since searched websites like Facebook, and also wrote to the Nuevo Herald, the Spanish-language newspaper owned by the Miami Herald, in an effort to reconnect with friends from his hometown. None of his efforts resulted in any useful information and this lack of resolution has led to a certain sense of desperation. '¡No sé si están en Miami!' he exclaimed, '¡No sé si están vivos! ¡No sé si están muertos! ¡No sé nada! No aparece nada. Nada. Nada. Cero'.

As an accomplished astrologer and practitioner of *espiritismo* and *santería*, Ramón is accustomed to connecting with and interpreting worlds beyond the one in which he physically lives. He confessed that engaging with the spirit world had certain advantages, however, over the type of communication he had been attempting. When someone dies, Ramón explained, you make that person present in your life by commemorating them in some fashion, such as lighting a candle or saying prayers for them. 'Pero una persona que tú sabes que…que no sabes si está vivo, está muerto', he lamented, 'No sabes si ponerle una vela, no ponerla. No sabes cómo vivir eso'. Ramón added that communicating with the deceased through spiritual mediums, even if others viewed it as crazy, served a psychological and emotional purpose. '¿Cómo yo me puedo contactar con alguien que no está en el más allá?' he wondered, 'Está en el más acá. Y

tal vez está buscándome'. The lack of resolution stemming from Mariel has produced a desperate longing within Ramón for reconnection that he shares with many Cubans of his generation. 'Hemos tratado de darnos una psicoterapia', he assured, 'Para tratar de pasar de eso. Porque como yo, también existen muchos más. Personas que conozco. Que cada rato recordamos ese evento y…y expresan lo mismo'.

Absence in Ramón's Narrative

Beginning with a childhood memory, Ramón narrated his experience with emigration by interweaving concurrent threads of his life story to highlight the personal trauma induced by emigration. He initiated his story at his first memory of contact with the phenomenon. This childhood memory was built upon the perception that his family was beginning to 'desintegrarse' and from his impression that this was in some fashion 'malo'. This interpretation of emigration permeated Ramón's narration of the various periods of his life. His empathetic relationship with his mother's sadness and longing to be with her siblings provided the thematic groundwork for his own traumatic experience at Mariel. Likewise, his mother's longing for reconnection with her siblings established the motivational orientation of his narrative that resurfaced in his representation of the experience of emigration fundamentally as a separation. The separation from his aunts and uncles, from his classmates from Santa Fe, from the Santa Fe of his childhood, and from Cuba during his own travels to Portugal, all served to orient Ramón's biographical work toward the relationships and how they had been affected by distance.

Absence was a pivotal trope through which Ramón narrated the imprint that emigration had left on his life and thus was given a distinct presence in each of the various stages of his life story. The first absence represented is that of his aunts and uncles, but, despite having their roots in the 1960s and 1970s, their departures were

never framed explicitly in terms of the revolutionary project. Instead, Ramón framed them in terms of the impact the separation had on his mother. The anguish of his mother's solitude and the longing to reconnect with her siblings constituted part of his relationship with her and was a formative element in his own relationship with separation and, therefore, with emigration as well. He had accompanied his mother through her separation from loved ones, from childhood until his mother's death just two years before the interview for this research was conducted. From a position of empathy fostered around the absence of siblings in his mother's life, Ramón learned to reproduce and reinforce certain emotional responses to absence. The continuity of these emotional responses was particularly evident in the narrative illustrations of his experiences with emigration.

The anecdote of his initial encounter with emigration related the breaking apart of the family as 'malo' and was presented as the insight of a seven-year-old boy. However, over forty years had passed between the moment in the 1960s that was being reconstructed in the story and the moment in the year 2011 from which it was being reconstructed through Ramón's memory. During those years, Ramón had repeatedly commemorated the birthdays of his absent aunts and uncles. During those years, he had travelled each summer to Matanzas to forge relationships with another set of his mother's siblings. During those years, he had observed his mother's increasing solitude after they too left and his mother's mother passed away. During those years, Ramón had helped his mother reconnect with one sister and witnessed the overwhelming joy of hearing her sister's voice over the phone. Although introduced through his mother's suffering, rather than his own, Ramón carried the themes of emotional memory, relational co-presence and reconnection into the narration of his own traumatic experiences with emigration.

Ramón's arrival at the year 1980 in the chronological progression of his mother's storyline produced a shift in his narrative, from vicariously lived absences to intimately lived absences. The depiction of an eighteen year-old trying to come to grips with the sudden desolation of his hometown of Santa Fe and the disappearance of the people in his life illustrated the intimate character of a broader collective trauma. Ramón stood 'sin movimiento de ningún tipo' on the beaches of Santa Fe, his own stasis juxtaposed with the physical dispersion of people from the space that they had commonly occupied. With his sense of place fundamentally altered by the massive displacement of population, Santa Fe had been transformed beyond recognition. His portrayal of a desolate ghost town that had been abandoned, both during Mariel and over the forty years following Mariel, signified the disappearance of his hometown and his disconnection from it. As a result of Mariel, he had not only been disconnected from individuals in his life, as had been the case of his mother, but also from a particular relationship with the world around him. In his biographical account, the experience with Mariel is portrayed as so traumatic that he was put on medical leave, and made conscious efforts to socially isolate himself. Mariel represented a dramatic rupture for this eighteen-year-old man on the cusp of adulthood and broke apart many of his first mature relationships, throwing into flux his immediate social references.

At this point in the narration, Ramón briefly departed from the Mariel storyline and revisited the storyline of his mother. His mother's joy at hearing her sister's voice over the telephone served as a reminder of how their relationship had been disconnected and reinforced the relational importance of connectivity. At the same time, Ramón emphasised his own distance from any shared history with his mother's family. Through a series of memories spanning from his childhood to his own travels abroad, Ramón arrived at his narrative destination: 'Emigración trae frialdad'. By taking this narrative detour, his mother's desire for reconnection was linked with the general sense of

disconnection that emigration represented for Ramón and with the importance that he placed on the human relationships involved.

With this emphasis on the effects of distance upon relationships, Ramón returned to the Mariel storyline and his description of people crying hysterically as boats, possibly loaded with their family members, disappeared into the distance reinforced this narrative focus. In this context, his commentary that 'a cierta distancia tú no logras ver caras' held particular significance, as it framed the trauma of Mariel in terms of the human faces that were disappearing from the lives of those who stood alongside Ramón on that beach. In this way, Mariel haunted Ramón. It haunted him in the absence of civility he remembered witnessing in the community around him toward those who were leaving. The physical and discursive violence directed toward those who left at Mariel represented a particular type of cultural disconnection for Ramón.   The political discourse of '¡No los queremos! ¡No los necesitamos!' and the intolerance that accompanied it had penetrated his imagination, both as a homosexual man and as a member of the generation that came of age as witnesses to what he described as inhumane treatment. Mariel also haunted Ramón through the ghost town that Santa Fe had become and through the disappearance of important people from his life. The lack of connectivity and the perceived impossibility of reconnection produced a sense of desperation and helplessness that was shrouded in uncertainty. Caught in a type of limbo between the spiritual communication with the dead and the material communication with the co-present, these figures from Ramón's past remained temporally immobile in his memory.

Ramón's need to reconnect with those friends who disappeared after Mariel was not grounded in a nostalgic desire to return to the past, or recreate the past in his present. Rather, he wanted to bring those figures from his past and insert them, in their current and updated form, into his present. For Ramón, the maintenance of personal

relationships was conveyed as paramount. Separation was detrimental to these relationships in that the affective ties were damaged, although not always broken, by the physical and psychological distance created between people. Emigration presented a particularly traumatic form of separation for Ramón, whether a matter of choice or not, because of the circumstances surrounding his formative experiences with the phenomenon and the manner with which memory around it had developed. From his mother's separation from her siblings to the vast emptiness left by Mariel, the meaning given to the absences, therefore, culminated in Ramón's broader understanding that emigration 'de alguna manera era malo'.

Emilio

Como cada quien la interprete, como cada quien lleve su dolor. ¿Duele? Sí duele. Duele en un lugar del cuerpo que no se toca… que está en nuestro interior. Pero están allí a modo de recuerdos. Están a modo de añoranza. Están a modo de deseo de muchas cosas. Quizás, para dar un abrazo en un momento determinado.

- Emilio, 4 February 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Emilio's Experience with Emigration

A young woman of humble beginnings, Emilio's mother had arrived in Havana in the late-1950s from a province in the interior of Cuba. After studying music and nursing, she got a job teaching adult education and met Emilio's birth father, who was one of her students. They married, but shortly after Emilio was born in 1962, his parents divorced and his father would later remarry a Spanish woman and move to Spain. 'En aquella época, a las personas que iban a salir del país, los mandaban para la zafra. Iban a la caña, a cortar caña', he commented without elaboration, 'él se fue alrededor de finales de los sesenta. Creo que fue 67, 68, más o menos'. From Spain, his father made the leap to the United States and settled in New York, where he established himself as a businessman and where he would live the rest of his life. Emilio had no memory of his father and the only connection he had to him was an uncle, his father's brother, whom Emilio would visit on occasion and whose wife would give him updates on his father whenever she could. This same aunt arranged the telephone call that would represent the only conversation Emilio ever had with his father. 'Al menos nos conocimos ¿no?' he noted, 'pero bueno, fue a los 24 años. El niño, el niño creció, no conoce a su padre'.

As an infant, Emilio was hospitalised with kidney problems and, during this time, his newly single mother met an Italian man who took it upon himself to look after her and Emilio. His mother became quite fond of this man, whom she would soon marry

and with whom she would have a second son, Emilio's brother, in 1966. This is the man Emilio would come to know as his father. 'Este era el que me sacaba al parque. Me cargaba en los hombros', he remembered, 'Y era mi papá'. Only a few years after his birth father had emigrated, however, in 1970, Emilio's stepfather would also leave Cuba with the goal of establishing himself in Mexico and then sending for Emilio, his mother and his brother to join him. Emilio remembered watching, at eight years old, as his second father, and only real father figure he had ever known, walked out the door: 'me recuerdo claramente el día de la noche que se fue, porque estábamos acostados y yo me desperté y lo vi'. In the end, his family was denied permission to leave Cuba because Emilio was over seven years old and considered to be of the age needed for future military service. Emilio's stepfather would never return, but he and Emilio's mother never divorced and he kept in touch through letters and gifts he would send to the boys until the day he died in 1987.

Over time and with self-reflection, Emilio said that he had come to better understand his emotions with regard to the absence of his fathers. Perhaps, he pondered, there was an unfulfilled need for a fatherly hug or spanking at some point in his life while growing up, or perhaps he had lacked male guidance as he entered into relationships with young women. Rather than being lived out with his father in daily life, these experiences were emotionally internalised. 'No fueron vividas, o vívidas, a través de…de lo que hubiera sido el amor de familia, la… la… la relación de padre e hijo en este caso que es mi situación', he reflected, 'Están vividas de esa forma, de esa añoranza'. Although his mother was always careful to portray a positive image of both his birth father and his stepfather, Emilio still had to confront their absence in his life on his own terms. He recalled an incident as a child in school when he was asked to provide information about his father and he responded that his father was dead.

¿Qué sucede? Que yo me quitaba de arriba tener que dar una respuesta. Pero, ¿qué iba a decir? ¿Qué puede implicar cuando el amiguito…cuando el amiguito que tenía al lado, o la amiguita, tenían papá? Yo no tenía papá. No tenía ninguno de los dos papás. Ni el progenitor, ni que me dio aquellos primeros años, aquellos Reyes Magos.

Emilio's mother took on the full responsibility of raising her two sons as best she could, as a single mother, and Emilio remembered his childhood as generally happy and fulfilling. If she had a little bit of money, his mother would take him and his brother to the beach, to the park, to parties, or to the cinema. 'Mi madre fue lo suficientemente madre', he clarified, 'No te puedo decir que haya sido, a pesar de todas estas cosas, un niño infeliz. No me tenía lástima. No nos tuvo lástima, ni mi mamá tampoco'. As an adult, Emilio eventually reached a point where he wanted to settle down and start a family, ideally consisting of a father, mother and two children, preferably boys. 'Yo quería aquello', he explained, 'Pero una cosa que te confieso. Era para que no vivieran mis hijos la misma situación emocional o ese dolor que yo llevé en toda mi infancia de no tener padre a su lado. Eso te lo digo de todo corazón. Cosa que no fue. Nunca'. Emilio divorced shortly after the birth of his first daughter, and at one point lived several hours drive away from her, but unlike both of his fathers, Emilio remained in Cuba and was able to maintain a close relationship with both of his daughters. 'Yo disfruté de mi hija, pero con aquella cosa que yo era el padre que estaba separado', he confessed, '¿Ves como ya el niño que tenía padre separado ahora era el padre que estaba separado de su hija?'

Woven into this family narrative of separation is another simultaneously developing narrative of friendship, which, although not pertaining to his biological family, would also become an intimate part of Emilio's experience with emigration. 'Tengo un concepto de amistad, no sé, tal vez un poco jodido', he admitted, highlighting that for him friendship was distinct from the popular notion in Cuba that 'el amigo es el

hermano que no es de la sangre'. Instead, Emilio said that he viewed friendship as a particular form of relating with those people in one's life that can be counted on at any time and in any situation, not out of any biological family obligation but simply because they wanted to be there. Among all the friends he had while growing up, one person who represented this vision of friendship was a young girl named Margarita. Emilio's friendship with Margarita began on the day that he volunteered to form a biology study group with her and another girl named Josefina. Both girls were Jehovah's Witnesses and for that reason, Emilio said, they were rejected by the rest of the students in the class and left without a group. 'Y en esa época eran muy mal vistos, ellos eran mal vistos, como Testigos de Jehová', he recalled 'y a mí aquello no me gustaba'. So, he spoke with the teacher and told her that he wanted to do his work with Margarita and Josefina and from that moment forward a friendship formed between the three classmates that Emilio recognised could have easily been confused for romance by the casual observer. 'Nunca hubo una diferencia, ni de mí con Josefina o con Margarita, o interés. Nunca hubo', he clarified, 'Pero éramos tres amiguitos'.

Over three or four years during the late-1970s, Emilio and Margarita cultivated and nurtured a relationship that he described as 'muy linda'. Considering the political culture in Cuba at the time, a friendship between Emilio, a member of the Unión de Jovénes Comunistas, and Margarita, a Jehovah's Witness, would seemingly have been conflictive. There were moments, he admitted, when their distinct ideologies would surface within the context of their relationship. 'En algún momento, Margarita, pues que creció en esa religión me decía, "yo quiero que tú te salves"', he remembered, 'Y yo jamás entendí que cosa era la salvación. Yo estaba salvado. Yo no lo miraba del punto de vista que ella lo miraba', Despite these differences, a genuine affinity, based on principles of mutual respect for personal beliefs and boundaries, allowed their affection to flourish and the acceptance of differences extended into the families of each. 'Todos

Testigos de Jehová y nunca en esa casa a mí me…me repudiaron, ni a ella se repudió en mi casa', he recalled. They remained in contact after finishing school and would often visit each other at their respective homes, although they no longer saw each other every day.

In light of his relationship with Margarita, Emilio paused to reflect on the experience of Cubans, such as himself, who have remained on the island over the years. 'Los que hemos quedado aquí hemos logrado, así que, milagros cubanos', he reflected, '¿Por qué te digo así? Porque en el año ochenta viene la…el famoso Mariel'. Although those who returned for their families at Mariel were mostly Cubans who had left during the heavily politicised generation of the 1960s and 1970s, Emilio noted that the sentimental motivations behind their actions were too often overlooked. 'Vinieron en el 80 aquí a reclamar su cariño, a reclamar su familia, a salvarlos entre comillas. ¿Por qué?' he remarked, 'Porque te hace falta tener a tus seres queridos. Porque son necesarios.' However, not everyone leaving through Mariel was reuniting with family abroad. Emilio claimed that the Cuban authorities 'vaciaron mucho el país', by 'proposing' the emigration of various social groups within the country's citizenry. Included in these groups were the Jehovah's Witnesses, and within that group was Margarita's family. 'De inesperadamente se apareció el MININT[20]', he said, recounting what she had explained to him later in letters, '"Ustedes están propuestos para que se vayan del país"…Y los expulsaron, vamos a decirlo así'.

Not every member of Margarita's family left Cuba at the same time and certain members never received that opportunity, producing a separation in the family, of parents from their children and brothers from their sisters. 'Claro que eso no le importa. El Estado no puede meterse en eso ¿no?' Emilio commented, 'El Estado está para atender la política, la economía, otro tipo de cosas. No para atender los sentimientos

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[20] MININT is the acronym used to refer to the Ministerio del Interior.

personales de cada quien'. As one of his closest friends, Margarita's departure was sudden for Emilio. One day in 1980, he went to Margarita's house for a visit only to find another family living there. He recounted his memory of that day when he discovered she had left Cuba:

> ¿Y qué sucedió? Que me fue a avisar. Me llamó. Yo estaba trabajando. Trabajaba por turnos, en una fábrica. Llegué. Mamá mi dio el recado. Y yo en ese momento no llamé, por alguna razón, después porque era muy tarde. Pasando al otro día, entonces le dije a mamá, 'voy a ir.' Y cuando fui que llego, me encuentro con que la casa está habitada por otras personas. Y me sale una señora y me dice, 'No esta casa, los que vivían aquí se fueron por el Mariel'. No me dijo los botaron por el Mariel. Esa no sabía lo que pasaba. 'Se fueron por el Mariel, y a mí me la dieron.' 'Pero, ¿Cómo señora? ¿Cuándo fue eso?' 'Ah yo no sé.' Y digo, pero nunca me dijo Margarita de que sí tenía gente afuera. A mí nunca Margarita me habló. Porque ya éramos grandes. Una cosa es cuando Margarita y yo estudiábamos que éramos más jóvenes. La cosa que ya éramos amigos de más tiempo. Nunca Margarita me impresionó a mi nada. Es más, yo ya en aquella época yo sentía esto, yo siempre quería irme, y todavía a estas alturas nunca me he ido, estoy loco por irme. Nunca salió el tema. Nunca me dijo Margarita que tenía nadie afuera, así que me quedé así. Y eso me llevó a una depresión que tuve que ir con un médico. Había perdido a mi amiga. En aquella época mi única amiga, porque lo que tenía eran amigos. Había perdido a mi hermana…Había perdido a alguien que en algún momento soñábamos por teléfono. En algún momento hacíamos ilusiones de edad. Y había intenciones lindas, de 'quiero que tú te salves.' ¿Te das cuenta?

From one day to the next, Emilio was suddenly confronted with the prospect that he would never see Margarita again and fell into a deep depression. He had already been through the loss of his two fathers to emigration and had gone through the mental and emotional process of not having them around. 'Entonces, ya año ochenta. Mariel. Otra cosa, otra situación más', he said. Nearly one year after Mariel, the opportunity to reconnect with Margarita presented itself to Emilio on the streets of Havana through a chance meeting with a man he knew to be a friend of her family. Although hesitant to trust Emilio at first, the man eventually gave him Margarita's address in the United States and, now with contact re-established, a flurry of correspondence began between the two. 'Margarita y yo nos escribíamos desesperados', he recalled. The letters took

between twenty to thirty days to arrive, and Emilio remembers writing one every week, which meant writing the next letter before receiving the response from the last one. As the years went by, however, the frequency of the letters waned, as Margarita began working, got married, had children and increasingly struggled to write in Spanish. At some point Margarita requested that he stop sending his letters to the home address because her husband had become jealous. 'Entonces, fui yo que decidí irme distanciando de aquello', he said, 'La recuerdo con mucho amor…De hecho yo tengo una foto que ella mandó en un cuadrito en mi casa y cuando llega una persona y me dice "¿y esa quién es?" Digo, "Es una hermana mía"'.

Emilio's only blood sibling, his younger brother, moved to the United States in 2009 and, like all of the separations Emilio has lived, it has been exacerbated by a feeling of impotence, related to the particular conditions surrounding Cuban emigration. 'Yo puedo decidir ahora ir a California y ir por Margarita', he asserted, 'Pero puedes estar seguro que a California no voy a llegar. ¿Por qué?' The political needs of the state, Emilio claimed, had not allowed loved ones to share their love on their own terms, according to their own affective needs. He recently wrote a letter to his brother, which was returned to him without explanation. 'Vaya no fui yo al Malecón a llevar la carta a mi hermano', he exclaimed, 'No me tiré en una lancha a ver a mi hermano. La puse por los términos legales. Y no llegó'. Emotions are important, Emilio said, and a person must cultivate, cleanse and care for them and although he may not have had the material mechanisms to do this, over time he developed his own, more private, mechanisms.

> De hecho, sí me doy cuenta de cosas que antes no veía, de justificaciones que antes no daba. Y reconozco la tristeza. Reconozco la soledad. No porque me sienta solo por estas cosas, estas no son las causas pero forman parte de la causa. Sí forman parte de la causa. Lo que he aprendido es vivir con ella. Sí. Y si no la veo más. Si no conocí a mi padre. Y quizás, mi hermano también tiene un caso, es un amiguito. Pero bueno, si al menos eso no se me da nunca, eso que tengo adentro está ahí vivo, y yo lo cultivo, y busco la forma de abrirlo, en silencio, en mi soledad, en mi silencio.

Whether family or friend, intimate or acquaintance, in his lifetime Emilio has lived the experience of being left by someone many times over. Whereas in the past he had struggled with it, he claimed it now gave him joy. Although once it was deemed a political problem in Cuba and is now labelled as an economic solution, as far as Emilio is concerned, once the step of leaving is taken, the emotional dynamics of separation are generated. 'Y, y los que están aquí son muy impotentes, muy amarrados', he added. Emilio had, in fact, been presented with the opportunity to emigrate in 2006, through the US visa lottery system known commonly in Cuba as the *bombo*, but the program was eliminated before his visa could be approved. In a drawer in his home in Havana, Emilio has his *bombo* letter and his passport tucked away, just in case that lost opportunity reappears. If he ever did get the chance to travel, let alone emigrate, Emilio said he would visit his father's grave in New York and his stepfather's grave in Mexico, to pay his respects, and then he would try and find Margarita. 'Es la intención de buscar esa otra parte que siempre ha existido con cariño, con amor…con deseos de…de reírnos, de conversar, de compartir', he said, before adding with a sense of certainty, 'Pero si algún día salgo, la busco. Y sé que lo voy a lograr. Sé que la encuentro'.

Absence in Emilio's Narrative

Emilio's life story of experience with emigration was divided into two separate and complete storylines that illustrated two distinct relationships and, therefore, two distinct manifestations of absence. He had very deliberately ordered his life story chronologically, but he had also very intentionally organised it according to distinct threads of experience. On the day of the interview, Emilio had brought along photographs, letters and cards to help him tell his story and even notified me of his narrative intentions before starting. 'Hoy voy a ordenarte la conversación', he told me.

First, he related the family story of the boy who grew up without a father figure, in its entirety. Then, he told a complete story of a friendship and the evolution of that friendship under conditions of separation. Using this strategy, Emilio narrated his experiences according to the unique dynamics of each personal relationship. In this way, Emilio's narrative was not so much focused on his experience with emigration, as it was on his relationships with these particular people from whom he was separated through a process of emigration. In fact, it was only at the end of his narrative that Emilio joined the two storylines together as elements of his broader process of coping with their absences and contemplating them in relation to his own future. The meaning given to each person's absence, therefore, was rendered through the specific memory associated with each separate relationship, rather than as an experience of emigration as a phenomenon.

Considering his narrative organisational strategy, the absences of Emilio's father and stepfather were logical places to begin. In addition to providing a brief family history and basic biographical information along the way, the family narrative established Emilio's relationship with emigration as interpersonal rather than political. Although both his father and his stepfather left Cuba during an era in which emigration was highly politicised, Emilio only briefly gestured to those conditions and never applied them to either his father or stepfather. Nor did he speculate regarding the motivation behind either man's decision to leave the country. Rather than to make a political statement or to produce a historical sketch of Cuban emigration, the purpose of Emilio's family narrative was to illustrate the impact that these departures and subsequent separations had on his own life.

The symbolic absence of a father figure and its formative impact on him was the main thread of Emilio's family-oriented storyline. Neither of his fathers had left a sufficient cache of memories for Emilio to engage with in order to maintain any degree

of relational presence with them, other than almost complete absence. His stepfather had kept in touch over the years and remained married to his mother, but because he had left when Emilio was so young, the impact of his separation from Emilio took the form of an absent father figure in general, rather than that of any one man in particular. Emilio associated the absence of a father figure with several memories from various periods in his life, including declaring in school that his father was dead and then imagining, as an adult, the ideal family for himself. His insistence that he never wanted his own children to suffer the pain he had of growing up without a father was discursively coupled with his subsequent separation as a father from his own daughters. Although he confessed that he was, in fact, very present in his daughters' lives, Emilio still attempted to tie his family history together through the narrative thread of the absent father.

After his family-oriented storyline had come to an end, Emilio announced the beginning of a new friendship-based storyline. He told the story of Emilio and Margarita, in which the historical moment of Mariel figured as the moment of their separation from each other. As Emilio told it, the significance of the Mariel boatlift was grounded in Margarita's separation from him, and the significance of that separation was found in the person Margarita was and what their relationship had meant to him. By putting Margarita at the centre, Emilio created a highly personalised narrative with a singular focus on a relationship grounded in mutual respect and platonic affection. In contrast to his absent fathers, Emilio had plenty of memories through which to make Margarita's absence a presence in his everyday life. In addition to memories of her presence in Cuba, Emilio maintained her presence in his life through the letters they exchanged for nearly two decades, before terminating communication because of her jealous husband. Over the years, he had archived the letters and photographs, some of which he shared with me after the interview. In his home, Emilio had commemorated Margarita's absence with a framed photograph of her and identified her as his sister to

anyone who asked. This maintenance of Emilio's memory added insight into his perceptions of Margarita absence, through his actions rather than simply what he conveyed with words. His words, however, were also quite revealing in terms of how he remembered the sudden disappearance of his close friend in 1980.

In keeping with his personalised style, Emilio's narration of Margarita's departure gave the sensation much like that of a deportation. 'Y los expulsaron, vamos a decirlo así', clearly conveyed his view that her emigration was nothing less than a forced removal from her native country. The role played by the Cuban state in his separation from Margarita was quite clear and this memory of an involuntary exit from Cuba was also present in Margarita's letters to him. In fact, Emilio referenced Margarita's first letter to him in order to explain how the Cuban government had forced her family to leave the country because they were Jehovah's Witnesses. However, it is not insignificant that Emilio never once referred to the revolution in his explanation, thus distancing himself from the politicised discourses surrounding emigration during the previous generations.

On the other hand, the insinuation on Emilio's part that the state was not concerned with the affective needs of its citizens did serve, both as an indictment of the Cuban government's handling of Mariel and as a declaration of his own concept of *patria*. During the recorded interview, but after the narration of his biographical life story, Emilio mentioned that his mother used to borrow a phrase from his stepfather, who used to say that a man's *patria* was where he felt loved, not where he was born. Similarly, Emilio advocated for a concept of *patria* consisting, not of allegiance to a national project, but of affective bonds to the environment one inhabited and to the people with whom one shared that environment. Margarita was one of the principal people who made up Emilio's homeland environment and that disconnection from an

important element of his personalised *patria* was a foundational dimension of his narration.

Much like his experience with friendship, Emilio's experience with emigration had consisted, not in a division or rupture in his relationships, but rather in creating another manner of relating to one another. As a child, he had to learn to cope with the absence of a father figure through the cultivation of an internalised sense of loss and longing. As he grew older and was once again confronted with an affective separation in the form of Margarita, Emilio channelled his emotions into his letter writing. Now, as even the letters he has sent to his brother in the US are getting sent back to him, he has the hope that he will someday travel and reconnect, in one form or another, with those from whom he has been separated all these years. Until that time, however, in the same place within himself that he had found so much pain, Emilio has found solace in his own solitude and silence.

Conclusion

More than any other single historic moment in Cuba since January 1, 1959, the boatlift at Mariel signified a dramatic rupture in Cuban society. The exodus at Mariel was not the same in scale or character as the emigrations of the 1960s and 1970s, nor was the experience of emigration that it generated. Both those who left at Mariel and those who watched them leave had lived extensively, if not exclusively, within the Cuban revolutionary system. They also were the first Cubans to live through successive generations of massive emigration from Cuba. The public *actos de repudio* [acts of repudiation] described by Ramón and the sense of deportation of Jehovah's Witnesses described by Emilio left many who experienced this second generation of Cuban emigration struggling to reconcile what they were witnessing every day with the revolutionary principles they had been taught since birth.

The stories of Ramón and Emilio provide examples of the sociocultural implications of successive generations of post-1959 Cuban emigration for Cubans living on the island. Unlike Helena and Alba, their experiences were not oriented exclusively around the rupture of the revolution. Similar to Helena and Alba, however, Ramón and Emilio gave meaning to their experiences, as Turner (1986) suggested, by connecting culture and language from the past together with expectations, feelings, and desires about the present moment. In the case of Ramón, much of his emotional response to the separations associated with emigration derived from a lifetime of loss and longing dating from his experience with his mother's family from the 1960s to the present day. Through this biographical orientation of experience, Ramón echoed Hess's understanding of distance as a 'disruption of an ongoing relationships and interconnections' (Hess, 2002: 664). Socially transformative elements of haunting, as proposed by Gordon (1997), were evident in Ramón's descriptions of disappearances and political aggressions surrounding Mariel as well as in his memories of his mother's

struggles with the absence of her siblings. In the case of Emilio, Margarita's sudden departure at Mariel 'es otra cosa más', that is piled on top of the absences of his two fathers that he had been coping with his entire life. Much more than Ramón, Emilio's biographical orientation engaged with the nationalist discourses in relation to emigration. However, unlike Helena and Alba, Emilio's *patria* resembled the 'moveable tent' described by O'Reilly Herrera (2011: 13) and attempted to discursively manoeuvre within the space between Clifford's (1994) established borders of diaspora: the Cuban homeland and the Cuban state.

Ramón and Emilio may not have been old enough to remember the boatlift at Camarioca in 1968, but childhood experiences during that period created a foundational layer for the development of their imagination regarding emigration. No longer confined to the first generation, the experiences and thoughts of emigration had been transmitted from one generation to another, and so too had legacy of the absences it produced. Cultural and biographical continuity had been formed, as Breckner (2003) suggested, out of discontinuity. Confirming Mannheim's social generation theory, emigration had become an integral part of their life stories, and of Cuban society and culture beyond being the result of the shockwaves produced by the revolution of 1959. In the next chapter, narratives from the third generation of post-1959 Cuban emigration will further challenge the rigid nationalisms and explore the social relationships of separation and absence amid the precarious conditions of the Special Period crisis.

Chapter 6: Third Generation of Non-migrant Cuban Experiences

Introduction

Perhaps more than any other period since the early 1960s, the Special Period crisis of the 1990s fundamentally altered the political and social relationship between revolutionary and emigration processes in Cuban society. Cubans who had been born in the Soviet-influenced Cuba of the 1970s and had experienced the Mariel exodus of 1980 as young children were coming of age during the Special Period the early to mid-1990s. Their memories of the Cuba of their childhood contrasted sharply with the harsh realities of economic crisis that they were living daily as young adults. Reforms opened up Cuba to foreign investment and tourism, the dollar was decriminalised, emigration increased, and ties were strengthened with the Cuban community abroad. In addition to serving as strategies to combat material shortages, these transnational processes cultivated a third generation of emigration experience, distinct from those that had come before it.

The gravity of the economic crisis facilitated, almost obligated, a strengthening of transnational ties and the imagined borders of the Cuban nation were necessarily extended beyond the territorial limits of the island. The Special Period produced a social rupture in everyday life that radically altered how Cubans understood and related to the world beyond Cuba, and to the Cubans abroad from whom they were separated. The experience of crisis disarticulated and reconfigured personal and collective narratives that had provided coherence to daily life and personal relations. New emphasis was placed on transnational networks, specifically the family abroad, and on material consumption. As a result, a more heterogeneous set of cultural influences also emerged. This chapter explores personal narratives from this third generation of emigration in an attempt to understand them in the context of the broader Cuban social and cultural narratives.

Milagros

Es muy duro para una madre que ya ha criado sus hijos siempre con uno ¿no?

- Milagros, 22 February 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Milagros's experience with emigration

With their emigration in 1997, Milagros was separated from her only daughter and her grandson, both of whom had lived in the same house with her up to that point. 'Se casó y se fue para Alemania', she described, 'Y se llevó al nieto mío. Y eso me causó a mí, que el niño vivía aquí conmigo, y me quedé muy deprimida'. Milagros and her daughter had remained in constant communication since she left, and her daughter had visited Cuba nearly every year. Still, as a mother, she found the separation difficult: 'Es muy duro para una madre que ya ha criado sus hijos siempre con uno ¿no?' Upper-class Cuban families, she noted, traditionally had sent their children abroad to study, while 'los pobres siempre vivimos con nuestros hijos en la casa'. Poverty, she insisted, had necessarily produced a form of close-quartered living, where no privacy existed between parents and children. At times, Milagros and her family had all lived in one room together, while on other occasions she and her husband had shared one room and their two children had shared another. When her daughter left Cuba, Milagros grappled with the emotions of a mother who suddenly found herself without the daily intimacy of her child and grandchild.

> Entonces de momento romperse eso, entra una soledad tan grande. Uno siente una soledad tan grande. Cuando mi hija se me fue que nada más de ver un juguete de mi nieto, una foto, me mandaban las fotos, yo lloraba. Cuando me llamaba por teléfono, casi no podía ni hablar porque me emocionaba tanto, se me olvidaba, y ella decía, '¡Coge un papel y escribe lo que me quieras preguntar mami! Eh…lo que me quieres decir para que no se te olvide.' Porque ya después tenía que esperar a que me volviera a llamar por teléfono. Ya llamadas eran tan caras.

Milagros expressed joy that her daughter's family was doing well, but also recognised the simultaneous sadness that she felt because she could not see them when she pleased. At sixty-three years old and living on a government pension, she was entirely dependent upon them either travelling to Cuba or covering the costs of her trip to Germany, which assumed that they would financially be in a position to do so. In addition, at her age, Milagros said, the bureaucratic process of obtaining permission to travel outside Cuba had become very stressful. She had to receive a *carta de invitación* from her daughter and obtain medical insurance in Germany before she could solicit the exit permit and visa. She did get the chance to travel to Germany once, in the year 2000, to help with the birth of her granddaughter, but was uncertain of when, or if, another trip would ever be realised. Her daughter's family used to travel to Cuba every year, but with an economic crisis in Europe and with two children, it was no longer feasible to make the trip from Germany every year. 'Yo por mi propia cuenta, yo pudiera decir cada seis meses voy a Alemania y veo a mi hija', she declared, 'No sé, ¿con qué, pero con qué dinero yo voy a viajar?'

As a retired office worker, Milagros said that she received a pension of 240 Cuban Pesos, or the equivalent of about 10 CUC[21], each month. Because of the dual currency in Cuba, the pension that Milagros gets every month in *moneda nacional* [Cuban Pesos] cannot be used to make all of her necessary purchases. In this way, the foreign currency sent by her daughter each month had, according to Milagros, allowed her to survive. 'No me alcanza ni para comer. Si mi hija no me ayuda, me muero de hambre', she stated flatly. For these same economic reasons, her husband had engaged in black market activities to help make ends meet, although it is not as if he robbed banks, she insisted. Her son, who still lives in Cuba, also worked, but he had two children and his salary was too low to provide for his entire family, so the money sent

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[21] CUC = Convertible Cuban Peso, the Cuban exchange currency for any foreign currency. For example, Milagros' daughter sends her remittances in EUROs that are converted into CUC before Milagros can spend them in Cuba. There are shops in Cuba that sell items exclusively in this CUC currency.

from Germany was used to resolve the financial shortfalls of both households. Milagros recognised the essential contribution of her migrant daughter toward her family's welfare in Cuba: 'Me ayuda resolver el problema. Mi problema. Es la parte positiva de que está lejos. Ellos se preocupan por mí también…que saben que…como es esto, porque ella vivió aquí'.

Now forty years old, Milagros's daughter had come of age amidst conditions of scarcity of the Special Period, in which illicit activities became a mode of daily survival. Still today, Milagros claimed, 'Todo el mundo roba'. She clarified that she was not referring to street theft, but rather goods that would be stolen from the workplace and then re-sold by the same workers who stole them. For example, those who worked in cigar factories would steal cigars and sell them on the street for profit. In her case, Milagros worked in an office, which meant that she used to steal paper. 'Papel para hacer las cartas a mi hija. Papel bonito. Papel bueno', she remembered, 'así para vendérselo a la gente que hacían tesis de grado, que llevan muchas hojas'.

Milagros believed that many years of scarcity and the inability to resolve economic problems through legal means had driven many Cubans to leave the country by any means they could find. 'Ese es el principal motivo de emigración en Cuba. La gente no, la gente se cansa', she claimed. With the perception of no viable civil outlet for their frustrations, such as protesting in the street, many people have tolerated the hardships. Others have left Cuba out of desperation, such as the nineteen-year-old woman from the apartment above Milagros who left on a raft and died at sea. 'Y esa señora se ha quedado con un trauma', she noted of the girl's surviving grandmother, 'dice, "yo tengo la esperanza que ella esté en algún lugar y que…no me haya podido comunicar con ella". Pero eso es…ella se ha… ella misma se ha hecho esa idea para no sufrir'.

At one point, Milagros's nephew had declared his intention to leave Cuba as a balsero and she confronted him, hysterical and worried. 'Y yo le dije a mi sobrino, "¡Ni se te ocurra! ¡Ni se te ocurra irte en una balsa!"' she recalled. In the end, her nephew left Cuba safely, although his migration was unauthorised, and his journey took several twists and turns along the way. For four years during the 1980s, he had lived in Czechoslovakia, as part of an official work-study program that certified him in the production of industrial grade tires for airplanes and tractors. Dedicated to the cause of communism, he returned to Cuba after his four-year apprenticeship with the idea of caring for his invalid mother and contributing his skills to the political project of the revolution. 'Creyó que aquí esto era igual que allá en Checoslovakia', commented Milagros, 'parece que él se hizo esa idea que había alguna mejoría. Empezó a mortificarse'. Despite his disappointment with the conditions in Cuba, her nephew stayed for several years but eventually became restless. 'Entonces, ahí, empezó ahí, pero le entró aquella nostalgia de querer irse otra vez', she explained. Through a network of contacts both on and off the island, in 2004 her nephew managed to get a *carta de invitación* to travel to the Netherlands and from there he went to Spain, where he bought a false Spanish passport that allowed him to travel to the United States. Once in a US airport, he hid in a bathroom before passing through immigration and customs, disposed of the Spanish passport, took out his Cuban passport, walked out of the bathroom, and invoked the Cuban Adjustment Act to enter the United States.

Although lacking the drama of her nephew's story, the emigration of her daughter was no less dramatic an event for Milagros. A friend had invited her daughter to Varadero, a tourist resort just outside Havana, and during her stay there she met a young German man who was visiting Cuba on vacation. 'Ella lo conoció como un fin de semana', Milagros described, 'El muchacho ya se iba ya. Entonces se cogieron la dirección para seguir en contacto ¿no? Y se empezaron a escribir'. This weekend

encounter turned into six months of correspondence, and eventually into a return visit to Cuba for the young German. 'Le escribe que si él podía venir a conocer a…a su familia', she explained, 'y yo le dije a mi hija que sí. Entonces vino. Me conoció a mí, a mi esposo, y todo eso'. The young man then solicited a *carta de invitación* in order that Milagros's daughter could go to Germany to meet his parents and it was there that the two were engaged to be married. From Germany, her daughter called Milagros with the news and received her mother's blessing to get married there rather than in Cuba. Although unable to attend her daughter's wedding, Milagros recounted the events as if she had been there. 'Se casaron. El padre. La madre. Los hermanos. Familiar', she described, 'Después fueron a un restaurant, lo… unas cuantas personas que habían invitado'.

Aside from the one occasion that she travelled to Germany for the birth of her granddaughter, Milagros had lived fourteen years of intimate family moments, such as her daughter's wedding, from a distance. In her absence, however, Milagros celebrated all of her daughter's birthdays for many years as if she were there in Cuba, complete with cake: 'Compraba un keik.[22] "¡Hoy es el cumpleaños de mi hija! ¡Mira, vamos a poner este keik a salud de ella!"' Milagros discontinued this tradition once she began studying to become a Jehovah's Witness, a religion that does not celebrate birthdays. Her daughter, however, still called Cuba every year on the day of her own birthday as well as on the day of Milagros's birthday and of her father and brother. This tradition was as much sentimental on the part of her daughter as it was practical on the part of Milagros. 'Como es más económico que ella me llame a mí y no yo a ella, si ¿con qué dinero voy a pagar yo una llamada pa'allá?' she insisted.

Similarly, Milagros used to write letters to her daughter two or even three times a week, but she had now become completely reliant on the internal email accounts of

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[22] This is the phonetic spelling of Milagros' pronunciation of the English word 'cake', which is the word commonly used in Cuba to refer to a cake.

friends in order to correspond with her daughter. 'Mi hija siempre me mantenía al tanto por cartas', she explained, 'Y antes eran cartas escritas a mano, no como ahora que, es, me manda correos electrónicos a casa de gente que tiene'. In her apartment, Milagros had boxes of letters that she had saved over the fourteen years since her daughter had moved to Germany, but the entire experience of correspondence changed for Milagros with email. Now, she relied on her son's wife, who had a printer, to print the emails for her to read. These emails, however, were usually addressed directly to the son's wife rather than to Milagros and the content tended to be informative rather than expressive. 'Eh… se, eh… se comunica uno de otra forma', she lamented, 'Que no, vaya, no queda el eso que tú te quedas con una carta y la puedes volver a leer. Porque como yo no tengo correo, ¿entiendes?'

At the very end of our hour-long conversation, I asked Milagros to describe how her life had changed since her daughter left. 'He mejorado. Porque tengo cosas que ni soñar yo he podido tener', she replied and then led me into her kitchen, 'Tengo refrigerador ya de doble temperatura. Tengo comida. ¡Mira!' She rummaged around inside her fridge and freezer to show me the food she has in it. '¡Pollo!' she exclaimed as she pulled out a package of frozen chicken, '¡Pero de la shopping! ¡Mira de la shopping!' She then began to do an inventory of all the appliances that her daughter and her nephew had sent her. 'Tengo microwave. Olla eléctrica. Tengo esto para el café. A moler café', Milagros said, letting out an excited laugh, before later adding to the list a water purifier, a blender, cake moulds, pots and pans, and a food processer. While she demonstrated to me how the food processor operated, Milagros casually commented, 'Aquí yo soy privilegiada. ¿No es así?' She then proceeded to explain how the water pitcher produced the same purified water as the bottled water sold in the foreign currency shops, known as *la shopping*. At this moment, her 73 year-old friend Violeta,

who had been listening to the entire interview, light-heartedly remarked, 'Es decir te has beneficiado de que tu hija se fue'.

Absence in Milagros's narrative

In many respects, Milagros's experience with emigration would appear to be a stereotypical Special Period narrative and an ideal representation of the contemporary transnational Cuban family. Milagros openly admitted that she was well attended to materially and emotionally by her daughter and her daughter's family in Germany. Monthly remittances and the appliances in her kitchen were testament to how her daughter's absence had been materially compensated in her daily life. Yearly visits to Cuba by her daughter's family had, until recently, been the norm and communication between them had always been regular. However, the absence of the everyday intimacy that her daughter's emigration had represented was given presence through this very compensation. Milagros's separation from her daughter and her understanding of Cuban emigration were both expressed in terms of material conditions and the limitations of those conditions. This relationship between the material and the emotional provided the underlying meaning to her experience with emigration and was made visible throughout the narrative organisation of that experience.

Rather than ordering her experience chronologically, Milagros oriented her narrative thematically through descriptions of what was significant to her about her daughter's emigration. The emphasis on her grandson having lived with her and the depression his departure caused opened the door for a commentary on the psychological and emotional impact of the separation. Told from the perspective of a mother and framed in terms of class, Milagros laid out her case for why physical distance produced such a traumatic experience for Cuban families such as hers. Her description of family

living among Cuba's poor linked the material conditions of poverty to the emotional conditions of family separation. Throughout her entire story, Milagros highlighted the economic factors that drove Cuban emigration. However, the same material conditions of poverty that motivated people to leave Cuba also obligated a particular corporeal organisation of its inhabitants that in turn produced a family culture of almost invasive intimacy. This communion, cultivated among people sharing close living quarters, was no longer possible when her daughter left Cuba and it was this absence of everyday intimacy that Milagros narrated.

Emigration had disrupted the intimate daily confines of Milagros's relationship with her daughter and thus produced a feeling of solitude: 'Entonces de momento romperse eso, entra una soledad tan grande'. Her emotional response to this solitude manifested in expressions of impotence. Although the sound of her daughter's voice no longer left her crying hysterically, unable to articulate her thoughts, Milagros did admit to a certain sense of helplessness. The emotional difficulties of communication were compounded by the material difficulties of communication. She relied on her daughter to call her because she lacked the means to do so herself. Likewise, she was completely dependent upon others in order to read messages sent by email, a communication technology that her daughter used exclusively but from which Milagros had been marginalised. Furthermore, any possibility of physical co-presence was not only dependent on her daughter's ability either to travel to Cuba or finance a trip for Milagros to Germany, which was also subject to the discretion of the state granting her permission to travel. Limitations on Milagros's ability to engage independently with her daughter had left her feeling powerless to control the conditions or outcomes of their separation.

For Milagros, the limitations on her daily life had caused a sense of impotence in her relationship with her daughter that she then translated this into the broader context of Cuban society. The material conditions that she and other Cubans confronted on a daily

basis, such as shortages, low salaries, prohibitive costs for goods and services and the dual economy, engendered a profound sense of desperation and stress that had an effect on their imaginations. Milagros proclaimed weariness ['la gente se cansa'] among the Cuban population as the primary motivation for emigration and, in doing so, connected the material and social limitations of life in Cuba with the psychological state of the people who lived that life. The story of her nephew served as an illustration of the relationship between the imagination, material conditions and emigration. She depicted a young communist, who had once been eager to serve the revolution but whose disillusionment with conditions in his country had driven him to take extreme measures in order to change his circumstances. He had lived in Czechoslovakia and Milagros conveyed a perception on the part of her nephew that the conditions he found upon returning home had not lived up to his expectations. Importantly, he had returned to Cuba during the initial stages of the Special Period crisis, which was characterised by material scarcity. As Milagros told it, her nephew became so disillusioned that he considered risking his life at sea. In this way, the sense of impotence and desperation that motivated emigration was narratively linked to the corporeal and psychological trauma of that experience, for both those who leave and for those who stay. For example, bodies of *balseros* materialised in her narrative in the form of the death of a young woman, whom Milagros had known personally. Rather than suffer with the idea that her granddaughter had drowned at sea, the young woman's grandmother had explained her disappearance through her own imagination as an inability to communicate.

In addition to the emails and phone calls, Milagros had negotiated the transnational intimacy with her daughter through the practice of imagination, cultivating her presence through material representations of her absence. Birthday cakes and boxes of handwritten letters were material manifestations of her daughter that articulated

Milagros sentimentally with her absence, in that present moment and in that present space. On the other hand, remittances and the array of kitchen appliances served as material representations of her daughter's contribution to Milagros's well-being and in this way served to compensate for the lack of everyday intimacy. As she was financially dependent on her daughter, their separation had become a vehicle for her survival that could only be provided by virtue of her daughter living in Europe, far away from her. In this way, the financial compensation provided by her daughter's absence necessarily represented some sort of consolation, or perhaps justification, for Milagros: 'Es la parte positiva de que está lejos'. In fact, the material compensation of a coffee grinder was one of the few emotional coping strategies available to Milagros on a daily basis, considering the limitations of her own conditions. Having consumer products that she could never have dreamed of before provided some relief to the sense of powerlessness that had surrounded the separation from her daughter and that had characterised daily life in Cuba.

Throughout her biographical account, Milagros reflected a tension between emotional needs and material limitations that characterised experiences with emigration from the Special Period. Her daughter's emigration, and Cuban emigration in general, were understood in terms of economic conditions, but also in terms of the human relationship with those conditions. The emotional response to being separated from her daughter and her grandson could not be isolated from the justifications for their departure and the various compensations for their absence. However, just as her narration conveyed a political message at times without being explicitly politicised, it articulated her experience in material terms without being entirely materialistic. Emigration had deprived her of daily intimacy and affection while simultaneously providing her with the daily alimentation needed to alleviate material scarcity. The balance of material and emotional relationships with her daughter's absence, and with

emigration, was evident at the beginning and ending of the interview. At the beginning, when I asked her to tell me about her experience with emigration, she responded by relating the depression she had suffered due to the separation from her daughter and grandson.   At the end, when I asked her what had changed in her life since her daughter's departure, Milagros replied very directly that her life had improved and proceeded to show me her stock of food and the array of new kitchen appliances her daughter had sent.

Elisa

Los cubanos tenemos un dicho que dice que 'se tomó la Coca-Cola del olvido.' No se la tomó completa. No se olvidó completo porque de vez en cuando él hace su ayudita. Muy de vez en cuando. Él hace su llamada. Muy de vez en cuando.

- Elisa, 22 February 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Elisa's experience with emigration

Upon my arrival at her home in the Plaza neighbourhood of Havana, Elisa revealed that she had arranged the interview to be with her 84-year-old mother instead of with her. Due to her mother's deteriorated hearing and speech abilities, however, the 40-year-old Elisa instructed me to ask very direct, unambiguous questions. To help overcome the unintelligible responses of her mother, Elisa began to intervene in the questioning and interpret the answers. At one point, I asked her mother about how it had felt to be separated from her son Samuel, who has lived in the US since 1994. In order to elicit a response from her mother, Elisa feigned a faulty memory. '¿Cómo era antes Samuel aquí? No me acuerdo bien', she asked, '¿Cómo era? Antes. ¿Te acuerdas?' Elisa waited a few seconds before reminding her mother of how it used to be, of how things had changed, and of how that might have made her mother feel. 'Todos los fines de semana y comíamos. Que ya no', she noted, 'Después de eso no. Todo eso cambió. Ahora, llama cuando se acuerda. Y por supuesto eso tiene que haberte dolido ¿No? Muchos años'.

After ten minutes of prompting her mother through the interview to no avail, Elisa suddenly switched the focus of the conversation. 'A mí me llegó mi salida', she said, getting up from the sofa and disappearing down the hall. She returned a few minutes later with a letter that the United States government had sent notifying her that she had been selected for the US visa lottery program, commonly known in Cuba as the *bombo*. 'Un buen día se me para una moto ahí', she recalled, '"¿Fulana de tal? Toma".

Y digo, "¿y eso qué cosa es?" Dice, "No, que te ganaste el bombo". Yo dije, "¿Qué bombo?"' Elisa had never registered herself for the visa lottery, but in 1996 the father of her son had entered both of their names without her knowledge. On January 19, 2007 she received the notification that she was eligible for a migrant visa to the United States. Elisa called her brother Samuel in Miami to ask him to loan her the money for the visas and travel expenses. 'Y le dije que yo quería que me prestara el dinero y cuando llegara allá y yo trabajaba se lo devolvía, se suponía con intereses si quería', she explained, 'Me dijo que sí, que no había problema'. The provisions of the US visa lottery program allowed Elisa to include all the family members in her household in her application, at a cost of around one thousand dollars for each visa. Her brother, who Elisa recognised was not wealthy, sent her enough money for four people, but she then reminded him one thousand dollars more was needed for their elderly mother. 'Eso fue la bombita', she recalled of his reaction, '"¿A mami? Porque mami aquí es una carga. Mami aquí vale muy cara ¿entiendes?"' Elisa responded that she was not going to leave her mother behind in Cuba.

> Fin de la historia. No se le manda el dinero. No se le manda el dinero. Porque un entierro cuesta muy caro. ¿Qué si tuvieras tantos años separado de tu madre y tienes la posibilidad de los dos, de esa que te dio la vida al lado tuyo, tú no la traes? Entonces te das cuenta de como cambia la mentalidad de las personas cuando hay una separación tan abrupta de este tipo. O sea, en Cuba no era así.

Samuel's unwillingness to pay for a visa for their elderly mother revealed, for Elisa, just how much he had changed since his emigration and to what extent his departure had represented a rupture in family unity. 'Es como que se rompió la familia', she declared, 'Ese pedazo de la familia se, se fue. Se fue. Completo. Literalmente'. There are Cuban families, she noted, that had maintained contact at a distance, but that was not the case in her family. 'Los cubanos tenemos un dicho que dice que "se tomó la Coca-Cola del olvido"', she said with a laugh. Samuel hadn't entirely forgotten about

them, she clarified, but their mother's efforts in raising and educating him had been reduced to the value of a yearly phone call and occasional money or medicines. 'Hace que la familia, esta separación que hace que la familia aquí se resienta contra la familia de allá', she commented. She mentioned that foreign friends had sent packages over the years with no particular motivation other than a sincere concern for her well-being. These gestures had been very significant to Elisa, particularly in contrast to her brother's lack of reciprocity. 'Bueno si yo tengo un hermano en Estados Unidos. ¿No puede hacer lo mismo que hace esta muchacha o este muchacho?' she contemplated, 'Y ese sí vivió en Cuba. Y ese sí sabe lo que pasa en Cuba'.

Elisa claimed that disengagement by Cuban migrants from their families back home, as experienced in her family with Samuel, can be found all across contemporary Cuban society. 'Casos como este te vas a encontrar por mil', she affirmed, 'Hay muchos cubanos que se van y se olvidan de que tienen familia en Cuba. Simplemente deja de existir la familia cubana'. This tendency to forget about the family back in Cuba was particularly prevalent in the case of Cubans who migrate to the United States, where the separation represented that of individuals but also that of two countries. 'Los que se van para Estados Unidos, pierden la familia en Cuba', she asserted. Cubans are very family-oriented people, she said, and because in Cuba the concept of family extended beyond the parents and their children to second cousins and great uncles as well, to remove a piece of that family is to break apart the entire family. Merely days before our meeting, Elisa had received a message from an aunt and uncle who lived in the United States saying that they were thinking of visiting Cuba in August. 'Pero es que todos los años es agosto. Todos los años. En el mensajito. Dicen lo mismo', she said dismissively, 'Ellos no han venido nunca'. She then reflected on the fact that in addition to never calling and not economically helping the family in Cuba, her brother had only visited once in the sixteen years since he had left. The distance between them was not merely physical.

'Pero la separación es muy grande. La distancia es muy grande', she said, 'No solamente la distancia de largo sino distancia de formas de vivir. Es diferente. Por completo'.

The perception that while living in the United States, Samuel had become emotionally removed from his family in Cuba and in some ways had forgotten about them produced a particularly negative dynamic around his absence. For example, Samuel was no longer consulted on decisions concerning the family and when he was mentioned in conversation it was always with a touch of resentment. 'Cuando se habla es para decir "¡No jodas! Con lo bien que está allá y yo aquí pasando hambre"', she described, 'Para hablar basura. Nadie, "¡Ay pobrecito! ¡Cómo lo extraño!" No'. In contrast, Elisa remembered that while Samuel lived in Cuba, he was as an integral and conscientious member of their very tight-knit family. They would all gather for meals every weekend, and important celebrations, such as birthdays, often times took place in Samuel's house. Even when he lived across town, he was always around their parents' house and was always taken into consideration by the rest of the family. 'Siempre hubo cariño', she remembered, 'Siempre estaba el pedacito de dulce que es de Samuel'. This close family connection made it all the more difficult when, in 1994, Samuel and his wife decided to move with their two sons to the United States, through the family reunification provision, to reunite with his wife's family. Elisa recalls the day they left: 'El 9 de febrero de 1994. Eso fue durísimo en el aeropuerto. Durísimo. Porque no se iba solamente él. Se iba él, la esposa, los dos niños chiquitos. Fue muy duro. Muy duro'.

During the first several years after emigrating, Samuel would buy international phone cards and call his family in Cuba every two weeks, but as the years passed, the calls became less and less frequent. 'Y ahora una vez al año', Elisa noted, adding that because their mother's birthday and Mother's Day both happen to fall in the month of May, he would call her on only one of those days but never both. Recently, Elisa had received a package from her brother weighing thirteen pounds that had the appearances

of him emptying out his spice cupboard and mailing it to her. 'Dije "¡Coño! Se volvieron locos Se enfermaron. Se sienten mal', she recalled of her reaction, 'Porque trece libras es trece libras ¿no?' Included in the package was a jar of salt, six soup packets, a jar of cumin, a can of beans, a jar of garlic, a jar of onions, three jars of tiny hot dogs in sauce, one box of instant mashed potatoes, and three cans of tomato sauce. After receiving the package, Elisa wrote to Samuel: '"Gracias. Ahora cuando puedas mándame con que se…que es lo que tengo que sazonar, porque me mandaste sazón. Ahora mándame cuando tú puedas lo que hay que sazonar"'. She clarified that although she remained grateful, it would have been more meaningful had he sent twenty dollars, which would represent another salary for the family and would actually resolve some of the family's day-to-day issues. Elisa viewed such gestures from Samuel and such reactions from herself as evidence that certain ties within the family had broken as a result of his emigration. 'Entre la familia se rompió algo', she affirmed, 'de que te expresas de esta forma así de alguien que siempre estuvo tan allegado a ti y tan dentro de la familia es porque algo se rompió'.

In terms of biological generations, Samuel was not Elisa's brother, but her uncle. However, for Elisa, the relational and emotional bond within the family had always transcended the biological category of generation: 'La relación biológica es mi tío. Ahora la relación sentimental es mi hermano'. Similarly, the woman she called mother was her biological grandmother. Her biological grandparents had three sons. Elisa's father was the oldest, followed by Samuel and his twin brother. Elisa was raised by her grandparents as a daughter and was treated as a sister by her father and her uncles. When Elisa's biological father [Samuel's biological brother] was hospitalised and had to have an operation, Samuel never called to check up on his brother's condition. '¿Ves a lo que me refiero?' she exclaimed, 'No es la acción sólo de mandar el dinero, de mandar la comida. No. Es la acción de…de "Mi hermano, ¿cómo saliste de la operación?" Nada

más que eso ya'. Her father's operation, or his failure to call when their mother became ill and was hospitalised, represented the dramatic changes in Samuel and in his relationship to the family and were the moments when his absence was most noticeable. 'O sea, ya de no enterarse de lo que pasa en la familia. Ya deja de participar en los asuntos de familia', she noted. Elisa had mentioned to Samuel on several occasions how she felt about his lack of participation in the family, to which he always responded that he did not have any time because he was too busy working. 'Para ayudar la familia no es. Evidentemente', she concluded.

Elisa glanced back at the *bombo* and began to replay in her mind the exchange with Samuel about taking their mother with her to the United States. She remembered that he had told her, '"Aquí los viejos molestan. Estorban."' To this comment Elisa replied that she did not consider their mother a nuisance and that if that was his position then she would prefer to stay in Cuba with her mother. 'Lo que soy hoy, se lo debo a ella', she added, 'Sería muy injusto de mi parte dejarla'. She had assumed that all of her siblings thought as she did about their mother, but Samuel's intransigent attitude had proven her wrong. Without Samuel's support, Elisa was incapable of getting enough money for the visas and living expenses upon arrival in the US and so the plan to emigrate was put on hold indefinitely.

Receiving the *bombo* had provoked in Elisa many conflicting emotions in relation to the decision to emigrate. She felt a sense of euphoria because of the possibilities that emigrating represented for her and her children, while at the same time she felt the fear of leaving the known for the unknown and of trading security for insecurity. In Cuba, she took comfort in the knowledge that her children would always have a roof over their head and food on their plates. There was also little violence in Cuba compared to other countries, she said, citing a friend of her son's who moved to Spain and could not leave her house to play in the street because of the danger. She also

recognised that once the decision to leave was made, she would have had to give up her house and it would have been extremely difficult for her to return to Cuba if things did not work out in the US, 'Para tú poder virar a vivir es un trámite Maquiavélico', she declared.

In the *bombo,* Elisa also saw the opportunity to start a new life and explore the world beyond Cuba, exposing herself and her children to other cultures so that they would learn to see the world from various perspectives. 'Aquí está centralizado y encerrado', she said, adding that by travelling or emigrating, 'vas a lograr, no sé, salir de estas cuatro paredes'. Elisa claimed that she and her children had very little access to information through the Cuban media and no access to the internet, despite the recent relaxation of restrictions on internet access. '¿Para qué me sirve ese derecho?' she asked, 'Eso es como el derecho a hospedarme en un hotel…lo que gano al mes son 12 dólares…cuesta 140 dólares un fin de semana en un hotel'. With a combined family income of about 40 dollars a month (1,050 Cuban Pesos), from four different salaries for a family of five, Elisa claimed that her family's basic needs were barely met and that extra money for internet access was not feasible.

Elisa explained that the economic system in Cuba was not necessarily poorly designed but that it was poorly administered, noting that free education and universal healthcare also existed in countries such as Canada that did not claim to be revolutionary. 'Porque además aquí en Cuba está muy mal utilizada la palabra revolución. La Revolución fue en el año 1959', she said, 'Revolución no es toda una vida'. Clarifying that she did not consider herself anti-socialist or anti-revolutionary, she supported the idea that Cubans should be able to privately own small business but she opposed the creation of corporate ownership in Cuba. Elisa believed that Cubans had been so long removed from any sort of institutionalised system of private commerce that they would have difficulty understanding it now as a society. 'Aquí en Cuba se dejó de

cobrar impuestos', she noted as an example, 'por la utopía de que todos tenemos que ser iguales. Pues es imposible. El ser humano no está preparado para eso'.

Although Elisa had prepared to face the uncertainty of the world outside Cuba when she received the *bombo*, she recognised the profound adjustments Cubans, like her brother Samuel, had to make upon moving to a country as different from theirs as the United States. 'Esto no es cambiar de champú que te lavas la cabeza', she emphasised, 'Esto es cambiar de vida totalmente, de un sistema a otro sistema. Que tú no sabes si te va a gustar o no'. Later she would discover through a mutual friend that her brother had difficulties adjusting to life in the US after he first arrived. Like all the children in their family, their father had taught Samuel how to repair virtually anything. So, when he arrived in Miami he would fix things for people whenever they needed, without charging, just as he had done in Cuba his entire life. When he needed something, however, there was nobody to help him. Experiences such as these profoundly affected Samuel and changed how he related to people, including his family back home in Cuba. Lacking the daily contact that unified their family, Samuel adapted himself to his new life without them. 'Lo que cambió fue la forma de vida de él', Elisa explained, 'No es que no nos quiera. No es que no haya sentimientos. Para nada. Eso que sí lo hay. Realmente fueron años de acostumbrarse a estar despreocupado. Se despreocupó'.

The family's relationship with Samuel had fundamentally changed in the sixteen years since he had left, but during his first and only visit back to Cuba, for their father's funeral, the unity and affection within the family surfaced once again. With tears in her eyes, Elisa revealed the emotions behind the words she had attempted to put in her mother's mouth at the beginning of the interview regarding how it felt to be separated from Samuel. 'Es difícil porque cuando, cuando él vino a Cuba todo aquello volvió a unirnos', she confessed, 'Él vino solo. Y volvimos a ser la familia que éramos antes. Una semana'. She remembered with boisterous laughter how, during his return visit, he

had sat at the kitchen table to eat his plate of beans with a 'flauta de pan' and without a shirt, just as if he had never left. She turned to collaborate with her mother in this memory, '¿Te acuerdas mami? ¿Cómo come Samuel?' From her position as the younger sister who remained in Cuba, Elisa said she felt resentful and hurt, while, at the same time, confused as to why her brother had forgotten them:

> ¿Cómo me siento? Así, dolida y resentida. Las dos cosas. Resentida no sólo con él. A veces me siento resentida de que se haya ido. A veces me molesta que se haya ido. Me…ok…¿qué? ¿Qué? ¿Qué hiciste con irte? Dejaste a toda tu familia aquí. A todos. Él no tiene a nadie afuera. La esposa y dos hijos. Y el cubano no considera eso toda la familia. Soy la más chiquita. El cubano extraña eso. Esa, esa relación extendida. La extraña. Y nosotros más. Los que nos quedamos más que los que se fueron. Él está allí y no tiene tiempo de pensar.

Other members of the family often voiced the feelings similar to those expressed by Elisa and at family gatherings Samuel's name was inevitably mentioned. 'Siempre hay un espacio y un momento para hablar de Samuel', she said, 'Siempre se ha producido. Siempre. Nunca hablamos bien, es verdad, pero siempre sale'. These references to Samuel have often been documented on video as resentful messages addressed directly to their brother. For example, at their mother's 80th birthday celebration, Elisa had placed several packets of powdered drink that Samuel had sent earlier that year on a table with cake and soft drinks. At one point, someone grabbed the packets and a video camera and recorded a sarcastic message: '"Vaya Samuel para que tú veas que tú estás presente aquí en la mesa. Eso para que tú veas que aquí también, mira, que tú aportaste. Tú aportaste refresco a la fiesta de mami"'. This message, along with other video messages to Samuel, had never been recorded with the intent of being sent to the US Instead, the videos were made for the family in Cuba and although they never said it directly, Elisa knew that the message behind all the posturing was that they missed him.

Nunca hablamos bien, es verdad, pero siempre sale. Nunca, porque lo extrañamos realmente, nunca decimos es como 'lo extrañamos' pero si vienes a ver en el fondo es eso. Porque si no, simplemente no lo mencionara. No me importara. No sé. Realmente es eso. Que sí uno siente que le falta un pedazo.

Absence in Elisa's narrative

Elisa's story of experience with emigration was about a family that had felt forgotten by their migrant brother and her narration focused on the struggle to understand the changing character of the relationship between this brother in the United States and his family in Cuba. It was not as if he had not completely forgotten about them, but it seemed that they had become an afterthought in his life and Elisa's emotional response, which she also attributed to other family members in Cuba, was to foster resentment toward her brother. While he had lived in Cuba he had a close relationship with his family, but his repeated failure to meet their emotional and material expectations, both as a brother and as a Cuban, signalled to them that his values had changed dramatically since his arrival to the United States. Elisa claimed that, not only was this perception shared by the rest of her siblings on the island, but that it was also an experience shared by thousands of Cuban families. Through the story of her personal experiences with her brother Samuel, Elisa engaged with how emigration changed the mentalities of those who left Cuba and fundamentally altered their relationships with those who stayed on the island.

By beginning the interview with her 84-year-old mother, Elisa oriented the scope of her experience with emigration around Samuel's relationship with the entire family, rather than focusing only on his specific relationship with her. In addition, her initial role as intermediary gave a certain degree of validity to Elisa's characterisations of Samuel by first introducing them through the figure of their neglected mother. Through the pretence of an interview with her mother, Elisa established the contrast that would

inform her entire narrative between the Samuel they remembered and the Samuel who had forgotten about them. She reminded her mother, while simultaneously reminding herself and conveying to me as her audience, how hurt she should have felt that the unity that once existed between Samuel and the rest of the family had disappeared. Elisa promoted a sense that Samuel generally lacked concern for his family back home, to the extent that he had failed to call his hospitalised brother and had shown disrespect to the woman who gave birth to him by prioritising the cost of her burial over the benefit of having her at his side. This would provide the foundation for the principal thread of Elisa's narrative: Samuel's relationship with his family in Cuba had been damaged because his character and his values had changed from when he lived in Cuba. Accordingly, Samuel's absence in her life formed around a set of expectations Elisa and her family had for him, both as a member of their family and as a Cuban migrant.

Samuel's disengagement with the family stood in stark contrast to Elisa's memory of him from before his emigration and her struggle to reconcile these conflicting images of her brother produced an absence in her life around emotions of resentment and hurt. Through this lens of this damaged memory, her brother repeatedly failed to meet the expectations rooted in her past experience with him in Cuba. The Samuel who Elisa remembered used to come by the house everyday, whereas the Samuel who Elisa was confronted with today only called once a year, out of obligation, on his mother's birthday. The Samuel who Elisa remembered made repairs to his neighbours' homes for free, whereas the Samuel of today sent packages full of condiments rather than anything that could improve his family's daily condition. By failing to meet the emotional and material expectations of his family, Elisa perceived a rupture in the family bond that used to exist. In response to his apparent disregard for their welfare, a sense of neglect festered in the imaginations of his family still on the

island and was demonstrated in acrimonious emotion and expression directed at their brother in Miami.

Perhaps no other portion of Elisa's narrative illustrated the perceived change in the value Samuel placed on his family as much as her experience with the *bombo*. In addition to being a point of contention regarding their mother, Samuel's refusal to pay for their mother's visa and Elisa's refusal to leave without her also represented a lost opportunity for Elisa. It is important to remember that, despite the fact that it never came to fruition, Elisa was narrating from the perspective of someone who had already worked through the emotional and psychological process of deciding to leave Cuba for the United States. She had recognised the risks that emigration represented, but also saw the chance to start a new life with improvements to her material conditions and opportunities for her children with which they would never be presented in Cuba. She had reflected on the achievements and shortcomings of the Cuban revolutionary project and had contemplated the costs and benefits of the life inside Cuba and the life outside Cuba. In the end, Elisa had decided to leave, but Samuel once again failed to meet her expectations of a brother who would have wanted to see his family united again and fulfilling their dreams.

In the process of narrating Samuel's failure to meet expectations as a member of the family, Elisa was simultaneously addressing many of the expectations of Cubans on the island for their family members who emigrate. She described the tension that existed in the Cuban imagination regarding the act of emigration and the possibilities, both material and personal, that it represented for those who leave and for those who stay in Cuba. Even for those Cubans who do not expect material compensation from their migrant family, there was an expectation of reciprocity, in some form or another, to help the family in Cuba. Her emphasis on the extended family as the authentic representation of the Cuban family provided a cultural foundation upon which to place

the importance the extended family held for her. By including the extended family in the definition of the Cuban family, Elisa justified the expectations that had been placed on Samuel by the family back home and in doing so, justified the resentment and hurt derived from his failure to meet those expectations.

Samuel's departure had proven destructive to his relationship with Elisa's family and had produced disharmonious sentiments among them. Elisa was particularly vulnerable to this emotional break, because of the distinction she made between biological and sentimental relationships. Biologically, Samuel was her uncle. Sentimentally, he was her brother. The manner with which her grandparents brought her up as a daughter and her uncles treated her as a sister necessarily put emphasis on her sentimental connection to these people. As she herself noted, there are many Cuban families that stayed in contact and maintained healthy relationships at a distance, but that was not the case of her family. Elisa's relationship with Samuel's was as much based on being remembered as it was in any particular way of remembering him and the sense of being forgotten had produced his absence in the imaginations of Elisa and her family.

Conclusion

The Special Period crisis shifted the paradigm of Cuban society's relationship with emigration as a cultural process and therefore altered the relationship between migrant and non-migrant Cubans. Once emigration was perceived to be void of any overt political motivation and was viewed as a decision based on economic necessity, the act of emigration and the subsequent separation were re-conceived by those who remained in Cuba. Without the previous politicised stigma, those who chose not to leave – or could not leave – grappled with how to now understand the significance of people leaving their communities. Whereas in previous generations of experience of emigration, many Cubans on the island tried to forget about family that had left, with the Special Period they were trying to remember and, importantly, be remembered by those who left.

If the experience of emigration is understood as a mutually lived sociocultural process, then the narratives of Milagros and Elisa communicate the transformation of relationships between migrant and non-migrant Cubans during the Special Period crisis. As evidenced by the narratives of this chapter, particular value was placed on family as an important social institution and on the material relationship with emigration and the absence of those who have left. Each of them experienced the departure of a close family member during the Special Period and they confront their respective reconfigurations of family relationships through engagement with the memory of that family from before the separation. The absences narrated by Milagros and Elisa are grounded in their respective transnational families and, therefore, allow for a more nuanced understanding of how the Special Period generation of emigration has produced a particular absence in the Cuban cultural imagination.

For those Cubans who lived through the Special Period, adaptation became necessary to meet the needs of a daily life as the social and cultural references acquired over lifetime were replaced by a new set of circumstances. At the height of the Special Period, Martín observed the sociocultural impact of the crisis: 'se producen numerosas rupturas en los modos de pensar y accionar en la vida porque, al no ajustarse a la cotidianidad cambiante, se tornan inoperantes' (Martín, Perera & Díaz, 1996: 93). Martín has also observed one key aspect of this rupture-adaptation process as it applies to emigration, and that can be observed in both narratives: the family as a social actor in the transformation of behaviours, values and emotions. As Milagros and Elisa spend more time separated from their families, as Sigman claimed, the relational continuity is maintained increasingly through memory work, as the expectation of physical presence decreases. In this way, Elisa and her siblings have generated an increasingly cynical energy with respect to their long-lost brother Samuel to keep him present in their lives and to sustain, Bach would suggest, the sensation that they too might be remembered in his mind.

The Special Period generation of experience of emigration would have far reaching implications for Cuban society. The economic demands and political realities of the time produced a paradigm shift that would recast how Cubans related to their everyday realities, to the revolutionary project, to the act of emigration, and therefore to the separation from each other. Through their narratives of family separation, each narrator in this chapter has engaged with the intimate cultural absence in their own families as well as a broader cultural absence underneath the surface of contemporary Cuban society. By the end of the Special Period, Martín and her colleagues in Cuba claimed, that the first three generations of emigration had left a *vacío* in the Cuban culture that had reconfigured the identities of both those who had stayed and those who had left (Casañas, Martín, Aja, 2006: 133). As will be seen in the following chapter, the

current post-Special Period generation of emigration is confronting issues that are the product of the Special Period experience, and all other previous generations of emigration and exile experience, and thus have produced a specific experience in relation to its own history.

Chapter 7: Fourth Generation of Non-migrant Cuban Experiences

Introduction

The rupture of the crisis of the 1990s had radically reconfigured the everyday conduct and, in many respects, collective and individual imaginations within Cuban society. Amid the post-Special Period context of today's Cuba, an entire historical generation of Cubans, born from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, has no memory of a social and political reality outside that created by the traumatic experience of the Special Period. This generation, much like the 'children of the revolution', these 'children of the Special Period' were born and raised within a unique context of social, political and cultural rupture and reconfiguration. The post-Special Period generation's experience of emigration has been characterised not as much by any particular set of economic or political circumstances as it has been by its social imagination. More than any generation before it, it balances the demands of a Cuban culture that is conceived and practiced simultaneously within and beyond the borders of the island.

The fourth generation of emigration has been characterised by expressions of mobility, of possibility, of exploring new horizons, of choices and of incorporation into the world beyond the island's borders. The prospect of improving their material conditions, helping their family back in Cuba, advancing their professional goals, and seeing the world, all motivate this generation of Cuban emigration. Embodied in the brothers and sisters, and neighbours and classmates who have left, but who also return, the experience of emigration is envisioned as a pathway for one's life aspirations beyond the borders of the island, and of the Cuban revolution. This chapter will explore this fourth generation of emigration experiences through the narratives of Cubans who remain on the island while family, friends, and lovers have left to chase their dreams.

Diego

Su anhelo era irse. Lo veo ahora. Mucho antes de conocerme.

- Diego, 6 March 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Diego's Experience with Emigration

At a kitchen table in the neighbourhood of Rancho Boyeros, on the outskirts of Havana, 39-year-old Diego began to talk about his personal life. 'Somos muy familiares', he said, 'mis padres y mis hermanos saben de mi vida. Yo nunca lo he escondido'. Neither the world or his family had ever given him problems, he insisted, but, just like every human being, he too had suffered. 'Y ya de mi vida personal en estos momentos', he explained, 'yo me siento, eh…como decirte…afligido. Me siento triste porque la gente que yo quería se me fue. Se me fue a otro país'.   Diego and Jorge began living together on the very same day they met in 1994. Over the course of sixteen years, the couple had grown accustomed to a life in which they were nearly inseparable. Since Jorge's emigration, one year and two months before, they had remained a couple and continued to get along, but both men had suffered from the separation. Now, as Diego sipped coffee just one block from the house they had shared, he searched for an adequate way to articulate his emotions.

> Yo en este momento, yo me siento muy así, vaya. ¿Cómo es explicarte? Eh…decaído. ¿Tú me entiendes? Decaído en el sentido porque él quisiera que yo estuviera al lado de él, y yo quisiera que él estuviera al lado mío. Pero bueno, eso tiene su proceso que…¿para qué hablar, de eso? Si quieres parar la grabacción.

While off-record, Diego explained that he felt as if he had not been speaking coherently. As he began to feel more comfortable with the idea of talking about his separation from Jorge, he eventually asked the recording to resume. He reinitiated the

conversation by describing the abrupt changes that had occurred in his life since Jorge had left. One of the most immediate consequences of the emigration for Diego was the need to move out of the home that they had shared for so many years, because it belonged to Jorge's family, and to move into his parents' home. He had never lived with his parents as an adult and now, in addition to having to adjust to life without his partner, he also had to adapt to a strained co-habitation with people whom, although he loved them as family, he was unaccustomed to living with on a daily basis. Diego's life had fundamentally been altered and although he made efforts at lifting his own spirits, what he called a 'sentimiento opresivo' would inevitably return to overwhelm him. 'Entonces uno se, se desahoga que sea uno llorando', he described, 'y yo escondido solo así que nadie me vea. Ni me vea mi mamá, ni mi papá. Nadie'.

Diego imagined that the private suffering he had endured also extended to others who had been separated from a loved one, whether it was a partner, a parent, or a child. For example, on the very same day as our interview, Diego had stopped by the house of a friend to wish her a happy birthday and found her crying. The night before, she had a dream in which her 10-year-old daughter, who now lived in the United States, was telling her that she missed her. Similarly, Diego had gone to his cousin's house in Havana one day where he encountered a young man who looked sad. When Diego asked him why he was so down, the young man replied that his father had just left the country. Diego responded by relating his own personal experience: 'Digole, "Prepárate para lo que viene. Porque mientras más pasan los días más mal te vas a sentir. Te lo digo por experiencia propia. Que aún así todavía estoy sufriendo". Así mismo le dije'.

Fuelled by a steady diet of coffee and cigarettes and not much else, Diego lost significant weight during the first three months of separation from Jorge and fell into a deep depression, the gravity of which presented a real health concern. 'Tengo miedo hasta de enfermarme de los nervios', he said. Diego's desperate health reflected his

outlook regarding the possibility of ever being reunited with his partner and, because Jorge would not be returning to Cuba to live permanently, Diego believed that any visit from him would exacerbate his own suffering. 'Me afectaría bastante que viniera. Y se…y se fuera de nuevo', he declared. Jorge would arrive and they would go to the most beautiful sites and drink the coldest beer, but Diego would have to feign a smile the entire time because the only thought in his mind would be that Jorge would be leaving again, without him. Moments as intimate as having sex would be marred for Diego by nervousness and doubt. 'Aunque uno tratara de relajarse', he speculated, 'no sé si sería feliz, porque, entonces me…lo primero que me diría, "Tú estás con alguien entonces"'.

What Diego missed most about his life with Jorge were the everyday intimacies, such as the seemingly banal conversations about washing dishes or deciding what to eat for dinner. 'Eso sí extraño, esas boberías', he explained, 'que si yo me demoraba cinco minutos, él estaba sentado afuera esperándome, "¡Ay no te demores más! ¿Por qué tú me haces eso?"' They had always been a couple that communicated well and would adapt to each other. Now that they lived separated from one another, Diego recognised Jorge's efforts to mediate the emotional distance between them, but he also recognised the emotional tension evident in phone calls and written letters. In his letters, Diego addressed issues that made Jorge uncomfortable and, when they talked on the phone, Diego would get nervous and remain silent. When Jorge urged him to speak, Diego often responded with sad indignation: '"¿De aquí qué te voy a contar? ¿Te hablo de qué me siento? ¿De la tristeza que yo tengo? ¿Para qué te voy a contar eso?"'

Adding to the tension within the relationship was the history behind the separation itself. For years Jorge had actively looked for ways to emigrate from Cuba and, despite the implications it would have for their relationship, Diego supported his partner in his efforts to realise his dream. Prior to Jorge's emigration in December of 2009, his mother had emigrated in 2006 and his grandmother many years before that.

After two failed attempts to travel to the US as a tourist on a *carta de invitación* and later losing $6,000 dollars in a smuggling scam involving a Cuban migration officer, Jorge's mother decided to begin the family reunification visa process for her son. Even after his visa had been accepted by the US, as a nurse Jorge still had to wait for his *liberación* – an authorisation number given by the Cuban health ministry to doctors and nurses, releasing them from their duties before they can emigrate. When Jorge was granted his *liberación*, it was Diego who answered the phone that day and it was he who broke the news to Jorge later that evening. 'Díceme, "¡Ay Diego, tú estás jugando conmigo! ¡Esto es mentira!"' he recalled of the moment, 'Yo le digo, "No. No estoy jugando contigo. Te estoy diciendo. Que ya estás liberado"'. Jorge ran out of the house to tell the news to his sisters, who lived next door, and together as a family they all began to cry in celebration. From the house, Diego watched as Jorge became uncontrollably excited that his dream of leaving Cuba had become reality, one that would inevitably include a prolonged separation from him and their life together in Cuba. 'Eso yo lo sabía de siempre, que su anhelo era irse', Diego admitted with a certain sense of resignation, 'Pero bueno. Tú sabes que uno no se adapta nunca a…a esa parte'.

Since Jorge had left for the United States, a long shadow of doubt had been cast upon Diego's already waning hope of once again having his partner by his side. 'Tengo miedo de eso, que pasen los años', he confessed, 'que tú vengas de visita y te vayas, para mí eso no es relación porque mientras tanto ¿qué?' Jorge had always assured Diego that he would find a way to get him to the US and that they would be together again, but it was not of much consolation for Diego, who had become increasingly distraught over their separated condition. Quiet moments of reflection, such as evenings of making religious jewellery by hand, often brought thoughts of Jorge that would culminate in Diego cursing to himself and wondering if perhaps he was going mad. '¡Estoy loco ya yo creo!' he cried with laughter, clapping his hand on the table. He then

glanced at the clock and in a soft voice commented that Jorge would have come home from work at about that time. Diego would often express his psychological state to Jorge and stressed the need specifically for his companionship. 'Dígole, "Eres la única persona con la que yo me puedo desahogar"', he had written in a recent letter, '"¿Se lo voy a decir al vecino? ¿Se lo voy a decir con la gente en la calle? A nadie le importa"'.

Together, Diego and Jorge gave each other strength to face the struggles of everyday life. For example, Jorge would often complain that there was not enough money to buy cigarettes, to which Diego would reply that he need not worry. '"Tú sabes que yo soy negociante"', he would say and then he would go out with the little money they had and come back with cigarettes plus three packages of fresh shrimp. Through a combination of determination, charm and a mystic connection to the universe, Diego had always had an ability to acquire, that which was believed to be unavailable or unattainable. On another occasion, Diego claimed to have predicted the arrival of a person who would resolve the couple's immediate financial worries just minutes before a man came to their house and left several thousand Cuban pesos on their kitchen table.

A practitioner of the religion *santería*, Diego had just entered the process known as *hacerse el santo* at the time that Jorge was preparing to leave Cuba. The initiation ceremony, or *misa,* generally lasts seven days and symbolises a rebirth in which one receives the particular *orishas* [spirit guides]. Preparations for the *misa* might last months or years to complete the necessary spiritual education and to acquire all of the required clothing, sacrificial animals and food for the large quantity of people generally in attendance. When Jorge had his *misa*, Diego was with him all seven days preparing the food that traditionally is served, such as lamb, goat, chicken and duck. In contrast, Jorge was only present for one day of Diego's seven-day initiation. 'Eso me dolió porque yo dije, coño, si…si tú fuiste…si yo fui capaz de estar con él y ayudarlo', he

said, 'por lo menos aparécete. Porque yo sentí tu presencia allí. Yo necesitaba tu presencia. Y fuiste un día nada más'.

As much as Jorge's scant presence during his *santo* hurt Diego's feelings, it was Jorge's absence in the year that followed that would prove to have the most profound impact on Diego, both psychologically and physically. After the *misa*, the newly initiated goes through a year-long period called *yaboraje,* in which restrictions are placed on activities such as eating habits and manner of dress, including wearing only white for the entire year. 'Que fue el año que se fue', observed Diego, adding that Jorge left a matter of weeks after the initiation ceremony. Diego went through the year of *yaboraje,* while at the same time, coping with the dramatic changes in his life brought by not having Jorge at his side and adapting to the crowded confines of his parents' house. 'Porque lo que tenía yo era un espacito así no más', he described, 'Yo dije, "me vuelvo loco aquí adentro"'.

Faced with this challenging personal landscape, Diego continued with his daily routine, until the day that he could be reunited with Jorge. 'Yo no quiero que venga', he clarified, 'Yo quiero que me saque'. From Cuba, he had even put Jorge in contact with people in Miami who might have helped expedite the process, but nothing happened. As someone who actively scrounged for solutions to his problems every day, it was difficult for Diego to understand the apparent lack of effort on Jorge's part to find a way for them to be together.

> Querer es poder. Y cuando se quiere, se puede. Por lo menos yo lo haría. Por lo menos yo lo haría. Busco la forma, la manera de estar en contacto. Sin pena. Si aquí para resolver uno tiene que…que averiguar y preguntar. Porque ahora si tú tienes ganas de comer pollo…si tú tienes ganas ahora de comer pollo ¿qué tú haces? Tienes que salir a preguntar. 'Fulana, ¿dónde hay pollo?'¡Pero preguntas! ¡Tuviste que preguntar! A poder comprarlo. Yo quisiera estar con él ya. Pero bueno. Hay que decir, 'entonces que sea lo que Dios quiera', pero entonces ¿cuándo lo vas a querer tú? Después de todo me río porque, eh… no es fácil.

The emotional impact of Jorge's emigration on Diego was evident in the deterioration of his health and humour. He found himself screaming at his mother and father, which would then provoke further anxiety over the state of the interpersonal relationships in his life. 'Es decir, que entonces me empeora', he explained, 'Porque entonces me pongo más melan, más nostálgico y más melancólico'. The separation had been an abrupt revolution of Diego's entire life and although he knew that both men were suffering, he believed Jorge was compensated somewhat by a rich and beautiful discovery of new places and things. 'Para mí no es así', he insisted, 'Para mí es todo lo contrario. Adaptarme a un lugar donde uno no está adaptado, a la convivencia con más personas…yo digo que no me voy a adaptar'. Exacerbating the distance between them, Jorge's family politics have presented more obstacles to their already vulnerable long-distance relationship. 'Si ellos se enteran que él me manda dinero a mí y a ellos no, ya tú sabes', he said, adding that Jorge always asked him to keep quiet about the cash he sent him, 'Porque muchas personas quieren separarnos'.

Jorge and Diego had never been apart for so long. Both had worked in the same health clinic, Jorge as a nurse and Diego in administration, and they used to wake up together, commute into work together, take their coffee breaks together and pass each other in the halls. The daily companionship that had most characterised their relationship in Cuba was what Diego most missed since Jorge left. He hoped that they would be reunited soon and had no intention of ending the relationship, although he admitted that there was a limit, perhaps three years, to how long he would be willing to wait. The prospect of initiating a new relationship with another man intimidated him and he claimed to have remained faithful to Jorge over the year and two months apart, but he recognised that he had his own affective needs. 'Porque a veces necesito tener a alguien al lado', he said, 'Que me pase la mano, que me…que me diga algo no sé, que me bese, que me abrace'.

As he allowed for the possibility of being with someone other than Jorge to enter his mind, Diego began to measure the weight of the emigration and separation on their life as a couple. 'Ese era el sueño de su vida', he said, contemplating the underlying significance of his partner's decision to leave, 'Pienso yo que él después sólo debe haber reflexionado y pensado del lado de allá, "¿Por qué, si realmente tú me querías de verdad, por qué te fuiste tan corriendo?"' Jorge had left four days before his own birthday and Diego questioned why, after having waited such a long time for this moment, Jorge could not manage to wait another few days to leave so that they could celebrate his birthday together. 'Si me hubiese querido tanto, no se hubiese ido tan pronto', he reiterated, 'Pero bueno, lo que es. Lo complací. Para que veas que una vez más yo soy de los que complazco'.

In fact, it was Diego who had suggested the solution that ultimately facilitated Jorge's *liberación* from his service as a nurse. After applying for the *liberación,* Jorge had five more years of service as a nurse before it could be granted and this put him in a desperate state of mind. Watching his partner so despondent, the inventive Diego looked for a solution. He suggested that Jorge use some creative accounting of his years abroad on medical missions, along with his good standing in the medical community and their contacts in the provincial healthcare hierarchy to get an early *liberación*. Although he never wanted his partner to leave, Diego recognised his own role as a facilitator of Jorge's emigration: 'yo fui el que le di las ideas para que él, para que su sueño se realizara'.

Diego's mother had told him on occasion that he complained about his situation and he always responded that he was not complaining but that he did have a need for someone at his side. 'Todavía lo siento como, como mi pareja de años', Diego declared, 'Y él siempre me dice, "Tú, tú, yo no te voy a abandonar nunca"'. On her most recent visit back to Cuba, Jorge's mother gave Diego some insight into her son's emotional

condition in Miami. She told him that Jorge would arrive home from work and sit outdoors for hours by himself, smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee, to which Diego responded: '"¡Qué bueno que yo no sea el único que estaba de café y cigarros!"' In many ways, coffee had become a long-distance bond for the two men and was the item that Jorge most often sent to Diego. 'De hecho te digo que eso es lo que me garantiza que siempre me mande él, y con la marca y todo. Bustelo', he said with a laugh. During their phone calls, Jorge had always seemed happy, or at least happier than him, and Diego claimed that a person's emotional state was something that could be detected in the voice and manner of speech. He did admit, however, that perhaps Jorge was merely attempting to keep up Diego's spirits and to meet the expectations for himself as a partner. Sometimes Diego would laugh and reassure Jorge that everything was fine and that he need not worry. Internally, however, Diego had concluded that he himself could no longer worry about the circumstances of their relationship.

> ¿Qué voy a resolver? Si en definitivo no va a coger un avión a venirse, ni yo me voy a coger un avión hasta allí. Eso lleva su proceso. Yo lo que sí no quiero es que pase mucho tiempo. Porque si pasa mucho tiempo yo me busco a otra persona. Porque yo no voy a estar solo. Yo no voy a estar solo.

Absence in Diego's Narrative

Diego's narration began with an explicit introduction to his family background and an implicit introduction to his sexual orientation, which together were used as platforms to discuss his experience with emigration. The emotional impact of the emigration was categorised as suffering even before he had mentioned that someone he cared about had left. Importantly, he described himself as 'afligido', meaning afflicted or heartbroken, and 'decaído', meaning weakened or dejected. This established the emigration of Jorge as a negative force in his life. The structure of his introduction to

the act of emigration was revealing in that he first said that a person he loved had left him, then immediately clarified that this person had left the country, not just him. Similarly, he clarified at one point that they had been separated by territorial distance, but as a couple they were still committed, not separated. The cause of the suffering derived from the disruption in the customs one developed when living with one's partner. He emphasised that the separation had its own process. It was at this point, after only three minutes, that he asked to stop recording the conversation. After recording resumed, however, Diego would begin to describe this process of separation and define in detail the meaning of Jorge's absence in his life.

Building from the biographical foundation that he had built in the first three minutes of conversation, Diego endowed Jorge's absence with meaning through the description of his own suffering. In relating his experience, Diego began to form Jorge's absence around his own struggle to adapt to the drastic changes that Jorge's departure produced. Since Jorge had left, Diego had been forced to move into his parents' tiny house, where he struggled to coexist, and his family relationships had begun to suffer due to his newly volatile temperament. Physically, he had lost significant weight, he chain-smoked and drank coffee incessantly, and he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. In short, Jorge's absence had become a destructive presence in Diego's life. Then, just as he had defined Jorge's absence through his own suffering since the separation, he then gave meaning to this suffering through his memories from before the separation. By remembering the everyday intimacies of their life together in the past, Diego contrasted them to the suffering of his life in the present and imbued them with positive value. The disruption of the everyday intimacies of their relationship, therefore, could not be interpreted as anything but negative, which corresponded with his understanding of their separation, established at the beginning of the narrative.

Diego's suffering had given meaning to Jorge's absence. Diego's memory of his past life with Jorge had given meaning to his suffering. The process of separation itself had given meaning to Diego's memory, and this process had been set in motion with Jorge's lifelong ambition of leaving Cuba for the United States. It formed part of the foundation of their relationship that Diego had been forced to cope with since the day they had met. Similar to how Diego had responded to Jorge's need for a cigarette by hitting the streets and negotiating the means to satisfy that need, Diego had coped with Jorge's dream to emigrate by indulging his desires and ultimately facilitating his departure. Jorge failed to meet Diego's expectations and his emotional response characterised how Diego interpreted the process of separation, both before and after Jorge's actual departure. Jorge's consistent failure to procure, or even search for, a path for Diego's emigration and for their reunification as a couple, which had always been the understood expectation, had altered Diego's emotional response to their prolonged separation. Instead of becoming depressed, doubt and suspicion have been cultivated in Diego's imagination. The process of their separation appeared to produce the conditions for dissolution of the romantic partnership. Diego's experience with emigration has been one characterised by the process of suffering. This suffering was produced by Diego's response to Jorge's absence as much as it was by Jorge's decision to leave.

Edgar

Él quería un estilo de vida que aquí no podía llevar.

- Edgar, 3 February 2011, La Habana, Cuba

Edgar's Experience with Emigration

At the age of 62, Edgar's life had been touched by emigration at various stages since the Revolution of 1959. From his father's family, an aunt had left in 1960 and an uncle in 1976, both went to the United States, both for political reasons, and neither ever returned to Cuba. According to Edgar, his aunt had worked with people from the Batista government and because his father was a member of the Communist Party, there was no interest in maintaining contact. 'Nunca más mantuvo contacto con nadie que no fuera mi abuela', Edgar remembered of his aunt's relationship with the family in Cuba. After his grandmother's death, nothing more had been known about this aunt until three years ago, when Edgar discovered that she lived in Boca Raton, Florida. On the other hand, nothing was ever heard from, or about, his uncle again. 'Yo no sé si mi tío se murió', he admitted, 'No supimos nunca qué…cuál fue su destino en Estados Unidos'. His uncle's penchant for alcohol and his failure to communicate even with Edgar's grandmother had led to the assumption that his life in the United States had not gone well. Complete severance of ties, such as occurred in his father's family, was characteristic of emigration during the 1960s and 1970s. 'Esa fue la etapa esa de, de cuando el exilio, cuando…eh…el problema entre los cubanos aquí y el exilio era un problema eminentemente político', Edgar explained, 'yo por lo menos, mi familia, hubo parte de eso'.

Whereas the family of Edgar's father had been wealthy, the poor, working class roots of his mother's side produced a political position within the family that did not

correspond with the notion of leaving Cuba. Aside from two of his mother's cousins who had served in Batista's *Guardia Rural* [State Police], no members of that side of the family had ever left Cuba permanently, until recently. One of Edgar's cousins moved to the US in October of 2010, just months before the interview, and was reunited with his mother and sister who had been living there for a number of years. In contrast to the split of his father's family, Edgar had personally maintained a relationship with these cousins on his mother's side. His mother, on the other hand, has maintained an extreme position with regards to emigration.

> Ella no…no analiza el trasfondo del hecho de que ellos se fueron de Cuba porque para ella todo es ya un problema de que no quieren a la Revolución. Y a todo le pone, ella es así, un matiz político a todo. Tiene una perspectiva muy política, no…aun cuando no sea esa realmente la cosa. Porque mi prima se fue de Cuba. No fue por un problema político ni mucho menos. Se fue porque ella quería llevar otra vida. Lo mismo que le pasó a mi hijo.

Edgar had expected that his son's emigration in 2007 would have given his 90-year-old mother a heart attack. Much to his surprise, however, she reacted to the news without commentary of any kind. For his part, Edgar purposefully refrained from speaking to anyone about his son's emigration and even instructed others not to talk about it in his presence. 'Para mí no fue fácil que mi hijo se fuera', he confessed. Despite having lived in separate cities after the divorce from his son's mother, Edgar claimed that the affective ties remained close between father and son. 'Él siempre fue muy allegado a mi', he said. His son had taken a trip to Mexico to visit his mother, Edgar's ex-wife, who had been working there for several years in a dance studio under a Cuban government contract. When his son did not return to Cuba after his tourist visa in Mexico had expired, Edgar assumed that his son had decided to stay in Mexico with his mother. Instead, he discovered through a mutual acquaintance that both his son and ex-wife had crossed the Mexican border into the United States. 'Nunca me, me habló claro cuál era su plan ni aun cuando yo lo imaginaba', he explained, 'Y eso es lo que

más me ha choqueado, no el hecho de que se haya ido a vivir a Estados Unidos porque bueno, si no era a Estados Unidos, siempre quiso ir para España'.

For some years, Edgar had known that his son dreamed of living somewhere other than Cuba. In the year 2000, Edgar's son had unsuccessfully tried to gain entry into Spain while on a government-authorised trip to Russia. After successfully migrating to the United States at the age of 33, his son returned home to Cuba three years later to visit his family. Edgar did spend time with him, but prohibited any conversation about life in the United States, clarifying that although he did not want things to go poorly for his son, he simply did not want to know any details about his life there. 'Yo simplemente no quiero saber si le va bien, si le va mal', he explained, 'eso es un problema personal mío, quizás pueda parecer un poco estúpido eso, pero es una forma mía de pensar'. Edgar once again emphasised that his displeasure was not based in the fact that his son had moved to the United States rather than any other country. Although he recognised that his son was a grown man, completely in his rights to make his own decisions without consulting his father, Edgar remained embittered about the manner with which the emigration was realised. 'Yo eso no se lo…no se lo perdoné nunca', he confessed as tears welled up in his eyes, 'A estas alturas todavía no me…no me he podido sacar eso de la mente'.

While in Mexico, Edgar's son had called him regularly and never once mentioned the plan that was taking shape to cross the border into the United States. The fact that this was a decision made entirely between his son and his ex-wife had left Edgar feeling personally excluded, but the political implications of their decision also bothered him. 'Yo sé que no había otra forma que no fuera esa, acogerse de la dichosa ley esa de Ajuste Cubano. Y eso es lo que más me molesta', he exclaimed, 'Es un problema de mi forma de ver las cosas. Ahí sí hay un problema político'. Once in Mexico, the prospect of migrating to the US through the Cuban Adjustment Act became

a viable option for Edgar's son and ex-wife, if they could safely reach the US-Mexico border. At the border, they could then approach a migration checkpoint and invoke the law in order to ensure legal entry into the US There they would have then been detained for a period at the border, while American authorities processed paperwork, confirmed their nationality as Cuban, and assured that they had contacts in the US that could take them in. 'Para mí eso es traicionar una serie de cosas', Edgar explained, 'Él no se crió en una familia desafecta a la Revolución ni mucho menos'.

On both his mother's and father's side, Edgar's son had been brought up in a family with revolutionary values. He had been raised by his maternal grandmother in Camagüey, whom Edgar described as having a clear revolutionary vision and even Edgar's ex-wife, his son's accomplice, had once been actively committed to the revolutionary project. Quite the opposite of a political refugee fleeing persecution, Edgar claimed his son's motivation for leaving Cuba was the desire to lead a different lifestyle. For this reason, the decision by his son to use of the Cuban Adjustment Act to facilitate their migration represented an affront to his revolutionary family heritage. He firmly believed that this law was a 'mecanismo diabólico', conceived by the United States government to create difficulties for Cuba by encouraging Cubans to leave the island, therefore making it fundamentally an anti-Cuba policy. 'Eso me molestó. Me afectó. Me choqueó', he said, 'Yo solo lo sé, yo nunca lo comenté. Yo soy de una familia revolucionaria'. Edgar wished that his son had been more patient in looking for another way of achieving his goal of living abroad, perhaps through marriage to a foreigner, a strategy he admitted was also not beyond reproach. 'Es criticable', he conceded, 'pero bueno es una forma para mí menos criticable que utilizar una cosa que es en contra del país donde tu naciste'.

In today's Cuba, Edgar claimed that emigration was no longer as politicised as it was in previous generations, when Cubans were not supposed to maintain relationships

with anti-revolutionary elements. 'Ya no es tan así', he explained, 'porque bueno, aquí todos más que menos tienen familia en Estados Unidos, o en España, o en México, o en Noruega'. Those who continued to interpret the continued emigration out of Cuba as a politically motivated act, according to Edgar, would be ignoring how much things had changed in Cuba over the years.

> Mucha gente se va de Cuba, sobre todo los jóvenes, por buscar otro sistema, otro estilo de vida, otra vida, por mejorar, y por, y por, como dicen muchos, que es el dicho: 'para ayudar más a la familia.' Que son razones eminentemente socioeconómicas. No políticas. Entonces hay quien piensa que eso es mentira que es una propaganda de la Revolución que la gente…nada así. Es realidad.

To illustrate his point, Edgar mentioned that one of his cousins, who was a true revolutionary, had emigrated that very same year, but not to the United States. Cubans, like his cousin, who decided to move to places other than the US did not have the same opportunities as those who went to the United States. These opportunities did imbue Cuban emigration with a political character, he said, but one that had been cultivated from the United States, through the Cuban Adjustment Act, not from Cuba. Edgar then qualified his opinion: 'yo no soy los once millones de cubanos. Yo soy uno más entre los que piensan, yo sé que, como yo, mucha gente piensa igual, pero sé hay mucha otra gente que piensa diferente'.

Often within the same family, Edgar said, different reasoning and distinct understandings existed regarding the phenomenon of Cuban emigration, some aligning themselves with his own perspective and others opposing it. For example, the daughter of a friend had recently left Cuba and Edgar guaranteed that, within that family, '*esas dos posiciones*', were being defended. Guided by her revolutionary convictions, his friend did not agree with her daughter's decision to leave Cuba*,* while his friend's mother and sisters defended it. A Cuban who agreed with the decision to emigrate was not always necessarily against the revolution, Edgar clarified, 'pero tiene otra visión un

poco más, yo diría simplista, menos comprometida, eh…y ve las cosas un poco más en naturalidad'. In his own family, the daughter of one of his cousins had been living in Bolivia without legal documentation for the past several years, her ultimate hope of reaching the US stalled by her inability to acquire an entry visa into the US from Bolivia. Despite having been brought up and educated in the same revolutionary family environment, Edgar and his cousin could not have had more diametrically opposed positions regarding emigration and the decisions of their respective children.

Ella te puede hablar de otras cosas y de que sí, que ella piensa que lo mejor que hizo su hija fue irse del país. Yo no pienso que lo mejor que hizo mi hijo fue irse del pais, porque mi hijo pudo haberse graduado, aquí pudo haber tenido cosas y haberse ajustado a un sistema de vida como hemos vivido muchos cubanos durante décadas en este país.

In addition to the political difficulties it presented for Edgar, his son's emigration had also not been easy for him to emotionally reconcile as a father. 'La separación me duele, no lo puedo negar. No estoy hecho de mármol, ni de piedra', he confessed, with a touch of laughter, 'no te voy a engañar y decirte que no extraño a mi hijo'. He added that he hoped to see changes in Cuba's migratory laws to allow its citizens to travel and live outside Cuba less restrictively. Edgar himself had travelled on several occasions in his capacity as an university professor of English, but said that he would like to travel on his own accord, with his own money and simply because he wishes to visit another country. Although it was not a destination of priority for him, Edgar would visit the United States if the opportunity presented itself, however, he stated clearly, 'nunca sería por invitación de mi hijo'. Over the years he had made many American friends, and any trip to the US would be planned around seeing them and, if possible, perhaps could incorporate seeing his son into those plans. He would not, however, make the same concessions for his ex-wife, because despite having had friendly relations for years after

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the divorce, Edgar primarily blamed her for his son's emigration. 'Porque de alguna manera yo lo culpo a él por lo que hizo', he affirmed, 'pero más la culpo a ella'.

Since learning of their decision to cross the border into the United States from Mexico, Edgar refused to have any type of contact again with his ex-wife, and did he initiate the first contact with his son. He clearly recalled one night when the jarring sound of the telephone roused him from a sleep and sent him scrambling to the other end of his bedroom to answer, before his cousin, who was asleep in the next room, also woke up. It was around midnight and the voice on the other end called him 'papi'. It was the first time he had heard his son's voice since he had moved to the United States and Edgar was in no mood to talk with him. 'No tenía deseos de conversar, sinceramente', he remembered, 'Entonces empezaba a preguntarme por cosas materiales, que si me hacía falta una computadora'. Although he did not hang up, Edgar gave cutting responses to his son's comments and flatly rejected the offer, saying that he didn't need or want anything from his son, not a computer, not money, nothing. After that one brief and limited exchange, his son never called again and Edgar made a concerted effort not to maintain communication.

Despite his decision to be incommunicado, Edgar did, in fact, continue to receive information about his son's life in the United States by indirectly listening in on conversations about him. Through his eavesdropping, he had learned that his son had a lucrative job and a car, and in general had fulfilled the aspirations that motivated him to emigrate. 'Me imagino que tenga lo que quería tener', Edgar said. Although his son may have acquired the material lifestyle that he had aspired to, Edgar fundamentally took exception to this particular conceptualisation of what it meant to emigrate. For him, choosing to emigrate or not to emigrate was a question both of patriotic loyalty to his nation and also of affective loyalty to his family.

Pero nunca hubiera aceptado eso de que él decidiera irse, porque hay una realidad, y eso está claro para mucha gente. Por lo menos para mí está muy claro. Cuando tú decides irte, sea por razones políticas, económicas, sociales, sexuales, ¡que sé yo!, por las razones que sean, cuando tú decides irte, abandonar el país, no solamente estás abandonando el país porque no te gusta la vida en el país. Estás abandonando y dejándote a la familia porque, sí yo te mando cosas materiales, yo te mando dinero, yo te llamo por teléfono, te mando besitos por teléfono, te mando cariño, pero no estás a mi lado cuando me hace falta que estés. Y eso no lo pagan ni cien billetes de Benjamín Franklin que te pongan al lado y eso pasa a muchas personas.

Although never mentioned openly, it had been well known within Edgar's family that his son aspired to a life that he could not attain in Cuba and wanted to leave the country. Nevertheless, had his son notified him of his plans, Edgar would have vociferously opposed the idea. 'Él sabía que no lo iba a aceptar', he admitted. For Edgar, it would have been acceptable had his son married a foreign woman and obtained permission to live abroad. His son's use of the Cuban Adjustment Act, however, was highly problematic for Edgar, as a Cuban, as a revolutionary, and as a father. 'Eso me molestó mucho que lo hiciera de esa manera', he admitted, 'Y yo no soy más fidelista que Fidel Castro, ni más comunista que Carlos Marx, ni Lenin. No, no, simplemente me molestó porque soy cubano. Punto'. Edgar added that most Cubans who had invoked the Cuban Adjustment Act, like his son, simply viewed it as a mechanism that worked in their favour to facilitate their emigration. 'Las personas que han hecho eso', he explained, 'lo menos que están pensando es que eso lo que están haciendo va en contra de su condición de cubano, o de la gente que quedó en el país o del país'.

Absence in Edgar's Narrative

Despite his attempts to depoliticise it within the current Cuban context, the political problem that emigration represented for Edgar personally would orient his entire account of experience. Throughout the narrative process, a moral tension between

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Edgar's relationship with certain family members and his relationship with his family's history of revolutionary values shaped the biographical orientation. By immediately providing an early history with emigration from both sides of his family, he established an understanding of the phenomenon as a political problem. These formative experiences with emigration and revolution within his family would find expression again in the manner with which he coped with his son's decision to leave Cuba permanently. Through the narrative progression of describing his son's emigration and of his own emotional response to it, Edgar would gradually give visibility to the politicised presence of his son's absence in his life.

Edgar initially introduced his son as an example of how emigration had become a non-political act. In contrast to his aunt and uncle who had left for purely political reasons, and in contrast to his mother's view that all decisions to leave Cuba were made against the revolution, Edgar noted that his son left because he wanted to live another lifestyle. He then reinforced the idea that it had not been a political problem, through the characterisation of his family as revolutionary and of his son as never having been politically persecuted. With his son's emigration framed in non-political terms, Edgar's emotional response to it was initially framed in wholly personal terms, as a father. The trust between a father and son had been betrayed by making the decision behind his back and he justified his unwillingness to forgive his son or his ex-wife on the grounds of personal betrayal. It was the way the decision was made, he insisted, rather than the decision itself that most bothered him. In order to justify what could be considered extreme responses on his part, such as refusing to learn about his son's life abroad, Edgar began to explain the details of his son's emigration and it was then that his political problem with the emigration slowly began to emerge.

Through his explanation of events, Edgar revealed that his son's use of the Cuban Adjustment Act was what most bothered him and he openly admitted that it

presented a political problem for him, both as a Cuban and as a member of a revolutionary family. By introducing the Cuban Adjustment Act into the story, Edgar politicised his son's emigration and in the process of coping with it in these terms would politicise his son's absence as well. It had gone from a non-political lifestyle choice to a very specific political act of betrayal. Edgar still insisted, however, that the source of the political problem was the mechanism used to facilitate the emigration rather than the act of emigration itself. He defended his position with claims that leaving Cuba for another system was not political and gave examples of true revolutionaries, even in his family, that hold opinions different from his own as proof that the phenomenon was no longer politically charged. As he mounted his argument, however, Edgar also provided revelations about how he continued to imagine his son's emigration, and Cuban emigration more generally, as a political problem.

Through the comparison of his cousin's daughter and his son, Edgar attempted to draw attention to how different opinions regarding emigration co-existed in the non-politicised climate of today's Cuba. Edgar and his cousin were both people he considered to be revolutionaries, but they disagreed about whether the best thing for their children was to have emigrated. The ultimate conclusion of this comparison was that Edgar did not believe that his son should have emigrated, but instead that he should have stayed and adapted to the system in Cuba, just as his family had done for decades. This was the first unqualified declaration of disapproval by Edgar regarding his son's decision to emigrate and it had immediate implications for his narrative of experience. First, it clearly conveyed that, as a member of a revolutionary family, Edgar had expected his son to adapt to the system in Cuba, not to go in search of a new system. It also undermined Edgar's previous claims that he had only been opposed to the way the decision to emigrate had been made but not to the decision itself. Here, Edgar expressed clear disappointment with his son's desire to emigrate and clear disapproval with the

decision to emigrate. Edgar followed this statement with a series of remarks that, while tempered with sentiments of loss toward his son, expressed his resentment toward both his son and his ex-wife, and included a moral disapproval of his son's materialistic motivations.

By questioning his son's motives in terms of their morality, rather than in terms of their sincerity, Edgar brought to the fore the underlying principles and emotions that had given form to his son's absence. In perhaps the most revealing statement of his entire biographical account Edgar left it absolutely clear that he would never have accepted his son's decision to leave Cuba, regardless of the reason behind it. Rather than continue to concentrate on the distinction between the political, economic and personal motivations of those who decided to emigrate, Edgar addressed the moral value of remaining in Cuba. When his son decided to leave Cuba, he was not merely exchanging one lifestyle for another, one political system for another. As far as Edgar was concerned, his son's decision to 'abandonar el país' was also a decision to abandon his family and to trade sentimental comforts for material comforts. His use of the word abandon emphasised the moral dimension of emigration by highlighting the dearth of moral value behind the motives of the migrant. His son had abandoned his family and not any amount of money could compensate for his absence.

The progression of Edgar's narration illustrated a discursive tension within the contemporary experience of emigration for a self-identified revolutionary of his generation. Although not politicised in the same manner as the emigration of his aunt in 1960, in many ways Edgar reproduced many of the discourses and coping strategies from that period. He attempted to cut off communication with his son and had not forgiven him for abandoning his country, the revolution and his family. However, the contradictions present in Edgar's narrative and discursive turns taken to compensate for them revealed conflicting emotions and a desire for coherence amid perceived

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incongruence. His son's values no longer coincided with the revolutionary values he had been raised with and this presented a moral dilemma for Edgar. The discursive reconfiguration of the politics surrounding Cuban emigration during the 1990s had redefined the phenomenon as a question of economic necessity. However, Edgar's son's decision to emigrate was a lifestyle choice motivated by the desire to live in a culture other than the one found in Cuba. Not tenable as a political problem in the vain of the 1960s, or as an economic need in the vain of the 1990s, Edgar placed his son's absence and his understanding of the experience of emigration in terms of moral values tied to the family, which in his case is revolutionary.

Conclusion

The fourth generation of Cuban emigration represents the tension in contemporary Cuba between expectations and circumstances within the dialogue between conditions and imaginaries. This current generation is one of 'dreams', in terms of aspirations and ambitions, but also in terms of generation of how Cubans 'dream up' the world outside Cuba and the future inside Cuba in relation to their perceptions of present circumstances. A relationship with emigration and travel has developed that is intimately connected to a desire to contribute to the wellbeing of one's family in Cuba, but it is also strongly associated with professional aspirations and a personal sense of adventure. Encounters with foreign tourists and Cubans who return to visit have reinforced, in the generational imagination, *el exterior* as representative of the social mobility that their country of birth simply has not been able to offer. In this fourth, and current, generation of emigration experience, the aspiration to leave Cuba, either as a traveller or as a migrant, has become a normalised part of envisioning one's future.

Each story in this chapter illustrates a distinct emotional response to the 'dreams' of that person who left, from the position of the person who remained at home, in Cuba. Although not contemporaries of the current historical generation of Cubans, both Diego and Edgar cope with separations that were motivated by the dreams [both aspirational and imaginary] of loved ones. Diego's story responds to the emotional difficulties of the a loved one's personal choice to leave – not out of political conviction or economic necessity – and having to cope with being 'left behind' as a result of that choice. Edgar's expression, on the other hand, reveals a palpable political and generational tension that plays out not only through his relationship with his son, but also through the moral dilemma, which that relationship poses in terms of his relationship with the revolutionary project.

Again, as suggested by Grinberg and Grinberg, Ilie, and Martín, the emotional responses to these separations represent a set of valued expectations that are not being fulfilled within the relationships between migrants and non-migrants, putting those relationships in conflict. In Diego's case, his expectation is that his partner would arrange for his migration to the US, to join him. This tension might be resolved, if it were not for the fact that gay marriage is not recognised in the US and, therefore, Diego cannot be claimed as Jorge's spouse through existing family reunification laws. In Edgar's case, he has placed value on the politicised social connotations of leaving the country and this produces a conflicted sense of betrayal and longing around his son's absence. Edgar's struggle to find a logical conclusion for his contradictory emotional responses reveals that the once clear moral lines that divided emigration from revolution, and the personal from the political, have become blurred in today's Cuba. No longer merely a clear-cut act of political dissent, nor a practical solution to economic crisis, the act of emigration has been at the centre of increasing mutual unintelligibility between older and younger generations on the island.

The narratives of this current generation reinforce Mannheim's notion of social generation by illustrating how certain patterns of migratory experience and thought have been transmitted and transformed from one generation to another in the formation of Cuban culture. This current generation of Cuban emigration has not been produced around a transformative event, like the revolution in 1959, Mariel in 1980 or even the *balsero* crisis in 1994. It has arisen from the specific circumstances inherited from a decade of economic crisis. For people who have grown up under these conditions, the experience of people in their community leaving the country in order to improve their own material conditions and those of their family in Cuba has been normalised. It is common for friends and relatives to return from the United States and Europe bearing gifts, trafficking basic supplies, and telling stories of abundance. One legacy from the

Special Period has been a new generation of Cubans that cynically weighs its goals –

individual or collective – against any real hope of achieving them in Cuba. In the

concluding chapter of this thesis, these generations of simultaneous continuity and

discontinuity will be examined further as to the broader social and cultural implications

of the experiences with emigration that have been narrated by Cubans on the island.

Conclusions

Somos diez y tantos de millones. Y de esos diez y tantos de millones, el cien por ciento tiene un familiar en el extranjero. O un amigo en el extranjero. Y comparte esa emoción. Es decir que vas a caminar por la calle y no vas a encontrar uno que no te habla de un primo, un hermano, un tío, un papá, una tía, una prima, un sobrino, un amigo…Los cubanos están regados por todas partes del mundo.

- Yaniel, 23 February 2011, La Habana, Cuba

It is not uncommon to hear a Cuban living on the island today say something similar to the above comment made to me by Yaniel, a 28-year-old man who lives in Centro Habana. In fact, as Yaniel claimed, it is uncommon *not* to hear a Cuban in Havana mention someone they have known who lives in *la yuma*[23] or make reference to Miami as if it were just another Cuban city. As noted throughout this thesis, emigration and relations with Cubans living abroad have increasingly formed part of Cuban daily life and the 'mafia anti-cubana' in Miami has long represented an ominous presence in the political rhetoric on the island. Cuban cinema and music, not to mention other artistic forms, have provided an abundant archive of cultural expression regarding emigration. Indeed, emigration has penetrated the lives and imaginations of Cubans on the island in various forms over the past five decades.

When I returned in 2011 to visit Alexis's family during the fieldwork for this research, Alexis's sister asked me if Cuba had the highest levels of emigration of any country in the world. I answered that I did not think so, and she responded that it probably did because it seemed to her that 99% of Cubans [so as not to say 100%] had family living abroad. This comment echoed Yaniel's remark, which, although perhaps lacking in its statistical veracity, serves to make several points that are particularly

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[23] This term supposedly originated from a 1957 Glenn Ford movie called *3:10 to Yuma*, based on an Elmore Leonard short story, and became slang for the United States or for a US citizen, although recently it has increasingly been used to refer to any foreign country or people from outside Cuba (Bardach, 2002: 11).

relevant to the exploration of social and cultural experiences with emigration as lived by Cubans in Cuba. First, Yaniel proclaimed that every Cuban had been touched personally by emigration. He then identified it as an emotional experience and proceeded to list the types of personal relationships that might be considered significant enough to warrant such emotion. Finally, he highlighted the dispersed quality of this experience by speculating that Cubans are 'regados' [scattered] all over the world. Yaniel's declaration raises important questions regarding how Cubans on the island have imagined and understood the history of population dispersion, territorial displacement, emotional distance, and cultural difference over the past five decades. This concluding chapter reflects upon what this experience of emigration has constituted in terms of broader social and cultural experiences of contemporary Cuba.

The thesis initiated an exploration of how Cubans in Cuba have lived the experience of emigration with an overview of its social generation over the past five decades. Beginning with such a broad scope has served to set a historical context for the political, social and cultural transformations that have formed and informed the experiences of Cuban emigration since 1959. However, rather than solely providing a contextual setting against which isolated experiences have occurred, emphasis has been placed on how this context of experience has been woven together in an often conflictive, but always reciprocal, relationship between processes of revolution and processes of emigration. The mutual constitution of revolutionary and emigration experiences, therefore, has been approached within the context of their own generation as dynamic social relationships, rather than as objectively defined waves of population movement caused by political action or economic forces. Through this generational lens, Cuban emigration has been envisioned throughout this thesis as a social experience that has continued over time and has been passed from generation to generation.

However, in order to understand how these social experiences of Cuban emigration have been lived, the broad scope of generational processes has had to be narrowed. Therefore, this thesis has examined how interrelated discursive histories have produced various collective understandings of emigration across generations of experience in contemporary Cuba. On the one hand, nationalist discourses have tied Cuban identity and belonging to territorial presence on the island and, in turn, have highly politicised the act of emigration. On the other hand, transcultural and transnational discourses have represented less territorial-based notions of Cuban belonging and less politicised understandings of Cuban emigration. The variants of these co-existing social and political discourses have presented important questions regarding how individual and social experiences of post-1959 emigration have been articulated in the imaginations and narrated memories of Cubans on the island.

With the understanding that wider social processes and individual experiences are linked through discursive practices, the thesis then turned our attention to personal experience, and a relational approach to absence as a social and cultural experience of emigration has been proposed. In order to study how Cubans on the island have lived experiences of emigration, those experiences must be understood as mutually constituted within a social relationship of separation. For the non-migrant, this experience of separation has necessarily involved the absence of the person or persons who have left. Although it has been noted that migrants also live the absence of those in the homeland, I have argued that the non-migrant location, both territorial and social, in relation to those who have left, has made absence a particularly significant experience of emigration for Cubans on the island.

In an effort to access how personal experiences of absence have been lived, interviews were conducted with Cubans living on the island. Rather than presenting a single unifying collective experience of emigration, interview participants expressed a

variety of emotions, political positions, and cultural understandings through autobiographical accounts of social relationships that were represented as part of contemporary Cuba. In doing so, they incorporated themselves into the wider social experience of Cuban emigration through selective engagement with various historical events and mediating discourses, as they traversed different generations of experience. By engaging their personal stories with collective Cuban histories, each narrator provided a window into how they had lived that experience with emigration over time and helped us gain insight into how emigration has been integrated into the social and cultural practices of Cubans on the island since 1959.

So, what is it that the narratives of personal experience have shown us about how the processes of emigration have been lived by Cubans in contemporary Cuba? Throughout this thesis, I have argued that processes of revolution and emigration in post-1959 Cuba have generated social and cultural experiences of separation and absence. Furthermore, I have argued that Cubans have mutually and simultaneously lived these experiences of separation and absence, on and off the island, and over time. Therefore, based on the narratives featured in the previous chapters, it is my contention that this social articulation of separation and absence has constituted an experience of diaspora in contemporary Cuban culture, of which the non-migrant Cuban is a fundamental part. To understand how I have arrived at this hypothesis, and its possible implications, we must briefly revisit certain questions and concepts that have been addressed earlier in this text and reconnect them with the personal experiences that have been narrated by Cubans on the island.

After reading the non-migrant narratives, it is clear that Cubans living in Cuba have indeed lived the experience of emigration in some fashion, despite their continuing presence on the island. The individual and collective experiences of Cuban emigration featured in this thesis have been given continuity over several generations through social

relationships that have been narratively stretched across space and time. This is evident in the myriad ways in which the interview participants have given biographical coherence to the relational separations they have experienced through the selective use of particular discursive histories. Each of the four discourses of revolution, exile, *emigración* and diaspora that have mediated the experience of emigration since 1959 were intertwined within individual narratives and across the generations of experience that they narrated. For example, the relationship between political exile and economic emigration has been transformed over time, without either of them ever ceasing to be simultaneously economically and politically charged. On the other hand, some narrators inevitably found their rigid nationalist discourses of revolution and exile to be cumbersome, and in some cases inadequate, to cope with the dynamic social change of the subsequent generations of experience.

In Helena's narrative, for example, we find her still negotiating the social and political rupture of 1959 through the story of her separated family. The biographical discord of her presence in Cuba and her 'close-knit' family's absence is explained by her moral convictions and revolutionary fervour, but it is never entirely reconciled within her emotional history. Her use of revolutionary discourse provides Helena with the biographical continuity needed to mediate the experience of family separation. It is precisely the continuity of her experience of separation that exposes the limitations of correlating social experiences with migratory flows, as many scholars of Cuban emigration attempt to do. Regardless of whether migration flow dropped significantly in the 1970s and 1980s, Helena's aunts, uncles and cousins are still absent from her life in Cuba and that social experience of separation has continued until the present day. For Alba, the exodus was traumatic because the revolution was traumatic. In her narrative, emigration plays a bit part as she withdraws from the Cuba she lives in and longs nostalgically for the Cuba she used to know, providing continuity of discontinuity

through her narrative of social isolation, or *exilio interno*. Helena and Alba were both steeped in nationalist discourses of their generation, and although each gave her own ideological coherence to her narrative, they both negotiated rather rigid notions of *patria* and *cubanidad.* Helena showed how deciding not to leave was a monumental decision and Alba showed that it was a devastating fate not to be able to choose.

As we move into later generations of experience, this political dichotomy becomes blurred and gives way to a more complex array of emotions within social relationships of separation. We can hear Emilio and Ramón both openly question the validity of those exclusive nationalisms in the context of the actions surrounding Mariel in 1980, as told over twenty years after the fact. Faced with conflictive emotions, Edgar is one example of just how complicated and complex personal and social relationships can be when one adheres to their moral principles in the face of social change. Generational and discursive contradictions emerge as he attempts to hold on to his fatherly emotion for his son and his revolutionary devotion to Cuba at the same time. Similarly, Elisa finds herself struggling to reconcile the changing conditions of her family's relationship with the memory of a family that she has preserved and that serves as a constant contrast to life since her brother's emigration. Although generally avoiding the same relational contradictions, Milagros does have a problem that Elisa does not, as she negotiates the material gains of her daughter's emigration with emotional loss in an awkward narrative dance between her daughter's absence and the food in her refrigerator. Meanwhile, Diego struggles to reconcile his partner Jorge's dream of leaving Cuba with his own emotional needs to have Jorge present amid the tumult and doubt that Jorge's absence has produced in his own daily life and his envisioned future.

Through their expressions, these biographical accounts have signalled personal participation in broader social processes and relationships of distance, of separation, of absence and of longing that have spanned generations of Cuban society. These personal

experiences have been configured and reconfigured, alongside national, cultural and family histories, in their memories and imaginations. The generational transmission of the experience of emigration has served to reconfigure those experiences as part of the overall Cuban culture, rather than exclusively as Cuban migrant or exile culture. In contrast to previous research on post-1959 Cuban emigration, which has maintained clear distinctions of migrant-non-migrant and political-economic experiences, the narratives in this thesis demonstrated a significant continuity of experience between generations. To be sure, this generational continuity is not formed through identical non-migrant experiences with emigration, or through experiences comparable to the displacement lived by Cuban exiles and migrants who no longer live in their native land. The continuity between the generations emerges from a shared history of separation and absence particular to non-migrant Cubans who have experienced over five decades of family, friends, co-workers and countrymen leaving Cuba. Understood as mutually constituted experiences of separation and absence that have been articulated over the course of generations, the social processes of dispersion, displacement, difference and distance, as well as expressions such as loss and longing, have all become relevant elements of Cuban culture on the island, as well as off.

Far from exhaustive in its scope, this thesis represents the potential for further biographical research into non-migrant experiences of emigration, absence and diaspora in Cuba and other contexts. The lack of attention paid to how the relationships between migrants and non-migrants might have been transformed, along with changing communications technology, are areas that deserve greater attention. In fact, several of the participants told of how they corresponded with their family abroad through *puentes* [bridges], which allow Cubans to circumvent various structural obstacles to communication with their friends and family who live at a distance. Another point of interest that is not addressed thoroughly in this thesis is the relationship that Cubans

have with travel and how those on the island have imagined travel and the world outside Cuba. To this point, further sustained research could also be done into how the theme of emigration has been represented in Cuban cinema, which represents an extensive amount of material for study. Also, directly related to the specific themes of this thesis, would be to further research the social and cultural implications of the new migratory reforms put into effect in January 2013.

The proposition of an experience of diaspora as it relates to Cuban emigration and exile is directly connected to the relational perspective offered by these non-migrant experiences. The mutual constitution of emigration experience serves to reconfigure it as part of the overall Cuban culture, rather than exclusively as Cuban migrant or exile culture. Understood as a mutually constituted experience of separation and absence lived by Cubans both on and off the island, diaspora ceases to exclusively represent migrant experiences of displacement from the homeland or ethno-national identity. Instead, diaspora processes of dispersion, displacement, difference and distance, as well as expressions such as loss and longing, all become relevant elements of non-migrant social relationships as well. In response to the initial question of how the experience of emigration has been lived by Cubans living in Cuba, this thesis argues that it has been lived as an experience of diaspora, not as a place, or cohort, but as a social and cultural process.

Since 1959, contemporary Cuban society has been enveloped in processes of diaspora, formed by political exile and other forms of emigration that have developed in relation to the processes of revolution. That is to say, the processes of diaspora have formed as integral a part of the revolutionary processes as any other aspect of its history. These processes have been lived in a unique fashion by those who have remained on the island, but it has been a mutual and simultaneous experience for all those who have lived the separations, whether they remained on the island or left. As we have seen

through personal narratives of experience, Cubans living on the island have not merely been affected by emigration; rather, they form a part of its processes. Through their biographical narratives, they have given some level of visibility to their role in these processes. In this way, individuals participate in a broader collective experience of diaspora that, in turn, forms an integral part of the processes of revolution, very concretely through these social relationships.

By studying the non-migrant experience of emigration, we are able to begin to understand the broader implications of diaspora on an entire society rather than just on those who have experienced territorial displacement by leaving their country of origin. The experience of absence as lived by the non-migrant Cuban provides for a different understanding of how diaspora can be temporally and spatially perceived by individuals and societies that have lived them. Similarly, the mutuality of absence provides insight into the dynamics of personal and national relationships while simultaneously confronting notions of mobility and the implications of being 'left behind'. The supposed territorial borders of diaspora experience have not excluded non-migrant Cubans from living the processes of dispersion, displacement and distance from their own relative positions of perceived immobility. In fact, it has been precisely their location, both territorial and social, in relation to their departed friends and family that has produced in the lives of non-migrants the presence of absence as an experience of diaspora created by processes of dispersion, displacement and distance, despite not having left Cuba.

This concluding chapter opened with Yaniel's perception that every Cuban has a friend or family member living abroad and that there are Cubans in every corner of the world. This perception has allowed him to create an imaginary in which *el exterior* is just as familiar, and just as Cuban, as *la patria*. His comment emerged from him telling me about receiving a phone call from his brother in the US, which is the emotional

experience that he claimed all Cubans shared. 'Los pelos se te erizan', he declared, 'Entonces ya uno sabe ¿no? cuando las llamadas son del exterior, por el eco es decir el retorno de, de la llamada'. The echo of the world beyond Cuba's borders had been bouncing around Yaniel's imagination since he was a child eagerly listening to stories about his father's voyages as a merchant marine, and had been further fuelled by contact with his brother Osmany and other friends who lived abroad. Through his friends and social networks on and off the island, he was constantly discovering that a former classmate was living in Spain, or Holland, or Miami, or found himself in the company of friends who had returned to Cuba to visit: 'Tengo muchos amigos que ya hoy por hoy no están aquí'.

As he had listened to his friends and his brother talk about their lives abroad, Yaniel constructed an image of a Cuban nation transplanted. He envisaged entire neighbourhood reunions taking place in Miami or Madrid and veteran Cuban immigrants helping the new arrivals adapt to their surroundings with advice, accommodation, money, and most importantly, a built-in social circle. So many Cubans had left the island, he claimed, that as soon as you arrived to your new community, you would be surrounded by friends from the neighbourhood back in Havana. Through his experience of diaspora, his conceptualisation of what constitutes 'mejor' has become firmly connected to the act of emigration and to the world outside Cuba. At 28 years old, Yaniel claimed to have the same ambitions as any other young person in the world might have. He wanted to travel and he wanted to migrate to another country.

> El sueño mio es poder emigrar. Ese es mi sueño. Mi sueño es así, emigrar y poderlo vivir. Poderlo vivir. Poderlo sentir. Como el refrán de, de José Martí 'Viví en el monstruo y conozco las entrañas.' ¿ya me entiendes? Pero él estuvo allá. Ahora sí lo quiero vivir y lo quiero sentir…Si me va bien, bueno, está bien. Si me va mal, regreso a Cuba.

As Yaniel articulated his 'dream', his mother Maria and father Ibrahim sat opposite their son in the front room of their Centro Habana apartment, drinking coffee and listening to their son express his desire to one day leave Cuba permanently. At one point, I turned to Ibrahim and asked him how it felt, as a father, to hear these words from his son. 'Como él mismo te lo dijo', he responded, 'la gran mayoría de, de la juventud piensa así de, piensa así de, de esa forma. De migrar para ser, para hacer vida y apoyar su familia y regresar'. It was precisely the perceived difficulty of return that had Yaniel's mother worried: 'Escucho a mi hijo, quiere salir pero no lo puedo creer. Pero me entristece porque sé que a la vez que salga, él no, él no puede virar'. In contrast to Yaniel's spirited vision, Ibrahim paints a less flattering picture of Cuban life in foreign lands: an immigrant never ceases to be anything but an outsider. As far as Ibrahim was concerned there was no place better on earth to live than Cuba, and any Cuban living outside the island would be viewed as untrustworthy by anyone who met him abroad. '"Ese dejó su patria"', he claimed they would say, '"y si dejó su patria, deja cualquier cosa y hace cualquier cosa. Es una gente que no se puede dar el corazón"'. However, with two children already living abroad and one more eager to leave Ibrahim recognised that younger generations saw things differently: 'Ellos ven la vida de otro ángulo, son productos de una generación distinta'.

As I reflect on the difference of generational experiences with emigration, as expressed by Yaniel and his parents – or the experiences narrated by Helena, Alba, Ramón, Emilio, Milagros, Elisa, Diego, and Edgar, as well as the 23 other interview participants and Alexis's mother in Cuba – conceptualising diaspora in terms of a territorial location, identity or condition and as exclusively lived by the migrant becomes less relevant. When the non-migrant experience is understood as mutually constitutive of the migrant or exile experience, diaspora ceases to be a place or cohort of expatriates that necessarily exist outside the country of origin, and it becomes the cultural

experience of an entire nation. As shown through the personal narratives featured in this thesis, and echoed in artistic expression from the island, political rhetoric and everyday social expressions such as Yaniel's, the Cubans in Cuba have also lived experiences of separation and absence, of dispersion and displacement, of distance and longing over the past five decades. In short, they too have lived the experience of diaspora. From his home in Centro Habana, Yaniel envisioned a diasporic imaginary of deterritorialised Cuban belonging – similar to those offered by some Cubans living abroad (Méndez Rodenas, 2007; O'Reilly Herrera, 2011) – that existed beyond the reaches of the state and wished for the reunion of those Cubans who had been separated from each other.

> Si se pudiera crear en el mundo un espacio entremedio donde se pudieran reunir todos los no, todas las personas que emigran y que no emigran, ya eso fuera una cosa muy bonita, a ver ¿Cómo me explico? ¿No? Algún sitio donde no haya leyes, donde no haya nada, nada más que encontrarse aquellas personas que no se ven.

Precisely because they have remained on the island, as Ilie suggested, Cubans in Cuba have had to reconfigure their social relationships with family, co-workers, and nation, around the absence of those who compose those relationships. These relationships, then, are stretched, as Giddens phrased it, and have been maintained, even in their most divisive stages, through ambivalent articulations of moments, tactics, and postures that Hall, Clifford and Edwards all remind us are simultaneously separated and connected, mobile and stable. However discordant they might have been at times, it has been within this process of articulating experiences of separation and absence, over distance and time that Mannheim would claim cultural continuity and change has been generated in Cuba since 1959. In this way, as relational experiences of separation and absence, diaspora has become as much a part of contemporary Cuban culture as the revolution.

Anderson claimed that communities are differentiated by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1991: 15). How, then, has the Cuban community, the Cuban nation been imagined since 1959? Has it been, as de la Nuez suggested, a *fuga* of Cuban culture? I would suggest that across several generations of experience with emigration, the biographical narratives in this thesis have illustrated an articulation of experience that has been lived in opposition as exile and revolution and imagined simultaneously in Havana and Miami, or Mexico City, or Madrid, or Manchester. These social generations of experience have been defined by political rupture, economic scarcity, and family fragmentation, but also by the emotional and psychological reconfigurations that forge a cultural continuity particular to contemporary Cuba. Through the intervals of separation that constitute it, this has been a continuity formed not only by revolutionary transformation, but also by diaspora transformation, experienced on the island in various manifestations through the relational articulations of separation and connection, and through the presences and absences of *los que se van* negotiated in the daily lives and imaginations of *los que se quedan.*

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