

**90 MILES OF MIRROR:  
REIMAGINING CULTURAL MEMORY  
THROUGH THE CASE OF  
CUBAN-AMERICAN MIGRANTS  
IN MIAMI**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis presents a methodological approach to cultural memory based on theories that place memory in the socio-cultural realm, employing the Cuban-American community in Miami as a case study. The research reveals the broad scope of this theoretical field and presents a methodological apparatus that incorporates the multiplicity of embedded possibilities. By examining theoretical currents underpinning the field, it becomes clear that the notion of space is a crucial theatre in which memory happens, which is why the thesis uses the concept of cartographical reasoning in its instrumentalisation of memory theory.

The case of the Cuban-American community in Miami is particularly suited for this investigation, not only due to the nature of Cuban nationalism – which to a certain extent was forged jointly between Cuba and its diaspora in the United States – but also because of the role that memory has played in Cuba's political history, especially considering the broad institutionalisation of particular tropes of history. The thesis proceeds through three analytical moments, based on archival research and oral history interviews with Cuban-American migrants in Miami, in which its theoretical considerations unfold into methodology. The first part of the analysis consists of the establishment of the foundational tropes of memory in Cuba, at a time when the interviewees were going through a formative phase of their lives there, through an analysis of educational material institutionalised during the 1970s. What follows is an investigation of how these tropes are operationalised in mass media during the Mariel Crisis – a time in which the Cuban state finds itself in what Walter Benjamin determines as a moment of danger. Finally, the investigation of oral history interviews shows how Cuban-Americans envision their past, present and future based on the narrative employment of accounts of history as well as the spatial environment that frames cultural memory.

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## PREFACE

In contrast to most PhD students, I can pinpoint the two moments that led me to my research focus. The first moment was when I was walking home from class at the University of Aarhus, where we had discussed the uses of history in present-day society. I had had an argument with my professor, who had asked us to analyse historical references in speeches by Danish politicians, as well as Hollywood films containing historical events. I had reacted to a historical reference in a speech that I was certain that no regular Danish person would pick up on, which would mean that the effect of employing it would not merit the level of analysis that we were giving it. In a broader sense, my argument was that an analysis of a text could not lead to a conclusion about its surrounding society if it was not paired with an investigation of the historiographical context of the reception, as well as the receiving subject's interpretation. As a wide-eyed BA student who could not find his words, I stood little chance against my professor, who undoubtedly, and perhaps justifiably, assumed that I was trying to argue my way around having to do the reading for the course. While walking home from class, I was listening to a song by Cuban singer-songwriter Silvio Rodríguez when it came to me that a country where discourses on history were centralised, uniform and to a certain degree under state control, would be a good place to elaborate a theoretical and methodological apparatus that would solve the problem that I unsuccessfully tried to explain to my professor. And since I spoke Spanish, Cuba seemed like the place where I could do that.

The second moment that shaped my focus was the Maria Moors Cabot Awards at Columbia University in New York, 21 October 2013, where I had smuggled myself in to watch Cuban journalist Yoani Sánchez receive an award. Here I met a Cuban American journalist. She was about my age, we had a glass of champagne, and an

overall good time, until I mentioned that I had visited Cuba to do archival studies earlier that year. As soon as I said this, she became sad, angry, she started crying and asked me: how dare I support such a brutal regime, that had murdered political dissidents and exiled her parents. Surprised by her outburst, I responded that I did not actually support any regime in particular and that I was just interested in Cuba as a historian, but with no luck; the mere fact that I had visited the island was enough for her to conclude that I was in full support of the Cuban government. She reacted not to a trauma of her own; she was born in New Jersey, had never visited Cuba. The trauma that made her cry was one passed down by her parents.

Little more than a year after this incident, I noticed that she had published an article on CNN's website with the title "Why I changed my mind about Cuba". In the article, she explained how she had grown up with stories about the horrors of communism in Cuba, family trips to Miami, and posters of Ronald Reagan on her walls. In the article, and in interviews given on the basis of that article, she explained how, in the time between the award ceremony and the publication of the article, she had visited Cuba. Going to the island and meeting family members there had influenced her opinion enough to now be against the US embargo on Cuba.<sup>1</sup>

These anecdotes illustrate the angle from which I entered into the field of memory studies. My standpoint is that memory does exist in the social realm and that it plays an important role in our perception of the relation between the past, the present and the future. I also believe that there is an important gap in research in this discipline that should be addressed. A book has no mnemonic agency if it is not read, and the political use of history in a speech is irrelevant, if the historical references are not understood. My encounter with the Cuban American journalist in New York inspired

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<sup>1</sup> Cusido, "Why I Changed my Mind about Cuba"; Cusido. "How One Visit to Cuba Changed This Cuban-American's Views on the Trade Embargo".

me to shift my focus on cultural memory to the Cuban American diaspora. The fact that the trauma of migration had passed from one generation, with enough power to provoke tears, convinced me of the importance of my research to society today. The personal reconciliation that she went through when visiting Cuba strengthened this belief and pointed my thesis in the direction that it has taken towards the role of the spatial relations between past, present and future in the diasporic Cuban community in Miami, as well as the role of what was left behind, which had such an importance for her reconciliation.

Her reaction on that New York evening was personal, tied to a framework of memory of Cuba that she was exposed to while growing up in New Jersey. It was a traumatic reaction, but it was also political; she reacted to me not unequivocally supporting the US embargo, she mentioned how communism was a failed system, and in her article narrating the story of her personal reconciliation, she mentions how she grew up with Ronald Reagan quotes on her wall. What happened was not just a clash between two systems of cultural memories; it was also a clash between two different systems of ideology, somehow ignited by memories passed down by her parents. Still, I had no way of explaining how these phenomena interconnected, so – paraphrasing the words of Jonathan Safran Foer<sup>2</sup> – I began my very rigid search through the nascent field of memory studies.

Even though the thesis relies on many awe-inspiring thinkers and thoughts, all of whom and which form part of its larger argument, it was Gunnar Olsson's softly spoken words that came to frame their organising in the argument that the thesis presents. A year after the interview, he contributed a beautiful essay to a panel that I organised for the Memory Studies Association congress.<sup>3</sup> The interview, as well as

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<sup>2</sup> Foer, "The Very Rigid Search".

<sup>3</sup> Olsson, "Seething Brains".

the essay “Seething Brains”, in which Olsson details his insights into his thinking on the human manoeuvrings across its personal as well as shared experiences, the subjective cartographical reasoning that guides us through the objective world, have had a profound impact on my thinking about the mnemonic process on all its levels.

I have relied on the help of many people on my way through the process that has resulted in this dissertation, but a few names need to be written down.

The financial aid of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the Society for Latin American Studies enabled me to fully dedicate my focus on this research at crucial moments.

Tony and Adam, not only did you guide me in the writing of a dissertation, you did so with patience and understanding when circumstances were worst, with challenges and encouragement when they were best, and always with deep knowledge and belief in my project. It is safe to say that research on Cuba is often contentious, but through the Cuba Research Forum, what in other fora would have been tedious arguments became fruitful debates. Thanks to Par for taking on the legacy that Tony has left you in the management of this network. I cannot think of anyone better than you. Also thanks to Izzy for good gossip and laughs. Nina was there when I went through the worst of moments. Her office was a place where not only professional anxiety could be shared, but also personal grief comforted. This kind of empathy is hard to find in the real world and more so in the jungle that is academia. Thank you.

Thanks to Mama, Papa, Nilles and Juul for being proud of me.

Finally, and most importantly, my Imaginary Agency, Moniek, Ravi, Lua.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate memory in the social realm. That is to say, the goal is not necessarily to assess any particular memory in and of itself, but rather to probe the theoretical foundation on which approaches towards knowledge production about the relationship between past, present and future are built. This will allow the thesis to assess the possibilities for the elaboration of a methodological approach that incorporates an understanding of the large, societal scales of cultural memory in concert with the intimate scale of the subjective imaginaries from which it emanates. To do so, this investigation has situated itself in the context of Cuba and Cuban-America, in order to use the highly centralised and institutionalised knowledge production machinery of the first as well as the migratory nature of the second as a case study in which these questions can be asked.

In 2002, Wulf Kansteiner wrote an article giving a substantive overview of the field of memory studies at the time, in which he asserted that:

Students of collective memory are indeed pursuing a slippery phenomenon. Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon, but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals. It can take hold of historically and socially remote events, but it often privileges the interests of the contemporary. It is as much a result of conscious manipulation as unconscious absorption and it is always mediated. And it can only be observed in roundabout ways, more through its effects than its characteristics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory", 180.

At the moment of writing, almost two decades after the publication of Kansteiner's article, the field of memory studies has to a large extent been consolidated and the hypothesis of the social and collective aspects of memory in the thesis is therefore hardly a new one: Research centres, international associations and academic journals are dedicated to its study. In June 2019, The Memory Studies Association held its third international congress, where more than 1,500 scholars from all over the globe congregated in 248 panels, 23 round table discussions, three poster sessions and a film festival. All contributions did in one form or the other take their point of departure from the social and collective aspects of memory.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the thesis will show that the critique that Kansteiner delivered in the conclusion of the 2002 essay regarding the lack of attention to what he called "...the problem of reception both in terms of methods and sources,"<sup>6</sup> still poses a problem in terms of theoretical consideration, methodological conceptualisation and practical implementation of research into memory. The thesis will aim to solve this problem by first building an understanding of how memory works on a cultural scale: an undertaking that requires the envisioning of all stages and levels in its development. In this sense, the reimagination of cultural memory, advertised in the title of the thesis, entails the methodological application of an understanding of cultural memory as a process rather than a product.

Another core problem with current interpretations of the interplay between history and memory that does not allow for a full understanding of their roles in society is the interpretation of the two as separate entities. My premise is that there is no juxtaposition between these two concepts, but rather that memory is simply a perception of the past, which can exist on many different levels of society.

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<sup>5</sup> Memory Studies Association, "MSA19 Conference Programme".

<sup>6</sup> Kansteiner, 180.

Furthermore, since it is assumed to be based on communication, collective memory exists in as many different forms and types as there are formats and types of communication in society. This means that history, historical research and historiography are merely a few of many outlets in which memory exists in the social realm of that society. These practices are valued differently in comparison to other formats across societies and groups in those societies. This value is one that at its core holds a notion of truth. This can be seen in the difference between the remembering that happens in Andrew Marr's *A History of 20th Century Britain* and J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series. Whereas the former is written from a paradigm of positivist truth-making, the latter is not burdened by these practices and employs narratives of the Second World War, racial tensions, white supremacist ideology as literary tropes to enhance moral topics. Both of these works contain important thoughts about twentieth century England, but only one of them would get you through a history exam.

Although Chapter 1 of the thesis will offer a broad review of research into the concept of memory in the social realm from a variety of perspectives, it is not too early to say that the thesis subscribes to Kansteiner's general contention that:

...we should conceptualize collective memory as the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

While it will be all but impossible not to reach conclusions about the effect that certain mnemonic phenomena have on their context in the case studies of the thesis, and vice versa, this is not its ultimate goal. Kansteiner's assertion above directly leads to the first aim of the thesis, which is to develop a theoretically founded methodological framework through which it will be possible to investigate a system of memory in the social realm in its whole. If memory is indeed a process that extends into the social realm, then an investigation of memory should include considerations concerning the entire process. This will on one hand entail the emergence of memory from its provenance as a narrative challenging the status quo as well as its journey through the social, cultural and political world until its final canonization as collective knowledge embraced by the status quo. On the other hand, this methodology must also include the possibility to engage in subjective acts of remembrance and thereby be able to comprehend the agency that occurs within those acts within the overarching system.

The second aim of the thesis is to test this assumption while simultaneously continuing the development of the methodological framework to understand the agency of mnemonic processes on a subjective level. In short: to achieve the holistic understanding of mnemonic dynamics that the thesis is in search of, we must study a lot of things, broadly. However, this is insufficient if we do not understand the subjective scale on which memory works, which requires us to delve deep into the mechanisms of meaning. For this, we must study a few things, profoundly.

In the case of the iterative research process of the thesis, in which theoretical and methodological considerations continually develop, it is Cuba and Cuban America, the development of knowledge production about the relation between the past, present and future in Cuba after 1959, the institutionalisation of these narratives and their mediation, that frames the broad context. The subjective scale of memory



will be explored through a profound dive into oral history interviews conducted among the diaspora in Miami Dade County in February 2018. In this sense, the reimagination of cultural memory, mentioned in the title of the thesis, entails a relocation of the focal point of the analysis not just onto the outcome of the mnemonic process, but rather onto the process as a whole. This leads the investigation from the large-scale framework of the historiography that entire generations of Cubans were given to base their cultural memory on, to the smallest scale of the very subjective interpretation of time and space in the narration of the interviewees in Miami Dade County.

It is in its dual investigation that the thesis develops the methodology that is its primary contribution. This means that, although several of the chapters in this dissertation each could merit their own PhD dissertations, they in the context of the thesis function as a part of the bigger argument. The narratives of the oral history interviews will not only function as the product of their mnemonic environment but will also allow for insight into the subjective mnemonic process, through which the thesis will further develop its holistic methodological and theoretical apparatus. In this sense, the concept of memory from which this thesis departs is that of memory as an essential aspect of knowledge production. The question that the thesis asks is how this can shed light on the role memory plays in the design of socio-cultural structures as well as subjective imaginaries.

Chapter 1 will explain the provenance of the perspective on cultural memory that takes shape in the thesis, point out how previous research has avoided engaging with the particular problem that the lack of a methodology encompassing origin, mediation and reception of cultural memory poses, as well as take the first steps towards building its very own methodological frame for analysis. To do so, the thesis will take as its point of departure theoretical approaches to memory that

address the large, societal scale aspects of knowledge production about the past, present and future, focussing particularly on the theories set forth by Jan and Aleida Assmann, as well as theories addressing meaning-making on the subjective level. On the latter scale, the thesis takes particular inspiration from Gunnar Olsson's notion of cartographical reasoning as the navigational tool with which the subject orientates itself in time and space. The particular interest of the thesis is to locate the connective logic between these two frames and apply historical tropes that enables it to analyse and describe representations and interpretations of historical experience.

After the establishment of the theoretical and methodological foundation that the thesis builds on, Chapter 2 will lay out the context of the intertwined histories of Cuba and its diaspora, as well as the particular opportunity that this circumstance provides for the development of memory theory. Simultaneously, the particular historical context of Cuba; the revolutionary rupture of 1959; the struggle for an independent nation in the century prior to 1959; the institutionalisation of official narratives under state control in the 1970s; as well as the trans-national nature of Cuban identity-construction across the Florida Straits provide such a rich material that it also can reflect back on the theoretical positions that have been laid out in this chapter. Hereby, Chapter 2 lays out the historical context of the Cuban American community in Miami and the particular variations of nationalism that this situation has produced, in order to demonstrate how this presents an excellent case study to test and develop the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis.

Chapter 3 analyses the interpretation of the relationship between the past, present and the future that the Cuban government promotes in its framework of power. The particularly centralised Cuban education system, the use of mnemonic signifiers in state-controlled mass media to galvanise support for the government in moments

of danger, and the diasporic nature of the population give us the opportunity to investigate the framework of cultural memory through which Cubans travel, when they migrate from Cuba to Miami. Hereby, Chapter 3 highlights the promotion of a particular conception of the relationship between the past, present and future in Cuba, during a time in which the interviewees were in a formative phase of their lives, followed by Benjamin's "moment of danger,"<sup>8</sup> of the Mariel Crisis.

Chapter 4 will argue the case for the inclusion of oral history interviews and frame the analysis of them as an inroad into the subjective mechanisms of memory. What made Cuba and Cuban America such a particularly generous case study for this research was a combination of factors that will be substantiated further below, but for now, suffice it to say that the particular role that perceptions of the past have played in social, cultural and political life since Cuban communities began imagining a nation;<sup>9</sup> the structures of political institutions that resulted in the highly centralised institutionalisation of education in the 1970s;<sup>10</sup> the diasporic nature of the nation with its large Cuban community in Miami, allow the thesis to investigate memory not only as a temporal but also as a spatial phenomenon.

This double focus, first on the production of a certain narrative compound of truth, a canon or a hegemony that dominates society, followed by an extended focus on the interpretation of people who have lived under this hegemony, canon, or narratively composed truth, is simultaneously the simplest and most complex contribution of the thesis. It is the simplest, as it is not difficult to explain that in order to fully understand the role of a narrative in a social situation, you must investigate its origin, journey and effect in concert. It is the most complex, because it requires approaching

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<sup>8</sup> Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 255.

<sup>9</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> Chávez Rodríguez and Deler Ferrera, *Antología*, 5.

different types of empirical material, that previously have been studied from different theoretical vantage points. This makes the main quest of the thesis an epistemological one: a very rigid search for components for a framework that is conducive to questions that require an understanding of the full scope of cultural memory.

This also means that the thesis has, undoubtedly, left out empirical data that would have been valuable for the analysis of the hegemony, canon, or narrative composition of truth in the context of the case study. The choice of the empirical material that has been included in each step of the investigation is substantiated in the respective chapters, but it should be mentioned here that the decision to include educational material for the teaching of history, in the analysis of historiography in Chapter 3, was carefully considered in order to encompass material that would have been a part of the foundational knowledge of the interviewees in Miami and have had a particularly high degree of impact on their understanding of relations between the past, present and the future. Subsequently, the inclusion of mediatic representation in the coverage of relations between the past, present and the future in the newspaper *Granma* in the initial months of the Mariel Crisis serves to highlight the intentional use of the narrative patterns highlighted in the analysis of the educational material in a test of Walter Benjamin's (hypo)thesis on history: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."<sup>11</sup> The hypothesis that the coverage of *Granma* during this period should reveal a narrative particularly construed to manifest ideological constellations of national identity corresponds to Lukas Port's findings in his discourse analysis of the material, which suggests that the coverage of those Cubans who left the country during the crisis was framed to bolster national unity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Benjamin, 255.

<sup>12</sup> Port, *Hegemonic Discourse and Sources of Legitimacy in Cuba*, 78-80.

Since the assertion that memory extends into the social realm does not set a limit to the sociality of the mnemonic process, it can be assumed that its ramifications stretch from the largest societal frames to the most subjective mechanisms. The mirroring of the analysis of the educational material and the Cuban media coverage during the Mariel Crisis in the oral history interviews conducted in Miami Dade County in February 2018 will take the thesis from an investigation of memory on a large scale into a subjective realm where it will be able to address the ways in which these two scales interact. On this level of the investigation, the thoughts of Swedish geographer Gunnar Olsson, who I interviewed in his home in Uppsala in the spring of 2018, come into play. In Uppsala, Olsson laid out his concept of cartographical reasoning by naming the three elements that make up any map: the projection scheme, invisible in the background, the points that can be named and the lines steeped in power.<sup>13</sup> These will be adapted into the methodology that the thesis promotes.

The consequences of adapting a methodological framework along Olsson's line of thought will be discussed in depth in Chapter 1, but for now, suffice it to say that the three elements of the map will function as heuristic devices that constitute the main pillars of the holistic approach that the thesis argues for. This is why the chapters of the thesis will be organised in three parts. Part 1 (Chapters 1 and 2) discusses the elements that make up the projection scheme onto which the metaphorical map is projected. Part 2 (Chapter 3) analyses the points that the institutionalised narratives, promoted and used by the Cuban government, plot onto this scheme. Finally, and most interestingly, Part 3 (Chapters 4 through 7) investigates the power emanating from the metonymical lines projected through these points in an analysis of the oral history interviews.

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<sup>13</sup> Olsson, conversation with Sjamme van de Voort et al.

## **PART I. THEORY IN CONTEXT**

## **CHAPTER 1: CECI N'EST PAS UNE MEMORY – TOWARDS A FULLER THEORY OF MEMORY**

Besides being what Kansteiner called a slippery phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> the issue of memory in the social realm is conspicuous for a variety of other reasons. For one, it is simultaneously interesting and confusing that this new field does not have a singular epistemological source, as the interest in interpretations of the past has surged across the world as responses to a variety of different societal developments in the present. In Europe, the interest in interpretations of the past came from having to cope with the fascist past of Germany and Spain. In Latin America, memory studies in the Southern Cone surged as a reaction to military dictatorships, in Central America in reaction to civil war, in the US as reactions to the country's racist past.<sup>2</sup>

Given the multiple origins and the subjective nature of the emergence of the field of memory studies, the thesis will not presume to be able to give a singular source of provenance for the field as a whole, but rather emplot the analysis from the subjective point of departure of the thesis, working its way forward through the process of the thesis and its way backwards from new concepts that it encounters.

### **A Danish Point of Departure: Uses of History**

On 2 February 2010, the first session of the second instalment of the newly instituted obligatory seminar series for the BA in History, Uses of History, took place in the basement lecture halls of the main building of Aarhus University. Indicative of the emerging nature of the field was that students were not instructed to buy Niels Kayser Nielsen's seminal work *Historiens Forvandlinger* [*Transformations of History*], which to this day forms the main pillar of the curriculum in the still obligatory

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<sup>1</sup> Kansteiner, 180.

<sup>2</sup> Langenohl, "Memory in Post-Authoritarian Societies", 163-164.

seminar series for fourth-semester history students, but that we were given draft chapters for the book, that would be published later that year.<sup>3</sup> A year later, one of Denmark's leading academic history journals, *TEMP*, dedicated a thematic issue to the topic of uses of history, where Annette Warring introduced the concept with an extensive review of its provenance in historical and didactic studies in Scandinavia.

The focus on the medium carrying the historical narrative in the studies of uses of history can perhaps be explained through the first large research project within the field in Scandinavia, "Humanistisk Historieformidling: I Komparativ Belysning" [Mediation of History in the Humanities: In a Comparative View]. The two leaders of the project, Bernard Eric-Jensen and Claus Bryld, both came from a point of departure in didactic studies and had since the 1980s criticised their discipline for its focus on itself, academic history and historiography, arguing for a broader understanding of history didactics. To this end, they promoted the concept of historical consciousness, meaning to them the dynamics between interpretation of the past, experience of the present and expectations of the future, strongly echoing Reinhart Koselleck's concept of historical time.<sup>4</sup>

A second concept promoted through this research was the concept of a culture of history, which, like the concept of historical consciousness, was inspired by German research into didactics of history. Although one of the central figures of the German tradition, Jörn Rüsen, defined historical culture as: "den Gesamtbereich der Aktivitäten des Geschichtsbewusstseins" ["The general reach of activities of historical consciousness"], it became in the Scandinavian context interpreted as a call for research into non-academic historical narratives in mass media, school, civil

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<sup>3</sup> Kayser Nielsen, *Historiens Forvandlinger*.

<sup>4</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 2-3; Warring, "Erindring og Historiebrug", 7-12.



society organisations, etc.<sup>5</sup> This approach led to a series of projects aimed at organising historical narratives in society into typologies, such as a political use of history, a commercial use of history, ideological use of history, etc.<sup>6</sup> These efforts at dividing historical narratives into categories take their inspiration from Friedrich Nietzsche, who in his *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* set out three possible types of historical narration: a monumental, an antiquarian and a critical type.<sup>7</sup>

Although these typologies are useful to a certain extent, especially when it comes to assessing the goals of a specific narrative, they do not offer tools for further exploration of what happens before or after a historical narrative is crafted to fit one of the various types within the various typologies, and therefore do not provide the tools to understand the wider dynamics of perceptions of the past, present and future. Furthermore, a general problem with concepts and definitions mentioned above is that they do not question what history is. Instead, the purpose of this core concept seems to fluctuate between meaning either the truth, the past and the truth about the past. The danger of allowing theoretical development to stop at a point where we can identify narratives of a certain type is that the practice of the methodology arising from this theory becomes one of enlightened historians pointing fingers. The use of literary tropes of the Second World War in the debates on racism in the Harry Potter series, or the use of the life and work of José Martí by political figures in Miami and Havana could be pointed out to be taken out of context, wrong, or serving a particular purpose, but this does not allow for further understanding of the communities that produce and consume these narratives.

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<sup>5</sup> Warring, 7-12.

<sup>6</sup> Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture", 38-43; Sjöland, *Historia från Tidskriftsredaktionen*, 32-42; Farbøl, "Kunsten at Lægge Historien til Rette", 68.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, 14-19.

Kayser Nielsen's contribution to the field of uses of history was the addition of the notion of historical tropes, building on the aforementioned concept of historical consciousness as well as American historian and literary critic Hayden White's tropics of discourse, as basic foundational themes which serve to structure historical narration. The notion that Kayser Nielsen takes from White's *Meta-History* is that no historian can represent the past exactly "how it really happened", but has to resort to literary tropes to emplot the historical narrative:

Providing the "meaning" of a story by identifying the kind of story that has been told is called explanation by emplotment. If, in the course of narrating his story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has "explained" it in one way; if he has structured it as a Comedy, he has "explained" it in another way. Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas White's analytical model is highly complex, as it centres around the structuralist linguistic tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony, Kayser Nielsen takes a simpler approach to analysing uses of history by seeing any historical narrative as a line drawn on a piece of paper. An emplotment of the past as good, the present as bad and the future as worse forms a trope of decay; the emplotment of a golden age to which we can return, a U-trope (as the line emplotted here looks like a U); a circular emplotment, a trope of repetition, etc.<sup>9</sup> However, since these tropes are abstract models of narratives inherent in representations of history, they still did not satisfy the need for a tool that would allow me to work on the full scope of narratives of past, present and future from conception, through

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<sup>8</sup> White, *Meta-History*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Kayser Nielsen, 53-61.

mediation, re-mediation, canonization or archival to perception. The historical tropes of Kayser Nielsen, understood as the operationalisation of Koselleck's historical time within a particular historical consciousness, will be applied as a fundamental tool of the analysis of cultural memory in the archival material as well as the interviews – although it must be emphasized that the concept of historical tropes cannot stand alone without an understanding of their role in the broader dynamics of cultural memory.

### **Broadening the Field: Memory Studies and Frustration with its use in Latin American Studies**

*Es wurde schon alles gesagt, nur noch nicht von jedem* – ‘everything has already been said, just not yet by everyone’. It is in the spirit of this famous saying by the comedian Karl Valentin that observers and critics of memory studies nowadays tend to sum up the state of the field.<sup>10</sup>

Since the field or study of uses of history did not encompass the full scope of the mnemonic process, different approaches to perceptions of past, present and future had to be examined. The writing of Kayser Nielsen and Warring pointed towards memory studies. As mentioned further above, the study of memory as a social phenomenon has a multitude of provenances, all depending on where you begin looking for them. Julia Creet credits Frances Yates for reintroducing the study of memory as a factor external to the body in her 1966 *The Art of Memory*, and places the transdisciplinary turn towards memory in the field of European studies as a reaction central to “...discussions of nation formation and reform since the Second World War, and even more intensely so in post-1989 Eastern Europe, a time and

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<sup>10</sup> Erll, “Travelling Memory”, 4.

context that produced [...] 'the memory turn' of both monument and intellect, framed by the memory of the Second World War."<sup>11</sup>

Creet's positioning of the foundational academic, political and geographic context of the genesis of memory studies reveals a Eurocentric tendency. However, although the field today, like any academic field, has its central texts and key scholars that any researcher needs to know in order to move within it, its provenance is not singular in either an academic, political or geographical sense. In Latin America, for example, a similar mnemonic turn has over the course of the last decades of the twentieth century taken place in cultural, social and legal studies as a reaction to the dictatorships that rose and fell on the continent during that time. One of the primary proponents of the field of memory studies, coming from Latin America today, is Elizabeth Jelin, an Argentinian sociologist who has written broadly about family structures, social movements, democracy and ultimately, memory. In her *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, she establishes her definition of memory as being a dynamic one, where the production, interpretation and reinterpretation of narratives about the past make up the stuff of memory:

The past is gone, it is already de-termin(at)ed; it cannot be changed. The future, by contrast, is open, uncertain, and indeterminate. What can change about the past is its meaning, which is subject to reinterpretations, anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future. That meaning of the past is dynamic and is conveyed by social agents engaged in confrontations with opposite interpretations, other meanings, or against oblivion and silence. Actors and activists "use" the past, bringing their understandings and

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<sup>11</sup> Creet, "Introduction", 4 & 10.

interpretations about it into the public sphere of debate. Their intention is to establish/convince/transmit their narrative, so that others will accept it.<sup>12</sup>

Although Jelin's definition allows for a broad understanding of memory, her focus is very much on its political aspect. In order to arrive at the definition above, Jelin begins with the neurological aspect of memory, the chemical reactions in the brain, before quickly moving through psychoanalysis to Paul Ricoeur's work on memory as a foundation of identity:

Each individual has his or her "own memories," and they cannot be transferred to others. It is this singularity of memories and the possibility of activating the past in the present – memory as the present of the past, in the words of Paul Ricoeur (1999, 16) – that defines personal identity and the continuity of the self over time.<sup>13</sup>

After affirming that memory is a phenomenon calling forth the past in the present past for identity formation into the future, Jelin moves beyond the individual and into the Durkheimian world of Maurice Halbwachs:

Individual memories are always socially framed. These frameworks bear the general representations of society, its needs and values. They also include the worldview and language of a society or group. For Halbwachs (1992), this means that "we can remember only on condition of retrieving the position of past events that interest us from the frameworks of collective memory ... Forgetting is explained by the disappearance of these frameworks, or of part

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<sup>12</sup> Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-14.

of them". This entails that the social is always present, even in the most "individual" moments. "We are never alone."<sup>14</sup>

The concept of memory as a social phenomenon that Jelin, by way of Halbwachs, promotes here as collective memory is one of structures and frameworks. The stories about family members disappeared through the various violent repressions of Plan Condor are not collective memories, but the narratives iterated into the world through frameworks and structures of collective memory set up by actors in a political context, are.

Although the thesis recognises the importance of work on the political life that follows dictatorship, there are two problems with the specific focus on this particular type of context, as it is seen in the work by Jelin. The first is, as was the case with the field of uses of history, that there is little focus on how to theoretically conceptualise and methodologically approach the mnemonic process in all its aspects. The second is that the concept of memory has subsequently been taken away from the thoughtful conceptualisation and applied in other research projects dealing with transitions from dictatorship to democracy in the Latin American context without the conceptual considerations that Jelin applies. In many cases this means that the concept, unfortunately, is emptied of any particular meaning that could further the study of countries in transition or the field of memory studies at large.

This tendency was particularly clear during a conference at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) titled "Democracy and Memory in Latin America". One of the more nuanced and conceptually critical arguments was delivered in the keynote by Jelin, in which she started with a critique

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11.

of the very implication of the title of the congress, which suggests a direct link between memory and democracy. This, according to her, was a result of the discipline establishing itself in Latin America during a time in which transitions towards democratic societies were taking place. Highlighting disappeared family members to give them a place in the historical account of dictatorship in the cases of, i.e., Argentina and Chile, was naturally closely related to the discourses on human rights, which require the investigation of the victims of human rights abuses, and thereby inscribed the study of memories in a certain legal context. The very important work of giving the victims of human rights abuse a place in the narratives of dictatorial pasts is, however, not where memory studies has its limits, which is the case in the projects that Jelin mentioned in her presentation. The conclusion of the keynote was that process-oriented concepts of memory as a collective and dynamic phenomenon do exist in theory, but that they often do not survive as such in practice.<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, the remaining congress proceeded, much as Jelin had warned in her keynote, with very few considerations as to what it means to say that memory has a collective aspect. The verbs used to describe mnemonic actions were such as reviving, preserving, restoring, rejuvenating or even building memories. In some cases, as in the presentation on Chile by Sergio Bitar, memory became synonymous with the history of the oppressed.<sup>16</sup> In other cases, as in the presentation on Haiti by Michèle Montas, it became antithetical to the discourses of the oppressing governments.<sup>17</sup> In yet other presentations, such as John Dinges' on the detention of Pinochet, it was simply used as a synonym for history.<sup>18</sup> The lack of definition of memory as an analytical concept and in most cases its use as an aggregate of

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<sup>15</sup> Jelin, "What Type of Memory for what Kind of Democracy?"

<sup>16</sup> Bitar, "How Memory Can Help Democratization and Reconciliation".

<sup>17</sup> Montas, "The Jean Claude Duvalier Trial".

<sup>18</sup> Dinges, "The Document Troves Leading to the Detention of General Pinochet and Operation Condor".

history, meant that all the very valuable insights on contexts in which mnemonic dynamics play a central role in societal development remained exactly that: contexts.

The conference at Harvard was accompanied by a special issue of the DRCLAS journal *ReVista*, titled: *Memory: In Search of History and Democracy*. In the editor's letter, editor-in-chief June Erlick tells the story about how her book on Irma Flaquer, a Guatemalan journalist disappeared in 1980 for her criticism of the dictatorship, appeared in a Spanish edition years after its English publication, and how young Guatemalans email her to ask about her legacy. This filling of holes in the traumatic past of Guatemala, to Erlick, is memory. The background to this definition comes from her work for the Inter American Press Association and the investigation of forced disappearances during the Guatemalan civil war, where she relied heavily on reports by the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) as well as the Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI).<sup>19</sup> In a 2005 article about her work, Erlick writes that: "No es casualidad de que ambos informes utilicen la palabra "memoria". La memoria cumple su papel como instrumento para rescatar la identidad colectiva, combatir la impunidad y reconstruir la historia."<sup>20</sup> This idea of memory as an undefined instrument or a method through which truth about the past is constructed, with a supposed and never addressed influence on the elimination of impunity and creation of collective identities, is however quickly discarded as she on the following page continues: "El informe de la CEH, y después el del REHMI, rompió con [la censura], ayudó a esclarecer la memoria y a comenzar con un proceso a través del que la gente podía hablar y recordar libremente."<sup>21</sup> Here memory, again, becomes synonymous with the term history.

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<sup>19</sup> Erlick, "Historia, Memoria y Impunidad", 53-67.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 55.



This, often contradictory, definition of memory seems to have its roots in the REHMI report, which refers to memory in general as the truth about human rights violations:

[...] la memoria de las atrocidades es también parte importante en la prevención de la violencia. Las versiones justificadoras de los hechos no sólo tratan de exculpar a sus autores, sino que también justifican en la práctica la ideología y los métodos en los que se basó la práctica del horror. [...] La memoria tiene una clara función preventiva. Del desmantelamiento de los mecanismos que han hecho posible el horror depende en gran medida que no se repita la tragedia.<sup>22</sup>

This conceptual confusion regarding the core concept in the article, the issue of *ReVista*, as well as at the Memory and Democracy conference is one that dominates in Latin American area studies. The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) hosts a section named *Historia Reciente y Memoria*, whose stated central goals are to: “promote interdisciplinary and international dialogue and collaboration among scholars interested in analysing the recent past of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and the use and/or the abuse of memory of that past in the present.”<sup>23</sup> One of the recent achievements of the section is a dossier published in the journal of LASA, titled “Verdad, Justicia y Memoria en América Latina”. In the introductory article, Jo-Marie Burt highlights what she sees as three trends in the dossier and in memory research within Latin American studies in general. Firstly, she emphasizes that scholarship into transitional justice mechanisms is producing new and more complex understandings of the past. Secondly, she highlights how survivors and families of victims have become central to these studies. Her final

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<sup>22</sup> Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, “La Lucha por el Rescate de la Memoria”.

<sup>23</sup> Latin American Studies Association, “Historia Reciente y Memoria”.

point is to highlight the importance of the activist-scholar interrogating structures of systemic inequality, committed to improving knowledge, contributing to public debates, and informing policymaking to promote social change.<sup>24</sup>

One might argue that, if Burt's concept of memory is merely a more complex understanding of the past, then what she really does is invent a concept subordinated, or in the best case running parallel, to the concept of history. In that case, the best thing that an activist-scholar might do to interrogate structures of systemic inequality and oppression might be to ask whether it is useful to conceptualise a disciplinary hierarchy that divides understandings of the past into memory and history. Perhaps the most progressive thing to do would in her case be to allow scholarship highlighting the narratives of the oppressed to be categorised as history rather than creating a new hierarchy of knowledge production.

The articles in the dossier all detail various efforts of truth-seeking from perspectives of NGOs, legal bodies, communities and in some cases academic institutions, in Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, Peru, Paraguay, El Salvador. Only two of the twelve articles (not counting the introduction by Burt) mention the term memory and move beyond the principal establishment of truth-seeking communities and the various contexts they operate in. In her article, Katherine Hite explains how: "Grassroots memorial activists throughout the Americas are mobilizing both to commemorate victims of the repressive past and to confront ongoing civil rights, political rights, and social justice issues."<sup>25</sup> This argument could be understood in the light of Leigh A. Payne's argument that these truth-seeking efforts serve as political capital that previously suppressed communities can use as leverage for

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<sup>24</sup> Burt, "Truth, Justice, and Memory in Latin America", 5-9.

<sup>25</sup> Hite, "Reckoning Time".

political recognition.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Payne's argument is even the key to understanding how memory studies is conceptualised in this dossier: as the recognition of a group, whose human rights have been violated, for future political purposes.

There are two reasons why this definition of memory is troublesome. First and foremost, the definition is logically inconsistent. If it is supposed to be synonymous with the concepts of 'truth' and 'history', then it has no function at all, since those concepts already exist. Furthermore, if the term memory is consolidated to mean a truth about the past from a certain political perspective, then it is bound to be a polarizing force in a post-conflictual society, rather than one promoting reconciliation. The second reason for my apprehension towards the definitions found in this dossier lies in direct continuation of the former argument. The definitions, as far as the concept is even defined and operationalised in the dossier, seem to be merely a certain aspect of what memory as a social phenomenon can be, from the perspective of a scholar from a particular discipline. For the journalist, the mnemonic aspect of clandestine mass graves is the documentation of truth about these graves. For the human rights activist in post-dictatorial Argentina or Chile, it is the inclusion of forced disappearances in the account of the nation. In order to understand what memory studies could mean to the various cases in the dossier, one would, however, suppose that a fuller understanding of what memory is and can be would be required.

On a practical level, the political aspects of memory studies, like the labelling of victims and perpetrators, means that there is a mutually reinforcing system, where actors from the political and the academic sphere benefit from the labelling of their practice as part of the memory boom. On a more abstract level, the problem is that this definition of memory continues to be considered as an object, rather than

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<sup>26</sup> Payne, "The Political Economy of Remembering Past Violence".

promoting understanding of memory as a social phenomenon. Furthermore, there is a chance that the field of memory studies becomes overly focussed on concepts of “trauma” and “traumatic memory”. Although examples of previous research most certainly would suggest that a focus on the traumatic memories prompted by the splitting of a nation would be appropriate, this thesis does not go down that path.<sup>27</sup> The choice of not employing the model of traumatic memory was initially due to the fear of applying the logic of the hammer looking for nails, as well as the interviews in Miami simply showing a much broader variety of responses to the Cuban-American experience than merely trauma. The thesis furthermore subscribes to the call set forth by the introductory panel ‘The Horizons of Memory Studies’ at the Memory Studies Association’s second annual conference in Copenhagen in December 2017, as well as the editorial board of the 2019 special issue of the journal *Memory Studies* on memories of joy. As pointed out in the latter:

The ‘traumatic paradigm of memory’ (Rigney, 2018: 369) causes a double risk with regard to the role of memory studies. One is that our research becomes monotonous and predictable, unable to uncover other types of memory. The ‘fixation on violence’ makes researchers of memory unaware of alternative modes of remembering and alternative memory traditions (Rigney, 2018: 369). The other risk is that memory scholars, by focusing on victimhood, genocide and trauma, contribute to very dark views on the past, which can support nationalist victim narratives and different types of aggressive or xenophobic mobilization.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The list of references to influential studies on traumatic memory is long. A few valuable examples are: Assmann and Detmers, *Empathy and its Limits*; Schwab, “Replacement Children: The Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatic Loss”; Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory”; Parr, *Deleuze and Memorial Culture: Desire, Singular Memory and the Politics of Trauma*; Serpente, “Diasporic constellations”; Sodaro, “Prosthetic trauma and politics in the National September 11 Memorial Museum”.

<sup>28</sup> Sindbæk Andersen, “Introduction: Memories of Joy”, 6.

Before moving on to the next step in the genealogy of memory studies that shaped the thesis, a mention needs to be made of another project that, like the ones mentioned above, aims to pursue what from a certain political standpoint could be seen as a commendable purpose, but which uses the concept of memory in a way that confuses rather than offers any additional insight. *Cuban National Reconciliation* is the title of a report on a two-year project with the same name, carried out by the so-called “Task Force on Memory, Truth, and Justice”, led by Cuba-scholar Marifeli Pérez-Stable.<sup>29</sup>

The report and the project are interesting in a number of different ways, including their deeply political mission statement, comparisons to reconciliation projects in Spain, the Southern Cone countries, South Africa and Eastern Europe (understood as a homogenous entity), and approach involving 26 people (16 from the Cuban diaspora, 10 from other countries). The following discussion will, however, focus on the definition of memory and its consequences for the report.

In the presentation of the report, Pérez-Stable writes that it carries “...two main recommendations: first, that a dialogue – among all Cubans and with all those interested in Cuba – be held regarding the Cuban civic reunion and, second, that Cubans seek the means to recover our historical memory as a central element of that reunion, which must necessarily be peaceful, inclusive, and democratic.”<sup>30</sup>

In this statement, the subject position is framed through the first person plural possessive pronoun “our”, preceding the object, “historical memory”, which is to be “recovered as a central element of the civic reunion of Cubans”, establishes a concept of memory as a kind of hidden key needed to unlock the treasure chest of a democratic and reconciled Cuba. However, although this conceptualisation

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<sup>29</sup> Pérez-Stable, *Cuban National Reconciliation*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

of memory as an undefined tool that unlocks utopias of reconciliation and democratization is the guiding argument throughout the report, it is not defined in detail at any point.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the understandings of the role that memory is to play in the report's proposal for a future reconciliation process is at times confusingly contradictory, as it at times is equated with the term truth: "[in Guatemala] ... civil society has been a vibrant player in the processes of rescuing memory and making accusations,"<sup>32</sup> while at other times seeming to exist on a parallel level with truth: "Indeed, the experiences of other countries highlight the significance of restoring memory, unveiling the truth, and pursuing justice in order to identify the guilty and determine their criminal and political responsibility."<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, the report suggests that this undefined concept of memory serves as a solution to the problems that it addresses, without answering the most crucial question: How?

While the report raises important topics related to human rights abuses and reveals interesting aspects about the Cuban American academic community, it is, contrary to the purpose stated in its title, only marginally touching upon its core concept of memory. The use of the term memory in this report, as well as in the studies mentioned previously in this chapter, is one that closely resembles the use of the term free information within the so-called dictator's dilemma, conceived in 1985 by then US Secretary of State George Schultz in an article for *Foreign Affairs*. In Schultz's binary logic, totalitarian societies faced the choice between allowing a free flow of information through new technologies and falling behind in the development of their economies:

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vii, x, 5, 6, 38, 49, 50, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 60.

Totalitarian societies face a dilemma: either they try to stifle these technologies and thereby fall further behind in the new industrial revolution, or else they permit these technologies and see their totalitarian control inevitably eroded. In fact, they do not have a choice, because they will never be able entirely to block the tide of technological advance.<sup>34</sup>

In his *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, Evgeny Morozov traces how the dictator's dilemma became the functioning logic behind foreign policy thinking, especially in the United States, when it came to theories of democratisation in the USSR, Warsaw Pact countries, China and beyond.<sup>35</sup> A 2013 article in the annual proceedings of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy situated the critique levelled against the dictator's dilemma by Morozov, Malcolm Gladwell, Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu in the Cuban context.<sup>36</sup> Of these scholars, Morozov remains the most outspoken critic of this binary logic, dubbing it cyber-utopianism.<sup>37</sup> The studies of memory discussed above have a similar approach to the idea of memory in the social realm, which they frame as a solution to problems ranging from democratic deficiency, state-sponsored human rights abuses and other collective trauma, while failing to explain how this would happen and quite simply what memory is. A non-democratic or divided society does not automatically become democratic or reconciled with the introduction of memory. Against the argument of non-democracy + memory = democracy, political slogans evoking memory such as "Make America Great Again" or "Take Back Control" come to mind, while the argument of division + memory = reconciliation can be countered by a look at the memories of happy Dutch childhood memories of candy and presents delivered by Saint Nicholas' black-faced helper in contrast to the memory of slavery, that

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<sup>34</sup> Shultz, "New Realities and New Ways of Thinking", 716.

<sup>35</sup> Morozov, *The Net Delusion*, 93-97.

<sup>36</sup> Henken and van de Voort, "From Nada to Nauta", 341-342.

<sup>37</sup> Morozov, xiii.

produced the image of *Zwarte Piet* [Black Pete]. What is suggested here is not a rejection of studies of memory, but rather that we learn from the debates surrounding cyber-utopianism in order to avoid memory-utopianism. In order to do so, we need a debate about what memory is and what it can be.

### **Back to Basics and Forward towards Complexity**

Before continuing this exploration of memory studies as practised within the context of Latin America, the thesis will let itself be informed by Hans Jørgen Lundager Jensen's review of Jan Assmann's concept of memory. As a religious scholar of the old testament, Lundager Jensen's interests lie in the change from religions based on oral tradition to religions based on scripture. Exactly that development is J. Assmann's primary point of investigation. In the relatively short article, Lundager Jensen points out J. Assmann's reliance on French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who in his *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (1926), *La Topographie Légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte* (1941) and the posthumously published *La Mémoire Collective* (1950) coined the term 'collective memory'. Lundager lays out Halbwachs' Durkheimian approach to memory: "Kollektiv hukommelse deles af et antal mennesker [ifølge Halbwachs], for hvem den er meningsfuld. Den former det, der huskes, i overensstemmelse med det, der giver mening for dem, der husker" [According to Halbwachs, collective memory is shared among a number of people, for whom it has meaning. It shapes what is remembered, according to what makes sense to those who remember]. Whereas Halbwachs' work is concerned with the initial process of socialization of knowledge in the form of memory, Lundager Jensen interprets J. Assmann as a development of this theoretical approach to fit a societal scale. As an Egyptologist with an interest in the introduction of writing to early Egyptian civilization, the addition of a fixture of memory to Halbwachs' looser framework adds several layers of complexity. As per Lundager Jensen:



Det afgørende for fremkomsten af en kulturel hukommelse er altså ikke skrift i snævrere forstand. Det afgørende er derimod social kompleksitet, fremkomsten af arbejdsdeling, der skaber muligheden for bl.a. en særlig klasse af hukommelsesbærere.

[Thus, what is crucial to the emergence of a cultural memory is not writing in the narrower sense. What is crucial, on the other hand, is the social complexity, the emergence of division of labor, which creates the possibility of, among other things, a special class of memory carriers.]<sup>38</sup>

The development of Halbwachs' theory by J. Assmann results, according to Lundager Jensen, in a division of Halbwachs' collective memory into a communicative and a cultural memory, illustrated in a simplified table in the review article:<sup>39</sup>

	brain <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">→</span>			writing
<b>Halbwachs</b>	individual	collective		history
<b>Assmann</b>	(individual)	communicative	cultural	(history)

It is this conceptualisation of memory that takes J. Assmann's work to a level where the concept becomes a theory of not only group identity, or even of knowledge production, but of power in society.

*Die Allianz zwischen Herrschaft und Erinnerung* hat auch eine *prospektive* Seite. Die Herrscher usurpieren nicht nur die Vergangenheit, sondern auch die Zukunft, sie wollen erinnert werden, setzen sich in ihren Taten

<sup>38</sup> Lundager Jensen, "Religion, Hukommelse og Viden".

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Denkmäler, sorgen, dass diese Taten erzählt, besungen, in Monumenten verewigt oder zumindest archivarisch dokumentiert werden. Herrschaft 'legitimiert sich retrospektiv und verewigt sich prospektiv.'

[The *alliance between power and memory* also has a *prospective* side. Rulers usurp not only the past but also the future because they want to be remembered, and to commemorate their own deeds by monuments, ensuring that their glory will be narrated, sung, immortalized or, at the very least, recorded in archives. Power 'legitimizes itself retrospectively and immortalizes itself prospectively.']

J. Assmann's reflections on the relation between power and memory are followed by reflections on power and forgetting, with references to the work of Aleida Assmann.<sup>40</sup> A. Assmann's work runs in many cases parallel to that of J. Assmann, perhaps since the two scholars have been married since 1968. There are, however, a number of important distinctions between the focus and conceptualisation of memory between the two. Following A. Assmann, the binary relation between memory and forgetting set up by J. Assmann is not dichotomous, as forgetting is an inherent component of remembering. No memory can contain the full truth about the past, whether we conceive of memory as a social and collective or a psychological and individual concept. In "Canon and Archive", A. Assmann writes:

When thinking about memory, we must start with forgetting. The dynamics of individual memory consists in a perpetual interaction between remembering and forgetting [...] In order to remember some things, other things must be forgotten. Our memory is highly selective. Memory capacity is limited by neural and cultural constraints such as focus and bias. It is also limited by

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<sup>40</sup> Assmann, *Das Kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 70-72.

psychological pressures, with the effect that painful or incongruent memories are hidden, displaced, overwritten, and possibly effaced. On the level of cultural memory, there is a similar dynamic at work.<sup>41</sup>

The key words in the quote above are those of interaction and dynamic. In A. Assmann's conceptualisation, cultural memory centres around the actions and agencies that on one hand are possible within its framework while simultaneously maintaining this framework. In "Canon and Archive", A. Assmann argues that two actions in two modes are possible within cultural memory: remembering and forgetting in an active or passive mode.<sup>42</sup> Taking the example of the representation of colonial histories in schoolbooks, these have only recently begun to move to the active remembering of canonization into curricula of former colonizing powers. Before this movement began, these narratives were floating dangerously between the passive remembering in archives and the passive forgetting of not being circulated on a societal basis, illustrating the grey area between these two categories and their openness to interpretation. The action and mode of active forgetting is associated with various forms of violence; the burning of books, censorship, the social taboo related to narratives of abuse, etc. The table below, taken from "Canon and Archive," contains further examples of what the double dichotomy of active/passive remembering/forgetting can be.

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<sup>41</sup> Assmann, "Canon and Archive", 97.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

Cultural Memory			
Remembering		Forgetting	
<i>active</i>	<i>passive</i>	<i>passive</i>	<i>active</i>
select, collect working memory <b>canon</b> museum, monument	accumulate reference memory <b>archive</b> store house	neglect, disregard material relicts dispersed in forgotten depots	negate, destroy material deconstruction taboo, censorship, trash

1)Table taken from "Canon and Archive," p. 99

With the expansion of Halbwachs' collective memory into the dynamic conceptualization of cultural memory by Assmann and Assmann, the floor is now open to debates on how narratives about the past function on societal and inter-societal levels. The problem with this large definition with its many moving parts, is that it is hard to conceive of a research project that can investigate all aspects of cultural memory.

As is the case with the cases of the Latin American investigations into memory as an aspect of reconciliation processes after dictatorship, Assmann and Assmann also write within a specific political context: that of the German reconciliation with its national-socialist past. In this context, an abundance of memory-related research projects were framed around the concepts developed by Assmann and Assmann, after their main works were published during the 1980s and the early 1990s. One of the most ambitious projects was carried out at the Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen with funding from the German Research Foundation for the creation of Sonderforschungsbereich (Special Research Centre) 434, or just SFB434,

which lasted from 1997 to 2008 and funded more than 100 researchers, including historians, Germanists, classicists, art historians, Romanists, Anglicists, Orientalists, philosophers, social scientists and sociologists.

The greatest value of the SFB434 for the thesis lies, however, not in the individual project results, but rather in its organisation. Due to the large scale of the project and the many researchers, ranging over many different disciplines and time frames, an organisational framework was needed, in which the researchers could be allowed to focus on their individual projects, while also engaging with the larger framework in a productive manner. The title of the project was determined to be “Erinnerungskulturen” [Memory Cultures], giving way to what Astrid Erll has called: “[...] ein mehrdimensionales Modell für die kulturwissenschaftliche Gedächtnisforschung [...], das Dynamik, Kreativität, Prozesshaftigkeit und Pluralität der kulturellen Erinnerung akzentuiert” [... a multidimensional model for memory studies in the cultural and social sciences, which accentuates the dynamics, creativity, processuality and plurality of cultural memories]. The table below, found in the original SFB434 proposal, functions as a prospective mapping of research collaboration, that, due to the ambition of the project, still today functions beyond the project and can be seen as a tentative map of the field of memory studies.<sup>43</sup> Note here the term ‘dominant memory’, which refers to research into hegemonic memories in relation to so called competing memories.<sup>44</sup> Since the dynamic of this research focus is elegantly explained by A. Assmann’s idea of the four different modalities of memory above, and the canon as the dominant form of memory, this is the terminology that will be used in this thesis.

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<sup>43</sup> Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, 31-34.

<sup>44</sup> Erll, “The Disciplines of Memory Studies”, 49-50.

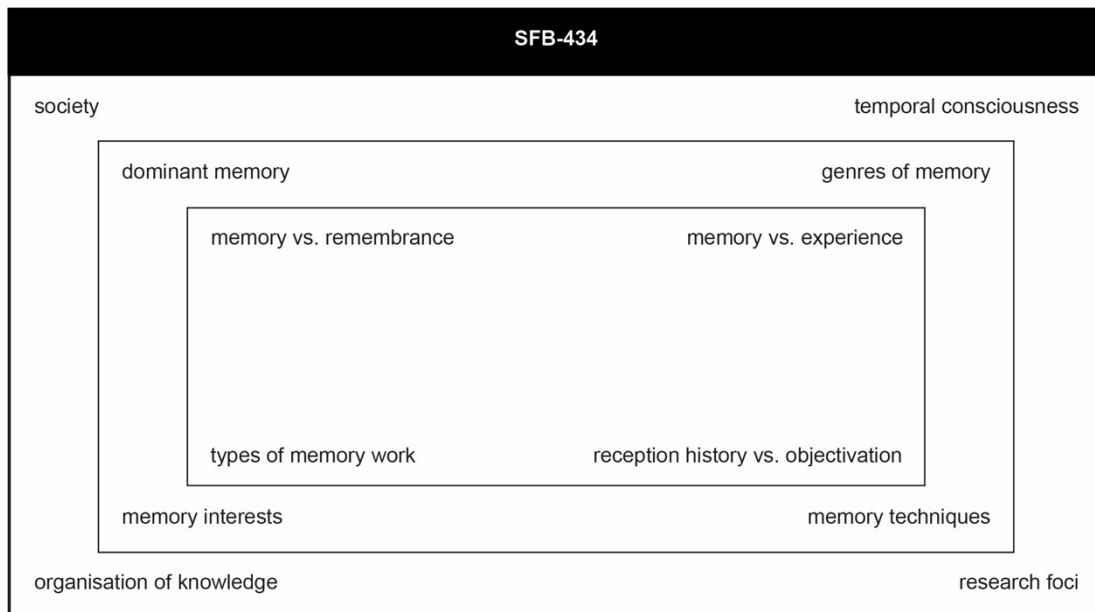


Table taken from *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*. p. 33

Before moving to the following section on the spatialisation of memory, it is essential to reflect and critique the many names of memory and the fixation on finding the next predicate. The weakness of the theoretical implications of the SFB434-framework is that it is just that: implications of an administrative framework and not a coherent theoretical argument. Although the SFB434 implies multidimensionality, the individual research projects remained within their own disciplinary frameworks, adding the concept of 'memory' as a space in which the phenomena they investigated took place. When we take a jump forward to the inaugural conference of the Memory Studies Association in Amsterdam, December 2016, and look through the programme for that and the following congresses (Copenhagen, 2017, Madrid, 2019), we see how this dichotomy – between an interdisciplinarity that celebrates memory as a concept that unites scholars from a multitude of disciplinary and geographical backgrounds, and the need to contextualise this concept to these different disciplines and geographies – has generated a host of additional predicates to accompany the core term of memory. Collective memory, historical memory, communicative memory, cultural

memory, mediatized memory, trans-generational memory and multi-directional memory are all terms that have gained prevalence over the last decades, with each a different (although deceptively similar) provenance and epistemology and therefore also different methodological impacts. The idea of memory in the social realm thereby becomes a concept that simultaneously unites scholars and pulls them apart in a power struggle centred around the social nature of academia as an institution based on hierarchies and boundaries. When a prominent scholar within the field promotes a certain predicate, this naturally draws the field in the direction of this researcher and their research agenda. A problem is that, as is the case with the study of memory within Latin American area studies, it is easy to mention the latest predicate promoted by a leading scholar, without assessing the consequences of their theoretical standpoints beyond the initial argument that memory is a social phenomenon that is mediated, contested, canonized, and/or discarded through the social dynamics of a cultural group, large or small.

### **Multiple Dimensions also Means Space**

Given that my initial point of departure, when embarking on my very rigid search for a concept of memory that I could operationalise, was that perceptions of the past have their provenance in multiple dimensions, it was given that I also had to think about the notion of space and place. One of the names that has achieved a position – a place – in the canon of memory studies when it comes to the issue of spaces and places, is that of French historian Pierre Nora, and his concept of *les lieux de mémoire*.<sup>45</sup> In the words of Michael Rothberg:

It would be impossible to overstate the influence of Pierre Nora's massive, multi-part *Lieux de Mémoire* project, a series of volumes that conjoins rich

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<sup>45</sup> Erl, "The Invention of Cultural Memory", 22-27.

contributions to an understanding of France and French culture with an innovative methodology for studying collective memory. In the quarter century since the first volume was published in 1984 – and in the two decades since Nora's introduction to the project first appeared in English in 1989 – the concept of the "lieu de mémoire" or "site of memory" has been at the center not just of considerations of French negotiations with its national past but of studies of remembrance on an international scale.<sup>46</sup>

In Rothberg's assessment of Nora's contribution to the field, we find the first problem: that of the translation. What Rothberg, as many before and after him, translates as 'sites of memory,' is in the 1996 English translation of the multi-volume work edited by Nora referred to as *Realms of Memory*.<sup>47</sup> The semantic difference between 'site' and 'realm' evokes a similar difference as that between 'lieux' and 'milieux', which are the two central concepts that Nora builds his general argument on.

Our curiosity about the places in which memory is crystallized, in which it finds refuge, is associated with this specific moment in French history, a turning point in which a sense of rupture with the past is inextricably bound up with a sense that a rift has occurred in memory. But that rift has stirred memory sufficiently to raise the question of its embodiment: there are sites, *lieux de mémoire*, in which a residual sense of continuity remains. *Lieux de mémoire* exist because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Rothberg, "Introduction: Between Memory and Memory", 3-12.

<sup>47</sup> More on the translation of 'Lieux de Mémoire' to 'Realms of Memory' in: Nora, "Preface".

<sup>48</sup> Nora, "General Introduction", 1.



The difference between what in the thesis will be translated as a memory site and a memory realm has led to many valuable interpretations of the various roles that spatial phenomena play in frameworks of memory. However, although Nora's concepts have been used to promote valuable research, the thesis will not subscribe to Nora's idea of the spatiality of memory, due to inconsistencies in its underlying conceptual framework and therefore the theoretical implications of using his terminology. Whereas Assmann and Assmann present a conceptual framework of memory that includes canonised representations of the past, such as the writing of academic history, Nora promotes an idea of history and memory as contradictions. This argument begins with the very title of the general introduction to *Realms of Memory* itself: "General Introduction: Between Memory and History."<sup>49</sup> It is only in subsequent publications of this introduction in academic journals, that this title is amended to make space for the spatial element of the argument: "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*."<sup>50</sup> In Nora's work, memory is seen as an almost primordial mode of representing the past, in a way that ties together the temporal planes of past, present and future. The advent of the modernist practice of academic history writing intervened in this dynamic by concentrating agency over the past in ivory towers, serving the needs of top-down impositions of nation-state ideology.

The "acceleration of history," then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past. On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory – unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Nora, "Les Lieux de Mémoire", 7.

reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth – and on the other hand, our memory, nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces. The gulf between the two has deepened in modern times with the growing belief in a right, a capacity, and even a duty to change. Today, this distance has been stretched to its convulsive limit.<sup>51</sup>

The critique that Nora levels against the practice of academic history, not to be confused with history as a concept which he applies as simply meaning the past of the nation, could in the terms of Assmann and Assmann be called that of its mode of remembering. Not only does this argument exclude academic historiography from the scope of memory studies, but it also presumes that there are no imaginable modes of academic history that could embrace the multi-dimensionality that he so praises. Whereas the latter seems like a lack of faith, when it comes to the abilities of future historians critically engaging with their own discipline, the former is a problem, if you are looking for a way to study perceptions of the past in the present and their effect on the future in a broader sense. It is notable, however, that Nora's scepticism towards institutionalized knowledge production about the past, is mirrored in resurgence of so-called collective memory, truth, and justice mobilizations in Latin America, especially in situations where traumatic experiences had shaken the trust in established institutions.<sup>52</sup>

The result of what Nora sees as the usurpation by interpretations of the past by history, away from the primordial mode of memory, is the disappearance of *milieux de mémoire* in favour of *lieux de mémoire*:

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<sup>51</sup> Nora, "General Introduction", 1.

<sup>52</sup> Villalón, "Introduction", 3-6.

Our interest in lieux de mémoire where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory.<sup>53</sup>

However, the notion of the site of memory, as a singular place in space, is expanded beyond its geographical meaning, as Nora argues that also immaterial sites “... capture the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs.”<sup>54</sup> In the interpretation of memory scholar Ann Rigney:

[...] ‘sites of memory’, both actual and virtual locations, provide ‘a maximum amount of meaning in a minimum number of signs’. As a result, sites of memory are constantly being reinvested with new meaning. Whether they take the material form of actual places and objects, or the immaterial form of stories and pieces of music, ‘sites of memory’ are defined by the fact that they elicit intense attention on the part of those doing the remembering and thereby become a self-perpetuating vortex of symbolic investment (this process recalls Foucault’s reference to an ‘internal proliferation of meaning’).<sup>55</sup>

The problem with this part of Nora’s argument, here elaborated further by Rigney, is that the definition of an immaterial memory site loses its meaning as a reference to interpretations of the past in the present for the future. This approach not only

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<sup>53</sup> Nora, “General Introduction”, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>55</sup> Rigney, “Plenitude, Scarcity and the Circulation of Cultural Memory”, 18.

promotes teleological visions of historiographical production but the assertion of a hierarchy of values is counterproductive to understandings of memory as a system of knowledges about the past, in which the production of history is one source of provenance and spatial dynamics another. My contention is that Nora does not so much pose an innovation of theory and methodology behind memory studies, but rather a critique of modernity promoted by a certain conceptualization of time in a certain type of historiography, set in the context of the nation-state, using the vocabulary of memory studies.

The few points above outline the general reservations about Nora's approach to memory and the way that they have been applied in the field of memory studies, but it leaves us with the main argument that scholars seem to draw from his work: that memory is contained in geographical phenomena.<sup>56</sup> Since there is very little discussion of the contradictions in Nora's framework, it is almost as if this argument is mainly interpreted through the title: *lieux de mémoire*, or memory sites, which argues that sites carry memory, or, in order to be completely clear, sites carry meaning about the past in a dynamic that in the thesis fall under the category of memory. The main problem with this statement is not so much that it is wrong, but rather that its critique of modern historiographical practices is hardly ever addressed, and that the main argument that is reproduced is that knowledge production has a spatial aspect. The latter in spite of the inconsistencies mentioned above, as well as it not being the first, nor the most exhaustive analysis of the categories of space, place and site as carriers of meaning. Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, Benjamin's reflections on Naples, Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place*, Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, are all examples of works produced

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<sup>56</sup> Nora, *Rethinking France*; Nora, "Les Lieux de Mémoire".

either earlier or more exhaustively promoting the argument that space, place and site carry or produce meaning and by extent, meaning about the past. Although Bachelard's main focus is on space, memory serves as a counterpoint in a dialectical relation that outlines the frame in which human imagination takes place.<sup>57</sup> Benjamin's reflections on Naples include thoughtful insights not only on the meaning about the past carried by the architecture of the city but also on the effect that this has on socio-cultural relations in this space as well as perceptions on time.<sup>58</sup>

Tuan's abstract pondering of space and place includes considerations of temporality and how the spatial conceptualisation helps us understand objective and subjective realms of experience of cultures different from ours by asking questions such as: "If people lack a sense of clearly articulated space, will they have a sense of clearly articulated time? Space exists in the present; how does it acquire a temporal dimension?"<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Lefebvre constructs his arguments on space in close relation to conceptualisations of time in a way that foreshadow Nora's focus on sites of memory carrying particular meaning about the past.<sup>60</sup>

The focus of this section is not a complete dismissal of Nora. Certainly, the importance of the spatialisation of memory studies, as well as the valuable studies that his concepts have inspired the scholarly community to carry out, must be acknowledged. What I am merely asking myself is, if we do accept the incongruencies in his thinking, why we should not continue to improve the development of theory that the spatial turn of memory implies.

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<sup>57</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin and Lacis, "Naples".

<sup>59</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 119.

<sup>60</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 12.

## Memory: A Map to take us from Place to Place through Space and Time

Oh, to sin is to trespass. To trespass is to cross a boundary. To cross a boundary is to break a definition. To break a definition is to create. To create is to be different. To be different is to sin. To sin is to live in self-reference. So, Janus! Help me become a sinner! Let me understand how you break definitions! Teach me how to erase what others see as irresolvable paradoxes! Teach me the equation of that third lens inside your head whereby you transform contradictory images into coherent wholes! Speak, memory, speak!<sup>61</sup>

Although the previous section was dedicated to the contradictions and inconsistencies in the work of Pierre Nora, as well as to the fact that his work can be presented as neither ground-breaking nor comprehensive when it comes to the issue of understanding space and place as vehicles of meaning, the core argument of the title of *Lieux de Mémoire* cannot be ignored, especially given that space does not only give memory yet another vehicle, as is the case with trans-generational memory<sup>62</sup>, yet another framework as is the case with trans-national memory<sup>63</sup> or yet another direction, as is the case with multi-directional memory<sup>64</sup>, but since it gives memory an entirely new dimension. The question now becomes from which angle to enter this new dimension. In a Cuban context, the work of Pablo Alonso González and Joseph Scarpaci are examples of how spatial phenomena such as monuments, museums and landscapes are interpreted as metaphors for structures of culture, power and social relations.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Olsson, *Lines of Power/Limits of Language*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

<sup>63</sup> Erll, "Travelling Memory".

<sup>64</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

<sup>65</sup> Alonso González et al., "Introduction: Heritage and Revolution"; Alonso González, "Transforming Ideology into Heritage"; Alonso González, "The Organization of Commemorative Space in Postcolonial Cuba"; Alonso González, "Communism and Cultural Heritage"; Alonso González, "Monumental Art and Hidden Transcripts of Resistance in Revolutionary Cuba, 1970–1990"; Scarpaci and Portela, *Cuban Landscapes*.

This theory reflects the fable by Lewis Carroll below, in which it is made clear that the representation of space can never be as complete as space itself:

- “That’s another thing we’ve learned from your Nation,” said Mein Herr, “map-making. But we’ve carried it much further than you. What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?”
- “About six inches to the mile.”
- “Only six inches!” exclaimed Mein Herr. “We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile!”
- “Have you used it much?” I enquired.
- “It has never been spread out, yet,” said Mein Herr: “the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.”<sup>66</sup>

The conclusion of this fable and the studies mentioned above is that interpretations of spatial phenomena are maps of relations between things and people in space. In other words: the map is a metaphor. Swedish geographer and philosopher Gunnar Olsson, on the other hand, turns this relationship upside down. In a radio interview on the Swedish programme *Filosofiska Rummet*, where interviewer Lars Mogensen talks with Olsson about his magnum opus *Abysmal*, Mogensen tries to sum up Olsson’s argument saying: “[...] du befinner dig i en tradition där kartan är en metafor” [...you write within a tradition where the map is a metaphor.], to which Olsson answers: “Jeg skulle säga det lite tvärtom, att det är kartan som

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<sup>66</sup> Carroll, “Sylvie and Bruno Concluded”, 556-557.

är territoriet” [I would say the opposite, that the map is the territory].<sup>67</sup> It is understandable that Mogensen should get Olsson’s argument backwards, as the language in *Abysmal*, however systematic, is rather complex. The passage in which the argument is made follows a long description of Ferdinand de Saussure’s signifier (presented as an uppercase S) and the signified (presented as a lowercase s), and reads:

While our immediate contact with the S goes through the five senses of the body – sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste – the s belongs to the sixth sense of culture. Much follows from this distinction, for instance that the activities of counting and naming are intricately intertwined and that God is a moral, not a material, agent. The Signifier is consequently not a thing-in-itself but a metaphoric image of a thing, the signified not a meaning-in-itself but a metonymic story of a meaning; what gives a coin its value is not the metal I hold in my hand but the socio-cultural context in which it can be exchanged and turned into something else.<sup>68</sup>

What is important to understand about Olsson’s conception of the Saussurean sign is the transformative capacity inherent in the bar between s and S, which he at times conceives of as a literal bar, a pub, an establishment of discovery, intoxication, fear and pleasure; a place where culture happens. It should be emphasized that, however far Olsson takes this metaphor in terms of insisting on the Bar-In-Between being a real bar, it is at times more fruitful to think of it as the moment in which a subject engages in cartographical reasoning. This interplay between the spatial and temporal qualities of the Bar-In-Between means that it is not a particular image of

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<sup>67</sup> Olsson, “Gunnar Olsson och det Kartografiska Tänkandet”.

<sup>68</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 80.



the world, frozen in representation, but a mechanism that converts one representation into another.

For the moment it is enough to repeat that every sign carries the mark of an invisible distinction, by an imaginary trick itself made visible in the bar of the fraction line, that umbilical chord through which Signifier and signified are connected to each other like mother to fetus, fetus to mother. Pushed to its minimalistic extreme this sign of the sign gets condensed into the penumbra of the Saussurean Bar-in-Between, the scene of a perpetual Bacchanalian revel, the place of a nightly rendezvous at which not a member is sober, perhaps a variant of Timaeus' chora. In our capacity as semiotic animals we have no choice but to live in and of language, much as the fish lives in and of water. The Bar is our home, the fraction line the bed in which our signifying descendants are being conceived.<sup>69</sup>

This transformative power of the sign also, or maybe even especially, applies to relations with and within spatial phenomena. It is in the context of transformations of and within space that Olsson invokes memory, as he lets the sign transcend the metaphoric conversion of one representation into one coherent meaning and into the metonymic transcendence in all sorts of meaningful directions:

The map of semiosis ties memory and mimesis together through activities which are essentially spatial. The function of place-bound metaphors is consequently to awaken the store of collective memories from their metonymic slumber, because to learn something new is to reconnect to something old. The self conversing with its likes in the Bar-in-Between is

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 84.

always a self in the making, for the limit of an object (regardless of whether that object is material or conceptual) is intrinsic to its being.<sup>70</sup>

If this is the power of the Saussurean Bar, the place where the signifier and signified happen in a multi-directional signification, then the question we should ask ourselves is: “What drinks are they serving there?” Or, in other words: “What makes this power happen?” During a visit in Olsson’s home in Upsala in the spring of 2018 with Moniek Driesse, he paraphrased Immanuel Kant, as he defined imagination as the human faculty to make the absent present. In *Abysmal*, Olsson expands this notion into what almost sounds like a mission statement:

Immanuel Kant was right on: “Imagination is the faculty of representing an object even without its presence in intuition... The faculty of imagination is, so far, a faculty of determining our sensibility a priori, so that the synthesis of the intuitions... must be the transcendental synthesis of the faculty of imagination.” Herein, then, lies the hidden condition of all knowledge, the only force strong enough to invade the utterly unknown.<sup>71</sup>

The crucial consequence of this definition for memory is that the absent that becomes present could be imagined across all imaginable dimensions and that the temporal has an almost equal value to the spatial. It is this imaginary agency that in Olsson’s work takes on the name of cartographical reasoning. If we keep in mind Benjamin’s sixth thesis on history, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger,”<sup>72</sup> then what memory does in the flash of that moment is

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin, 255.

allowing us to travel across space as well as time. The representation of memory in the social realm, whether in the canon of Assmann and Assmann,<sup>73</sup> the collective of Halbwachs,<sup>74</sup> the media of Erll,<sup>75</sup> the generations of Marianne Hirsch,<sup>76</sup> are in this argument maps that guide specific types of multi-dimensional travel. If this is true, then the next step is to ask what a map is. During the interview in Uppsala, Olsson defined it as a combination of three elements:

To have a map, the only traditional map, only three things you need. A set of points, lines between the points and the projection scheme. Now, to name the points is not so difficult. [...] When it comes to the lines, the relations between them, that is of course much more difficult, because that relation does not have a physical counterpart. So, these lines are steeped in power. [...] when I have to baptize the points, the name sort of sticks. But when I baptize the lines, the lines begin to shake, and they want to change form.<sup>77</sup>

As the title of this chapter is 'Ceci n'est pas une Memory' – a somewhat clichéd reference to Magritte's representation of a pipe – and I have argued how various uses and definitions of memory in the social realm do not fully capture what memory is and does, it is now time to profess my direction. Olsson's insights allow me to give my definition of what memory can be and do. With Olsson's notion of cartography, my readings across the many sub-genres of memory studies have found a system that gives it form. The organisational framework of SFB 434 (see p. 38) lays out the widest extent of the projection scheme, the canvas, the possible mnemonic actions and modalities of A. Assmann. This should not be seen as a projection scheme of cultural memory; the projection scheme *is* cultural memory. Iterations of memory

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<sup>73</sup> Assmann, 98-99.

<sup>74</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

<sup>75</sup> Erll, "Medium des Kollektiven Gedächtnisses".

<sup>76</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*.

<sup>77</sup> Olsson, conversation with Sjamme van de Voort et al.

such as investigations into the disappearances of Guatemalan journalists, truth and reconciliation committees, Harry Potter-novels, are points on the map, each with built-in mnemonic capacities, narratives, and consequences. The lines emanating from these points are defined by the mode, directionality and, ultimately, the agency of memory. An example that will play a vital role at a later point in Chapter 6 is the notion of nostalgia. As a mode of remembrance that connotes a particular sense of longing to be in a different place or time on the map, it is not surprising that it should play a role in oral histories of migration. The particular theoretical implications of this notion as well as its methodological significance will be debated in depth as and when prompted by the analysis of empirical material as the empirical material demands it – which is especially the case in Chapter 6 – but a few notions should be clarified here. The power of nostalgia, that the lines are steeped with, projecting the narration through space and time, is one of unfulfilled promises. Interestingly, it is through the cartographical reasoning of the promise that Olsson approaches the Bar-In-Between:

The limits of the oikumene can be studied through experiments with, on and in the Saussurean Bar, invaluable insights gained in the process. The trick is to take the fraction line of the sign

$$\frac{s}{S}$$

literally, in other words to treat it as the line it really is:

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Accordingly I now let the dividing/unifying divisor between the Signifier and the signified approach the extreme conditions of zero and infinity, in the first instance becoming minimally thin, in the second maximally thick. The paradigm of the first case is the speech act in which the differences between what I am saying and what I am doing are all but erased—when in the wedding ceremony I utter the words “I promise,” I am not merely describing a state of affairs but performing an act, the world irrevocably changed in the process.<sup>78</sup>

In other words, the notion of nostalgia is important in the theoretical framework of this study, as it is incredibly close to the core of the Bar-In-Between. Just as Olsson mentions that when baptizing the points on the abstract map, the name sticks, the naming of a memory leads to its subsequent movement from individual to collective memory, where it begins to play its role in the system. This role is certainly defined by the narratives imbued into the point by its narrators, J. Assmann's high priests of memory,<sup>79</sup> which gives them a fixed position on the projection scheme. The points are fixations of power by what Nora called “...the maximum possible meaning with the fewest possible signs.”<sup>80</sup> Contrary to Nora's sites, it is in Olsson's definition, however, the lines that emanate from the points that contain power, trembling when called into question. This operation of naming is what scholars such as Rothberg, Erll and Hirsch are engaged in, as they each analyse a vehicle of memory. Unfortunately, the vehicles of memory each imply a different analytical tool, brought to the field of memory studies from the respective backgrounds of these scholars. It is here that I would instead return to the historical tropes of Kayser Nielsen, seeing interpretations of the relation between past, present and future as lines propelled in

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<sup>78</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 240.

<sup>79</sup> Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory”, 114-118.

<sup>80</sup> Nora, “General Introduction”, 15.

directions by the narratives inherent in the points on the projection scheme. In other words, the tropes of Kayser Nielsen, encompassing a fuller scope of narratives of past, present and future from conception, through mediation, re-mediation, canonization or archival to perception, become visualisations of historical consciousness within a certain cultural memory. This is why the notion of historical tropes will serve as a methodological tool to illustrate the directionality of the historical narratives with which this thesis engages in chapters 3-6.

### **From Theory to Methodology**

The question now is how to turn this amalgamation of theories into a methodological framework that could form the basis for a method of analysis. From that point, it would be possible to conduct research into a body of empirical material with sufficient explanatory power to fulfil my very rigid search for an approach to perceptions of past, present and future with a lens broader than the analytical tools with roots in disciplinary silos. In a response to Susan Sontag's criticism of the field of memory studies, which will be discussed further below, A. Assmann returns to the work of Halbwachs, pointing out that: "According to Halbwachs, the term 'collective memory' cannot be understood without referring to the concept of 'social frames.'" This, to A. Assmann, points to the constructivist foundation of Halbwachs' thinking about group identities, which, again, according to A. Assmann, explains how the concept of memory during the 1990s came to take over academic discourse on ideology: "What happened in the discourses of the 1990s was more than a simple substitution of one term by another. The change of labels was an index of a deeper theoretical transformation."<sup>81</sup> In the following, the thesis will dissect a series of core ideas in the study of ideologies in order to build a methodological framework within which the analysis of the case study can be employed.

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<sup>81</sup> Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", 51-56.

There are indeed strong overlaps between thinkers in studies of ideology with, for example, the notion of J. Assmann's cultural memory guarded by high priests of memory, who decide what is canon and what is taboo. Here we can hear Louis Althusser's work on ideology resonate clearly. In his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", he investigates the epistemological relations between means of production and the reproduction of means of production, but also the means of consumption and the reproduction of the productive forces.<sup>82</sup> Taking his point of departure from the school system, where the labour force acquires the necessary skills to serve the means of production, but where it also acquires the ruling ideology needed to keep them in their place within the system they live in:

...the reproduction of labour-power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression...<sup>83</sup>

After introducing the school system as a mechanism that reproduces the submission of the productive forces of society, Althusser goes on to analyse the concepts of the state, law, and ideology from the point of view of the reproduction of the established order.<sup>84</sup> In his definition of state, Althusser distinguishes between what he calls state power, i.e. the struggle of political actors for conservation or seizure of power, and the state apparatus.<sup>85</sup> It is in his work on this definition of the state that Althusser breaks with previous Marxist theory, as he notes that (to his knowledge) only

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<sup>82</sup> Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", 127-134.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 130-134.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

Antonio Gramsci had theorized the reproduction of state ideology through his division of the state into political and civil society. The innovative idea that Althusser proposes here is not the division of state power and state apparatus, as this is already part of the Marxist theory of the state through the concept of repressive state apparatuses (RSA), which refers to institutions such as government, police, army, courts, prisons, etc. Instead, Althusser proposes the addition of ideological state apparatuses (ISA). Initially, the difference between the RSA and the ISA seems to be the legitimate violence that the RSA can exercise over its subjects, but, as Althusser also notices, the RSA include institutions that do not exercise direct, but rather an administrative violence. The difference, therefore, lies in the plurality and the privacy of the ISA. Whereas the RSA derive their legitimacy from one source, state power, the ISA acquire theirs from a multitude of sources, such as religion, family, education, cultural taste etc. The argument regarding privacy refers to the fact that these sources do not belong to the public domain and are not only enforced top-down but also bottom-up.<sup>86</sup>

After this simple distinction, Althusser then notes that also the RSAs have ideological elements and vice versa. The army not only subjects to repression through violence but also to ideological violence through its methods of discipline and punishment within the institution, meaning that it is the agency of the state apparatus that determines the main difference in Althusser's argument.<sup>87</sup>

Althusser's conceptual framework is further complicated by noting that if we accept Gramsci's premise that the state consists of political society and civil society,<sup>88</sup> then repressive and ideological apparatuses cannot only belong to the state; like the state legitimated violence of the police, a vigilante self-defence group can act as

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 141-148 note 7, 142.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>88</sup> Gramsci, "The Art of Science and Politics", 235.



a repressive apparatus, just as an independent art institution or publishing house can act as an ideological apparatus. A remedy could be a combination of the two frameworks and the introduction of the concepts of repressive civil society apparatuses (RCSA), repressive political society apparatuses (RPSA), ideological civil society apparatuses (ICSA) and ideological political society apparatuses (IPSA), in order to be able to determine the origin of ideology.

It is also by applying Gramsci that the concept of hegemony becomes a part of the argument. First introduced by Vladimir Illich Lenin, who focuses mainly on the political aspects of hegemony (the praxis), Gramsci, writing from prison, turns his focus towards the realm of the ideological: “*The realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge...*”. In Gramsci’s understanding, the superstructure of society consists of this ideological framework, which during a revolution must be combated “*...in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy one hegemony and create another, as a necessary moment in the revolutionizing of praxis.*”<sup>89</sup> Again, the similarities between J. Assmann’s cultural memory in conjunction with A. Assmann’s canon seems like an almost parallel argument. This will become particularly clear in Chapter 3.

Michael Freeden debates Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, and applies it as “*...an ideology pre-eminently serving to safeguard the power of a dominant class over the masses...*”<sup>90</sup> Here we see a difference between Freeden and Althusser, as the latter sees ideology as a phenomenon encompassing society in its entirety and the former

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<sup>89</sup> Alves, “O Conceito do Hegemonia”, 73; Gramsci, “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc”, 190-209.

<sup>90</sup> Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 19.

seeing ideology in certain situations that he calls political. This derives from Freeden's definition of ideology as "...located at the meeting point between meaning and form: it constitutes a significant sampling from the rich, but unmanageable and incompatible, variety of human thinking on politics, contained within and presented through a communicable and action-inspiring pattern."<sup>91</sup> In his work, Freeden further suggests that the analysis of ideologies focuses on "...identifying, describing, and analysing the building blocks that constitute it and the relationships among them."<sup>92</sup>

If the conceptualisation of memory in the social realm, collective as well as cultural, that the thesis builds on, is to take any influence from these thoughts on the concepts of ideology and hegemony, it would be that the future aspect of memory contains a political expression. Whether memory, that is, our ability to cartographically reason between past, present and future, comes before or after ideology, is not particularly relevant for the argument, although the first instinct would be to argue that the imagination of any political action has to take place in the imagination of a subject in time and space. What is more relevant, however, is that we notice the relation between memory and ideology through the cartographic reasoning of Olsson as the driving force behind the lines on the map, as the agency that projects the tropes from point to point on the ideological canvas, fuelled by the abysmal depths of the glasses in the Bar-In-Between. If "the metaphor is the map," then the map is outlined by the point where our limitless imagination touches the limits set up by the canvas, laden with meaning through language, marking the limits of the time and space in which we can act and think. In other words, we can only imagine as far as our language allows us to.

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<sup>91</sup> Freeden, "Political Concepts and Ideological Morphology", 140-141.

<sup>92</sup> Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 48.

This fundamentally language-based link between the schools of ideology and memory leads us to Terry Eagleton, who uses the term empty signifier in his analysis of the concept of ideology but argues that the term itself becomes emptied of signification if it is defined too broadly. According to Eagleton, the concept is not applied by theorists such as Michel Foucault, who in his search for power relations instead of ideology uses the term discourse in order to understand society.<sup>93</sup> This is why Eagleton, in his initial definition of the term, spends considerable effort clarifying the fact that he does not attempt to develop a concept that is all-encompassing, and that it is important to notice that which is not ideological.<sup>94</sup> Eagleton goes into the technical details about the relation between ideology and discourse through the work of Soviet linguist Valentin Voloshinov, who saw ideology as the organization of consciousness, and the sign as simultaneously the main source, vehicle and final culmination of ideology.<sup>95</sup> This leads Eagleton to develop a tool for the analysis of ideology based on language:

Ideology is language which forgets the essentially contingent, accidental relations between itself and the world, and comes instead to mistake itself as having some kind of organic, inevitable bond with what it represents.<sup>96</sup>

The implication of this relationship between ideology and language, where language, disassociated from reality, is simultaneously the vehicle and the core of ideology, moves away from the rather structural definition of Althusser, where structures of ISA, condition ideology. The working definition of Eagleton acknowledges the role of the RSA and ISA in the fixture of ideology, but equally sees the fluctuation of ideology in the use of language, but only from the subject position of the person

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<sup>93</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 6-8.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-198.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

articulating or interpreting this language. Ideology simultaneously provides the interpretive model for a subject to understand the world and leads it to reproduce or react to this world. Important to remember is that Eagleton also operates with the dichotomy of ideological and non-ideological language, both of which can be analysed keeping in mind the context of the utterance and interpretation.<sup>97</sup> It is based on this focus on language as the key element of ideology that Eagleton develops his approach to ideology through the lens of discourse analysis, inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

Ideology is a matter of 'discourse' rather than of 'language' – of certain concrete discursive effects, rather than of signification as such. It represents the points where power impacts upon certain utterances and inscribes itself tacitly within them. But it is not therefore to be equated with just any form of discursive partisanship, 'interested' speech or rhetorical bias; rather, the concept of ideology aims to disclose something of the relation between an utterance and its material conditions of possibility, when those conditions of possibility are viewed in the light of certain power-struggles central to the reproduction (or also, for some theories, contestation) of a whole form of social life.<sup>98</sup>

Besides resonating with Olsson's thoughts on the cartographical reasoning between S and s through the Bar-In-Between, what in Eagleton's work is defined as the relation between an utterance and its material conditions of possibility, it is through the conception of ideology as a discursive phenomenon that we get back to the concept of memory. In the ambitious article "Entangled memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies," five memory scholars respond to a call for innovation in

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 223.

the theoretical framework of the new discipline.<sup>99</sup> The main argument of the article contains the proposal to view the mnemonic process as a discursive, semiotic one:

Insofar as acts of remembering are a phenomenon of discourse, their objectifications are a semiotic phenomenon. We therefore suggest designating these objectifications as mnemonic signifiers, which can refer to any socially relevant figuration of memory.<sup>100</sup>

In this re-thinking of the Laclau and Mouffe-inspired discourse theory to apply to phenomena of memory in the social realm, Gregor Feindt et al. draw up a distinction based on the nature of memory as a reference to the past.

As a genuinely temporal concept, memory plays the role of distinguishing between past and present. In the following, memory refers to acts of mental representation in which signs bring something absent to the fore of consciousness. Acts of remembering differ from other acts of mental representation in that they denote the absent *as past*.

[...]

Acts of remembering correspond to speech acts in that the former, too, create meaning through the analogical compliance with existing rules. However, not all speech acts are also acts of remembering. Even if rules always relate an utterance to a *prior* utterance, only those acts for which the attribution *as past* is constitutive can be qualified as memory.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Feindt et al. "Entangled Memory"; For a delimitation of the previous phases of memory studies by Feindt et al., see note no. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 28-29.

The initial reaction to the argument by Feindt et al. is one of excitement, as seeing representations of memory as speech acts within a discursive system allows for the construction of a methodological toolbox. However, there is an issue with the definition of “acts of remembering as differing from other acts of mental representation in that they denote the absent as *past*,” informed by the multi-directional agency granted to the mnemonic metaphor by Olsson. If the metaphor is the map that takes us through the Bar-In-Between across place and time, then it does not only denote the absent as *past* in a temporal sense, but the cartographical reasoning happening also denotes spatial movement from that past, through the present and into the future. In other words, as the mnemonic signifier passes through the Bar-In-Between, it does not come out as a signified in a static state, waiting to be re-signified, but rather as a historical trope, guided into a temporal and spatial direction by imagination. The analysis of the interviews in Chapter 5 will highlight how the spatial aspect of memory plays such an important role in subjective imaginaries of the future.

At this point, the explanatory power of memory and ideology have become deceptively similar. The aim of both theoretical frameworks is to explain a collective way of thinking about group identity, both aim to explain how this thinking about group identity gains political aspects. However, where Althusser, Freeden and Eagleton see the political aspect in the assertion of power of hegemony in a structure within one timeframe, the approach to memory studies in the thesis proposes to see it in the formation of tropes that move imagination into a particular direction of the future.

### **From Methodology to Method**

The theoretical worlds through which we travelled in the previous section are, in essence, based on post-structuralist modes of thinking. Even Olsson’s articulation of a fixed point where meaning is produced, the Bar-In-Between, is a place where

meaning moves faster than comprehension. This statement does, however, call for yet another series of definitions, as post-structuralism is, in itself, contested name for a wide variety of practices. Danish historian Dorthe Gert Simonsen has written that:

[Poststrukturalisme] er som et stykke vådt sæbe i fedtede fingre: Hver gang man tager et fast greb om sæben og tror, at nu har man den, smutter den ud af hænderne igen.

[Post-structuralism is as a piece of wet soap between greasy fingers: Every time you take a firm grip on the soap and think that now you have it, it snaps out of your hands again.]<sup>102</sup>

After dissecting the concept of post-structuralism through her own research focus at the time, gender studies, she reaches the conclusion that:

Poststrukturalisme er ikke Sandheden, det er strategier. Disse strategier kan bruges som effektiv magtkritik, idet alle magtpositioner forlader sig på metafysikken

[Post-structuralism is not the Truth, it is strategies. These strategies can be used effectively as criticism of power, as all positions of power rely on metaphysics]<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Simonsen, "Som et Stykke Vådt Sæbe", 31.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 47.

The result of the assertion that memory exists in the social realm is that we cannot point at a thing in the world and say: “this is a memory”. The post-structural thoughts about ideology, in the section previous to this one, have, however, offered us a strategy to peek into the mnemonic process by seeing its objectifications as language. This is where we find solid ground in the scary world of slippery fluctuation: through stories. In a 2018 article for *History and Theory*, Juan L. Fernández argues for the dissolvment of the opposition between narrative and theory in historical sciences. Through a discussion of a wide variety of theories of history, including those of Max Weber, Benedetto Croce, Jacob Burckhardt and especially Rüsen, Fernández formalises four different strategies of historical writing, reaching the conclusion that: “...against the traditional separation between historical research and historical writing, I shall contend that (scientific) writing is the last step of research, not the next (rhetorical, literary, didactic) move after research is done.”<sup>104</sup>

Historical Knowledge Epistemological Square		History always has/needs <b>theoretical elements</b>	
		Yes: T	No: T'
History always has/needs <b>narrative structure</b>	Yes: N	<b>NT</b> <b>N &gt; T</b> Stories enriched by theories <b>N &gt; T</b> Historical sociology <b>N = T</b> Corcean concrete universal	<b>NT'</b> Traditional narrativism 'Empiricism'
	No: N'	<b>N'T</b> Neopositivism, Structuralism	<b>N'T'</b> Descriptivism, Portrait-ism

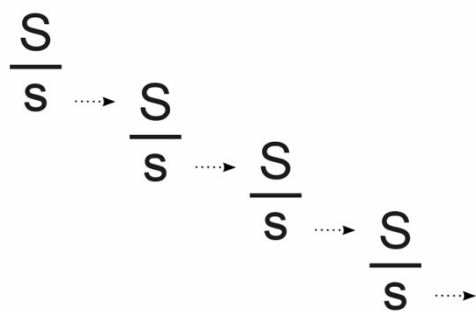
Table taken from “Story Makes History, Theory Makes Story”, 78

<sup>104</sup> Fernández, “Story Makes History, Theory Makes Story”, 78-79.



The semiotic sliding that Eagleton notices in the discursive formation of ideology and which Olsson sees in the transformative power of the Bar-In-Between, is one that happens when we form narratives of identity at the subjective, collective and cultural level. The first proposal is now that the tropes of Kayser Nielsen could be used to describe the directionality of the mnemonic signifier and thereby of the cartographic reasoning inherent in the signification across time and space. Such a trope is an abstraction of a narrative phenomenon that includes the notion of time and/or space. This means that it cannot be depicted as an infinite semiotic slide, as this model depicts the transformation of meaning across various narrative acts. However, both time, space and history remain categories that we need in order to exist in particular moments and places in the (social) world. In that moment and that place, the historical trope is not the semiosis from one sign to the other, but a single structure of an s and an S that meet in a Bar-in-Between that shoots into past and present, here and elsewhere.

Not:



But:



In this conceptualisation, the historical trope is not only the descriptive categorisation of fixed historical narratives, but rather an analytical tool with which we can address the situation of the Bar-In-Between at a given moment. Knowing that the Bar-In-Between is where new historical tropes are performed, that it is the conductor of change between Koselleck's horizon of experience and expectation, it

becomes an analytical category with which we can engage with the role of cultural memory in the Cuban-American migratory experience. Whereas historical tropes previously addressed static historical narration, the Bar-In-Between highlights their processual nature, requiring us to engage with the structures and mechanisms that produce and result from the signification process. It is these that are the focus of the analysis in this thesis, as it will allow this concept to emerge from both the historical narration in its archival material and the oral history interviews.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT – CUBA AND MIAMI

Michael J. Bustamante has reflected on the difficulties he as a Cuban American scholar faced when visiting Cuba after the joint announcement of resumed diplomatic relations by presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014, asking a series of questions related to Cuban American identity, and debates the rhetorical tropes formed by the various generations and waves of Cuban immigrants, visitors, exiles and transnational travellers. The dichotomy between Cubans *de adentro* and *de afuera* is clear, but Bustamante also mentions a myriad of other factors contributing to the complexity of a nationalism he calls the Cuban American return narrative.<sup>1</sup>

Before contributing to the debate taken up by Bustamante, some background information is needed. This chapter will introduce the historical context of this study and ask how the roughly 1,213,500<sup>2</sup> Cubans in Florida came to not only be among the ten largest immigrant communities in the United States, influencing presidential elections and popular culture, but also to form a Cuban national ideology in opposition to Cuban nationalism in Cuba. Any study of nations as socially constructed phenomena has to mention Benedict Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities*. Inspired by thinkers like Benjamin and Foucault, Anderson traces historical, cultural and linguistic roots of the powerful forces that bind complete strangers together in national(ist) *Imagined Communities*. One of the elements mentioned by Anderson as a catalyst for the spread of this ideology is the printing press and especially the newspaper industry.<sup>3</sup> According to Anderson, it was the business relations with partners through regional newspapers, rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Bustamante, "Los de Adentro y Los de Afuera".

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau, "The Hispanic Population: 2010", Table 4.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 32-36.

the linguistic relations with the metropolis, that forged the paths of nationalism in the American colonies.<sup>4</sup>

### **Cuban Nationality in the Making: The Early Connection to the United States**

In Cuba, it was also the development of business ties that had a crucial impact on the development of nationalism. Its geographical location made Cuba a point of transfer with access to both Caribbean, mainland Latin American and North American markets since the days of Spanish silver fleets in the sixteenth century to the present-day redevelopment of the harbour in Mariel. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Cuba was thus not only receiving daily news from the United States over the telegraph (which infrastructure in its physical form played an important role for one of the interviewees of the thesis, see p. 177), but was also serviced with scheduled direct steamships from New York, Mobile, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New Orleans and Key West. As Cuba's economy was mainly based on export, the US market, insatiable for Cuban products and rich with innovation, was not far away. North Americans settled in Cuba and Cubans in North America.<sup>5</sup>

The communities of Cubans living in the United States have been called many names, many of which carry certain political attributes. The notion of exile, for example, ties into the return narrative that Bustamante discussed in his work, whereas Antoni Kapcia's discussion on the terminology used to define Cubans in the United States determines that the term *émigré* was never used much due to its Hispanicisation, *emigrado*, being identical to the Spanish term for emigrant.<sup>6</sup> As a reaction to what he considers a boom in the use of the term diaspora, Rogers Brubaker has written that: "The problem with this latitudinarian, 'let-a-thousand-

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 48-65.

<sup>5</sup> Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 24-30; Pollitt, "The Cuban Sugar Economy and the Great Depression", 3.

<sup>6</sup> Kapcia, "What's in a Name?", 219.

diasporas-bloom' approach is that the category becomes stretched to the point of uselessness." In order to counter this conceptual depletion, Brubaker proposes three criteria that should be considered when applying the concept: Dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance.<sup>7</sup> In the Cuban American context, all seem to apply.

In his work on the Cuban American experience, Gustavo Pérez-Firmat establishes the definition of three Cuban ideologies regarding nationality: *cubanía*, *cubanidad* and *cubaneo*, all of which could be translated as *Cuban-ness*. *Cubanidad* is here described as a political ideology, based on the official belonging of a subject to the state by means of birth certificate, passport or the like. *Cubaneo*, on the contrary, is described as a culturally fixed ideology, taking into account structures of gestures and dialects: acting Cuban. These two interpretations of national identity are not unique to Cuba, but Pérez-Firmat describes a third ideology of *Cuban-ness*, named *cubanía* by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz at a lecture in Havana November 28, 1939. In Ortiz' definition, *cubanía* does not attach itself to a state or a people, but to a more abstract entity: the *patria* [homeland]. Given Cuba's particular historical context, this *patria* has historically always been on the verge of realisation, through struggles against Spanish colonialism, American neo-colonialism, and a revolutionary project that bases itself on the idea of a utopian society in the future that will come after the struggles of the present. The concept revolves therefore, according to Pérez-Firmat, around this "willingness at heart", the will to be Cuban.<sup>8</sup> This very broad definition of Cuban nationality seems almost too inclusive: if you have a desire for the *patria* to succeed, you are Cuban. The explanation does have a series of flaws. For example, the independence wars of the nineteenth century could not have been fought without the many black Cubans fighting for a *patria*

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<sup>7</sup> Brubaker, "The 'diaspora' diaspora", 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> Pérez-Firmat, "A Willingness of the Heart", 7-8.

alongside white Cubans. Still racism survived to an extent that it excluded black Cubans from the nation.<sup>9</sup>

The social inequality of who could form part of the nation is interesting when it comes to the lower social strata of Cuban society, but for now, the main focus will be on the higher strata. During the late nineteenth century, the upper class of Cuban businessmen had become entangled with the United States through production in Cuba and manufacturing there. Tobacco was grown in Pinar del Río and cigars were rolled in Tampa, Florida. Children of the upper classes were sent to private school, college and university all along the East Coast of the United States. During the Spanish colonial regime, there were even tens of thousands of Cubans who acquired US citizenship because international law and the colonial government's need for a sustainable relationship between Spain and the United States gave them stronger civil liberties and protected them from government seizure of property.<sup>10</sup>

There was a continuous exchange between the United States and Cuba, based on grounds from the convenience of the US markets for Cuban products, opportunities for businesses to set up manufacturing, to legal benefits of independence from colonial power. Cubans integrated themselves into US society and occupied all kinds of positions: from dentists to politicians, teachers to engineers.<sup>11</sup> A further push for Cuban migration to the United States came with the independence wars of the nineteenth century. Besides the undeniable horrors of war, devastation and death, the wars were bad for business and Cuban manufacturing companies moved in great numbers to Key West, Ocala, Jacksonville and Tampa, Florida.<sup>12</sup> Often, when the manufacturing companies moved, the skilled labourers were forced to

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<sup>9</sup> Gott, *Cuba*, 81, 92, 120-127 & 144; Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 2-5, 9-10, 25-28, 38, 42, 69, 87-88, 128, 198-200.

<sup>10</sup> Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 32-39.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-46.

<sup>12</sup> Pérez, *Cuba*, 84-85.

move too, bringing tens of thousands of Cubans to Florida.<sup>13</sup> This process created a community of Cubans outside of Cuba that identified themselves as Cuban partly due to their immediate perceived difference to US Americans, and partly due to the nature of the business connections back home to Cuba.

### **Cuba and Miami, or the Chicken and the Egg**

In 1896, a group of Americans succeeded in getting the train station along which they had settled to be recognised by Florida officials as a city called Miami. Among its 700-800 residents, there was a small group of Cubans. This was not uncommon, due to the economic and social patterns of Cuban migration described above, but as the entrepreneurial Miami upper classes devised their public relations strategy to, quite literally, put Miami on the map, they focussed on the construction of cigar factories, encouraging entrepreneurial Cuban tobacco producers to develop innovative methods of production in collaboration with the agricultural experimental station at the University of Florida in Lake City. Although some industrious Cubans did move their cigar production from Key West and other cities in Florida to Miami, it never took hold of the city on the same scale as it did elsewhere in the state but given that it formed part of the founding financial, social and cultural structures of the city, Miami became known as a Cuban space.<sup>14</sup> Decades later, when Miami began to take shape as a city in the 1920s, it did so with one eye on Havana. Not only were streets given names after Cuban people and places, buildings designed to look particularly Spanish, but even building materials were imported from Cuba, where people earned good money by stripping their houses of old tiles to be sent to the new city.<sup>15</sup> This culturally neo-colonial process was self-re-enforcing: Before Miami was even fully developed as a city, its industry was thought of as Cuban, which

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>14</sup> Sicius, "The Miami-Havana Connection", 5-7.

<sup>15</sup> Pérez, 432-433.

led to further migration from Cuba, and architecture devised to fit this paradigm, constantly reflecting the cultural processes of Havana.

The choice of the reflection or the mirror as metaphor for the Cuban diaspora and Miami is not accidental, as highly influential political and cultural figures opposed to Spanish colonial rule often sought refuge as exiles in the United States and formed their visions of a post-colonial Cuba from that position. Famed general from the first war of Cuban independence, Calixto García, spent the final four years of the “Ten Years’ War” (1868-1878) in Spanish captivity, whereafter he relocated to New York to organize the Cuban Revolutionary Committee (CRC) in order to continue the struggle for independence.<sup>16</sup> In the Cuban community in New York, we find another influential advocate for Cuban independence. In January 1880, José Martí arrived in the city after having spent the better part of a decade travelling through Europe, Latin America and the United States. The timing of his arrival coincided with the final stages of the so-called Guerra Chiquita (the Little War), and Martí volunteered his services to the CRC. From that period, Martí was the main voice of the exile movement for a free Cuba. Under his ideological leadership, Cuba Libre moved from being a conundrum of sentiments, loosely common denominated by separation from Spain, to a developed ideology of Cuban nationhood based on Martí’s social theories, ideas of national pride, and anti-imperialism. Martí’s labour bore fruit when a new political party, the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC), was formed in November 1891.<sup>17</sup>

The party was mainly formed to include Cuban workers in the United States in its structure, and in 1892, Martí declared that “the working people” were the “backbone of our coalition.” This was a strategic move, as 80% of Cubans in the United States

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 89-93; Olson and Olson, *Cuban Americans*, 20-24.

<sup>17</sup> Pérez, 108-112.



were blue-collar workers.<sup>18</sup> As the main battleground for the CRC's and later the PRC's campaigns, before the start of the final Cuban war of independence (1895-1898), was set in the various US cities where Cubans had taken residency (New Orleans, Mobile, Pensacola, Tampa, Key West, Miami, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston)<sup>19</sup>, Martí's ideas of a Cuba Libre were spread in the United States even before they reached Cuba itself.<sup>20</sup> The main base of the PRC consisted of Cuban workers in the United States, and its central ideology was formed through the experiences of Martí's exile. Remembering Anderson's focus on imagined differences as a key factor in the creation of a national identity, the mirror becomes an even stronger metaphor for the formation of Cuban nationalism in the late nineteenth century; formed in juxtaposition to not only colonial Spanish rule, but also in close encounter with other nationalisms forming in the United States.

The existence of nationalist narratives of sovereignty and independence from a cruel Spanish colonial power resonated in the United States and gave rise to further calls for intervention in Cuban affairs. In his *Cuba in the American Imagination*, Louis A. Pérez jr. indicates how the struggle for independence in a colony closely interlaced with the United States brought forth a paternalistic US sentiment that ultimately led to multiple neo-colonial interventions.<sup>21</sup>

### **Captured in the Mirror: Concentration of Power and the End of Trans-Nationalism**

Cuban nationalism spread far beyond Cuba's geographical boundaries, and deep into the US imagination of itself as an imperialist state, guided by its so-called Manifest Destiny. As Cuban nationalism became entangled in the political pursuit of a sovereign Cuban state, this became problematic. Two opposing forces were at

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<sup>18</sup> Pérez, 45-47; Olson and Olson, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Estrade, "El papel de la emigración patriótica en las guerras de independencia de Cuba (1868-1898)", 89-92.

<sup>20</sup> Olson and Olson, 20-27.

<sup>21</sup> Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 178-181.

play: on one hand, Cuban and US nationalism developed as mutually reinforcing ideologies based on close relations and movement of people, business and ideology between the two young countries. On the other hand, these nationalisms developed a focus on the nation-state; an ideological turn that by definition moved nationalist sentiment into a sphere where political power set boundaries for the movement of both ideas and people. José Martí paradoxically warned against the possibility of a clash between the interests of the United States and Cuba as nation-states, while simultaneously promoting the idea of Cuba as a sovereign nation-state.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most influential clashes of power between Cuban nationalist forces and US imperialist pursuits was the intervention in 1898. After a prolonged pro-war media campaign in the so-called yellow press, the United States declared war on Spain in Cuba on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1898.<sup>23</sup> Cuban forces had already fought the Spanish colonial forces since February 1895 when on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1898 the USS Maine exploded in the harbour of Havana, due to a fire in its coal room. This failure was at the time not recognised and US officials attributed the sinking of the ship to, first, one side of the Cuban-Spanish conflict, then the other. No matter what, it served as a pretext for US invasion. After a short period of negotiating with the Spanish government, the United States set out with an invasion force to capture Cuba, with the additional intention of acquiring the remaining Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines in the subsequent peace negotiations.<sup>24</sup> Spanish resistance was no match for both the insurrection forces and the US navy, and all colonies were taken within months. What is especially interesting in the context of the Cuban population in the United States is the passing of two amendments that on one hand safeguarded Cuba from becoming a colony like Puerto Rico, but on the

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<sup>22</sup> Olson and Olson, 27; Poyo, "Evolution of Cuban Separatist Thought in the Emigré Communities of the United States, 1848-1895"; Martí, "Carta a Serafín Bello, 16 Noviembre 1889", 255.

<sup>23</sup> Gott, *Cuba*, 100-101; Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 83-87.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Cuba – or: The Pursuit of Freedom*, 387-388.

other hand ensured that it would be under US neo-colonial domination for the first part of the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

The Teller Amendment was an addition to the US declaration of war against Spain, and basically stated that the United States did not have any colonial ambitions in Cuba. The law was sponsored by senator Henry M. Teller, who rushed the amendment through Congress on the suggestion of a lawyer connected to the Cuban exile community in New York and a friend of José Martí.<sup>26</sup> After the Spanish forces were expelled from Cuba, the United States set up a military occupation of the island that lasted from January 1899 to May 1902.<sup>27</sup> After the Americans left, the Platt Amendment came into play; voted through the US congress, and added as a provision to the still draft constitution of the new Cuban republic, it restricted Cuba from making treaties with foreign powers, allowing foreign military on Cuban soil, while it gave the United States oversight over Cuba's public finances, and allowed the United States to intervene for militarily whenever it felt the need to do so.<sup>28</sup>

The outcome of this post-colonial/neo-colonial standoff is revealing of the political implications of the two competing nationalisms at stake in the Cuban case. On one hand, a transnational Cuban nationalism flourished in both Cuba and the United States, which produced a struggle for national sovereignty, and allowed Cuban exiles in the United States to interfere with the US political process to the point that the Teller Amendment saved Cuba from becoming what Puerto Rico is today. On the other hand, the Platt Amendment enshrined a neo-colonial power relationship into both Cuban and US law only a few years later. The result of these contradictory processes resulted in a situation in which US citizens, businesses and organisations

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<sup>25</sup> Pérez, *Cuba*, 118-120; Gott, 99-105.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas, 375-377.

<sup>27</sup> Pérez, 138-141; Rodríguez and Targ, "US Foreign Policy towards Cuba", 20.

<sup>28</sup> Pérez, 142-143; Gott, 110-111; de la Torriente, "The Platt Amendment"; Kapcia, "The Exception to the Rule".

had significant advantageous access to the Cuban market, which they came to dominate within the first decade after the war, reinforcing Cuban anti-American state-nationalist sentiment.<sup>29</sup>

### **The First Wave: The Working-Class Foundation**

The five waves that will be described here are identified within two parameters. First and foremost, the actual numbers of people who came from Cuba to the United States will be taken into account. There has been a constant migration from Cuba to the United States throughout the twentieth century, but five times the migration flow surged. These waves each had a certain demographic profile, but more important is the second parameter, that there would be a specific reason for their migration.

The origins of the Cuban community in the United States were primarily working class – people came to work in the Florida tobacco industry during the nineteenth century, when wars of independence devastated the Cuban economy.<sup>30</sup> This trend continued during the first decades of the twentieth century, with one small alteration: they often returned to Cuba. As the conditions in Cuba revived after the disastrous wars of the nineteenth century, US businesses moved to the island, taking away market share from the cigar industry in Florida.<sup>31</sup> The skewed balance of power, and the monopolization of business on US hands, meant that there was an increase in Cuban emigration to the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century, followed by a sharp decline in the following decades, until a new increase came about after 1945. Mirroring the migratory pattern of Puerto Rico, Cubans

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<sup>29</sup> Pérez, 149-53 & 183-84; Hitchman, “The Platt Amendment Revisited”; Rodríguez and Targ, 22; Guggenheim, “Amending the Platt Amendment”, 2519-2520; Altunaga, “Cuba’s Case for the Repeal of the Platt Amendment”; Domínguez López and Yaffe, “The Deep, Historical Roots of Cuban Anti-Imperialism”.

<sup>30</sup> Grenier and Pérez, *The Legacy of Exile*, 18; Pérez, “La Emigración Cubana”, 625-630; Poyo, *Exile and revolution*, 13-18.

<sup>31</sup> Grenier and Pérez, 20.

leaving for the United States at this time mainly went to New York, following the demand for labour in the post-war US industry.<sup>32</sup>

The latter development in this first wave leads into the second wave of immigration: the refugees that left Cuba in the 1950s and early 60s due to the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and the insurrection that ended it. In most literature on the genesis of the Cuban American community in the United States, 1959 is often set as year zero. Immigration before the insurrection against Batista is either not discussed, or, in the rare occasions it is discussed, is conflated with the migration that is often labelled as exile.<sup>33</sup> Puerto Rican immigration to the United States, on the other hand, has been thoroughly studied under the paradigm of colonial influence and displacement under imperialism. As migration from this other Caribbean island that came under US influence during the 1898 US intervention in Spanish colonies follows the same pattern of Cuban migration in the period after World War 2 to the end of the 1950s, it is plausible that it happened due to similar motives: in the period, US companies took over large amounts of Puerto Rican and Cuban land to be cultivated mainly by labourers from Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, lowering the wages, and creating unemployment among the native population.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Second Wave: The Golden Exiles**

The Golden Exiles hold a special place in the Cuban American narrative. From the ousting of Batista in 1959 to 1962 about 200,000 people migrated from Cuba to the United States. Primarily white, middle to upper class, these people migrated as a direct result of the regime change in Havana, either because they in some form or another had participated in the Batista dictatorship in a way that made them fear

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<sup>32</sup> Pérez, "De Nueva York a Miami", 16-17.

<sup>33</sup> Grenier and Pérez, 16-20; Rusin et al., *Cuban Immigrants in the United States*.

<sup>34</sup> Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora", 1-20.

legal repercussions from the new government, or because they disagreed strongly with the direction of new policies. It is worth noting that about 14,000 Cuban children travelled to the United States unaccompanied over the course of this three-year period in the so-called Operation Peter Pan. Almost all of these children left Cuba thinking that they would return as soon as there would be no more communist influence in the schools. This idea is understandable given Cuba's middle-class history of sending its children to schools in the United States, only this time the children left never to see their family again. Finally, the wave was also brought forward by the combination of the new Cuban government's use of the migration wave as an escape valve to diffuse political unrest at home, and the US government's use of migration as a tactic to humiliate the new government.<sup>35</sup>

The vast numbers of Cubans coming from the island dwarfed already existing Cuban American communities. During the 1950s, the total number of Cubans in the United States more than doubled, from little more than 71,000 in 1950 to 163,000 in 1960.<sup>36</sup> This had a tremendous impact on Cuban culture in the United States, especially given the increasing levels of hostility between the United States and Cuban governments. In August 1960, US president Eisenhower authorised the disastrous plan to overthrow the new Cuban government using a paramilitary force made up of recently arrived Cubans, trained by the CIA.<sup>37</sup> The Iron Curtain did not just fall between the governments of the two countries, but also between two cradles of Cuban culture, as communications were broken off and diplomacy thrown to the wind. The CIA debriefed all newly arrived Cubans meticulously, kept a sharp eye on the Cuban community in Miami and set up propaganda channels, directed towards

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<sup>35</sup> Gott, 211-212; Grenier and Pérez, 23; Pérez, *Cuba*, 254-255.

<sup>36</sup> Rusin et al.

<sup>37</sup> Olson and Olson, *Cuban Americans*, 55.

both Cuba and Miami in early 1959, consolidating the animosity between the two communities.<sup>38</sup>

### **Third Wave: From Camarioca to the Freedom Flights**

The Cuban government stopped allowing regular Cuban citizens to leave in October 1962, a fact that was used by Radio Free America and other US propaganda channels to portray Cuba as a prison. In order to tackle this problem, the Cuban government announced that anybody who wished to leave the island could do so via the beach of Camarioca, east of Matanzas.<sup>39</sup> Cuban Americans organized small boats to travel from Florida to pick up relatives and anybody who wanted to leave, and soon hundreds of boats sailed back and forth over the Florida Straits. Both governments intended to use the situation for propaganda purposes, and President Johnson announced that any Cuban would be welcome in the United States<sup>40</sup> The Camarioca Boatlift lasted nearly a month, and close to 5,000 Cubans were ferried across to Florida. After this incident, the US and Cuban governments agreed to set up an orderly airlift that could transport Cubans wanting to go to the United States without the perils of the open sea. This system lasted from December 1965 to 1973 and brought 260,500 people to the United States on two daily flights. The Cuban Adjustment Act was passed through Congress in November 1966 to secure any Cuban who stayed in the United States for more than a year residency in the country, giving them an advantage over any other immigrant, as well as encouraging irregular migration. As a part of the diplomatic agreement, the Cuban government reserved the right to decide who would be able to board these flights, which had a huge impact on the demographics of the emigrants, making it more female and elderly.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Gleichauf, "Keeping Up on Cuba", 49-53.

<sup>39</sup> Olson and Olson, 59.

<sup>40</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 104-107.

<sup>41</sup> Grenier and Pérez, 23-24; on the Cuban Adjustment Act, see: LeoGrande and Kornbluh, 107.

The motivation behind the emigration of the people in this wave will not differ much from the motivation behind the first post-1959 wave. The Camarioca crisis started as an opportunity for Cubans in the United States to pick up their relatives, but quickly escalated to a near decade-long exodus of people who in one way or another dissented from the course of the new government. The reason for this dissent may however be varied; the Cuban economy performed erratically during the 1960s due to experimental central planning, a rationing system was introduced, previously stratified social and race-relations changed, small and large businesses were nationalised, and the development from the original revolutionary groups from the insurgency towards institutionalised political parties made way for the establishment of the communist party as the sole power-holder.<sup>42</sup> All of these factors might have been motivation behind the so-called Freedom Flights. One main difference between this wave and the previous one is that Cubans going to the United States this time around knew that their time away from Cuba would not be temporary.

#### **Fourth Wave: Mariel**

The dissatisfaction with, and opposition to, the Cuban government that lies at the core of the motivation to migrate during the Freedom Flight-wave is also crucial in the third, wave: The Mariel Boatlift. Approximately 125,000 Cubans entered the United States between April and October 1980, giving the incident a magnitude and impact that even made it to the silver screens of Hollywood through Al Pacino's portrayal of a Marielito in Oliver Stone's *Scarface*.<sup>43</sup> The incident arose, like the Camarioca boat lift, as a stand-off between the governments of the United States and Cuba. In the six months before the incident, there had been a diplomatic dispute between the two governments over US immigration policy, and when a group of Cubans breached the walls of the Peruvian embassy in Havana to seek asylum, the

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<sup>42</sup> Pérez, *Cuba*, 260-265.

<sup>43</sup> Gott, 266-269; Skopp, "Race and Place" 449-471.



Cuban government seized the opportunity to open the gates to the embassy for anyone who wanted to go. When this decision backfired, and so many people took the opportunity to use the embassy as a way out of Cuba that its grounds were literally filled with waiting emigrants, the Cuban government raised the stakes of its gamble, and opened the port of Mariel, as they had done with Camarioca, 15 years earlier. The crisis ended when President Carter gave in and changed US immigration policy.<sup>44</sup>

The demographic composition of the Mariel emigrants was different from earlier waves, as earlier waves to a large extent were upper class, white Cubans. Most Mariel migrants were of lower social status, and close to 50% of them were black, compared to only 5% of the earlier waves.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, a higher percentage of the Mariel migrants were adherent to Santería than the traditionally Catholic Cuban American community. The media representation of the incident was less one of a valiant US reception of political refugees that had characterised the earlier waves, and more fearsome of an invasion of unruly, black, male criminals. It was true that about 26,000 had prison records, and between 4,000-5,000 of them convictions for violent crimes.<sup>46</sup> Most of the migrants eventually moved to either Miami or Union City in New Jersey.<sup>47</sup> All in all, the Mariel Boatlift was one of the most influential historical incidents when it comes to the composition of the Cuban American population.

### **Fifth Wave: The Rafters**

Although the Mariel Crisis was a traumatic experience for many Cubans that were pitted against each other by the two governments for propaganda purposes, the

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<sup>44</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, 214-218.

<sup>45</sup> Skopp, 458.

<sup>46</sup> Olson and Olson, 78-91.

<sup>47</sup> Skopp, 455-457; Olson and Olson, 92-94.

most tragic must be the rafter crisis of the mid-1990s. This final wave of the twentieth century took place in what is called the Special Period – the devastating economic crisis that followed the collapse of the USSR. As with the Mariel and Camarioca crises, a diplomatic dispute lay at the heart of the rafters' crisis. During the first months of 1994, when the Cuban economy was at its worst, many Cubans resorted to drastic measures, and began crossing the Florida Straits in makeshift rafts. Many drowned. The Cuban Coast Guard intercepted some of these rafts, and on a few occasions, this led to violent and tragic ends. On one occasion, an action against a hijacked boat ended with the death of 40 men, women and children. The government reacted to this situation by lifting all restrictions against emigration by sea, and in less than a month, the US coastguard intercepted and salvaged more than 37,000 Cubans at sea. Ultimately, the US government agreed to take 20,000 Cuban immigrants of the Cuban government's choosing every year, and to pass the so-called wet-feet-dry-feet policy, stating that any Cuban intercepted by the US Coast Guard before reaching US shores would be returned to Cuba.<sup>48</sup> Explanations for the rafters' motivation to undertake this perilous journey are many, but two seem most generally plausible: the first one is the frustration and dissatisfaction with a Cuba that used to be able to feed its citizens, and that suddenly lay in economic ruins. The second one is that the rafters, like the Golden Exiles before them, might have thought that the crisis promised *Fidel Castro's Last Hour*,<sup>49</sup> which would mean that they would only face a short stay in the United States.

### **Final Tally: One Fifth of a Country – Half a Nation(ality)**

In 2012, a Pew Research Centre statistic accounted for 1,973,108 people of Cuban origin residing in the United States.<sup>50</sup> The Cuban Office of National Statistics

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<sup>48</sup> Grenier and Pérez, 24-26.

<sup>49</sup> Oppenheimer, *Castro's Final Hour*.

<sup>50</sup> Flores, "2015 Hispanic Population in the United States Statistical Portrait".

concluded that 11,167,325 people were living in Cuba at that same time.<sup>51</sup> That means that the Cuban diaspora in the United States makes up roughly 17.67 % of the population living in Cuba, or almost one fifth. As with everything, Cuba turns out to offer a special case to be studied. Cuban national identity is forged in concert with its diaspora; projected from a perceived exile onto an island where cultural developments were sped up by the creolization process of rapidly changing New World encounters. As this nation building process happened across borders before these were properly defined, the establishment of Havana and Washington as two centres of power fighting over political hegemony over Cuba meant that two main categories of interpreting Cuban nationality arose, interpretations that allowed for cross-border nationality, and those that did not.

A reading of Cuban American history from this perspective gives the impression of a lost opportunity. With the imposition of hostility between these two centres of power, especially after 1901 and later 1961, the interpretation of Cuban nationality was taken hostage, and only an interpretation focussed on the idea of a nation-state was made possible. The fact that the Cuban neighbourhood West of Downtown Miami is called Little Havana is significant. It indicates the trauma of a loss of a home that is remedied with the construction of this surrogate home. The dichotomy between *los de afuera*, and *los de adentro* is a violent one, maintaining a collective trauma of frustrated nationalism that is difficult to solve in the political climate of today.

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<sup>51</sup> Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información, "Informe Nacional", 69.

## **PART II. HISTORIOGRAPHY**

### CHAPTER 3: HISTORIOGRAPHY – THE ORIGIN OF IDEOLOGY

Compañeros de Historia,  
tomando en cuenta lo implacable  
que debe ser la verdad,  
quisiera preguntar —me urge tanto—,  
qué debiera decir, qué fronteras debo respetar.  
Si alguien roba comida y después da la vida  
¿qué hacer?  
¿Hasta dónde debemos practicar las verdades?  
¿Hasta dónde sabemos?  
Que escriban, pues, la historia, su historia,  
los hombres del «Playa Girón».

Silvio Rodríguez. "Playa Girón".

So, a white Dutchman and an Englishman of colour are sitting in the Bar-in-Between. The Dutchman remembers a Saint Nicholas Eve when a magic man dressed in blackface gave him candy. The other remembers centuries of slavery. What happens when two people from different cultural memories communicate? What happens is that memories entangle,<sup>1</sup> chart multiple directions,<sup>2</sup> perhaps one gains hegemony and establishes a new cultural memory.<sup>3</sup> Now, a revolutionary enters the Bar-in-Between and seats himself next to a historian of the status quo. What happens?

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<sup>1</sup> Feindt et al., "Entangled Memory"

<sup>2</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

<sup>3</sup> Assmann, *Das Kulturelles Gedächtnis*.

When viewed in a narrowly abstract and theoretical sense, the value of historiographic material must be contested during a revolution, as revolution by its very nature contests the value of truth in the machinery of power-production of the ideological state apparatus (ISA) of the ancien régime.<sup>4</sup> This is the conclusion reached not only in the complex work of Louis Althusser but also by nueva trova singer-songwriter Silvio Rodríguez in the third stanza of the song “Playa Girón” above – which, as mentioned in the preface to the thesis, was one of the original sources of inspiration for this PhD project. In three stanzas, Silvio asks three groups of cultural producers how to describe the Cuban fishing fleet Playa Girón, named after the beach, where the US-backed forces landed in 1961 in a failed attempt to overthrow the new Cuban government. First, he asks this question to the poets, then the musicians, and in the final stanza, the one above, he poses the question to historians. Besides the obvious double meaning of *Playa Girón*, Silvio’s question is not how to write the most truthful account of past events, but rather how to write a narrative that inspires to do good. In more abstract terms, the song “Playa Girón” proposes a move from modernist historiography, as being the writing of Leopold von Ranke’s *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, towards a pedagogical use of history. There is an element of closure in this proposal: if the revolution in its very nature contests truth production in the ISA, the instalment of a new modus after the contestation must mean that the revolution has come full circle and a new hegemony has formed. In the Cuban case, this hegemony was however not altogether successful. In one of the interviews conducted for this research, analysed in-depth below, an interviewee told me that it was partly the “consignas revolucionarias” that tired him and convinced him to travel back to the future to Miami.

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<sup>4</sup> Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 149-151.

Rafael Rojas has written a series of systematic reviews of Cuban historiography with attempts to link this to issues of popular sentiment, ideology and nationhood.<sup>5</sup> In certain aspects of his work, he does apply the term memory, but mostly as synonymous to the term discourse and without any strong conceptualisation such as the one that the thesis searches for. The historiographical work that Rojas reviews is mainly of academic nature, which allows him to assess important trends in the way history is employed to support political programmes. The thesis will however look at the historiography that has been produced to be mediated to the Cuban people on a large scale to perform a pedagogical role in Cuban society.

When asserting that Silvio Rodríguez above suggests a change to the way history is used from merely truth-seeking to a moral, pedagogical use of history, it is crucial to mention the work of Kayser Nielsen again, and especially his previously mentioned *Historiens Forvandlinger* [The Transformation of History]. The introductory chapter to this tour de force of ways in which history is used in the present begins with what could be thought of as a definition of the term uses of history:

Historien er en forvandlingskugle. Den ændrer sig hele tiden, fordi vi stiller nye spørgsmål til den – og bruger den på nye måder. Nok handler historien stadig overordnet om at se bagud, men vores syn bagud skifter hele tiden. Det er nemlig bestemt af hvilket formål vi har med historien her og nu – og i fremtiden.

[History is like jawbreaker candy. It changes continuously because we ask it different questions – and use it in new ways. Overall, it certainly deals with us looking backwards, but our view backwards keeps changing. That is to

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<sup>5</sup> Rojas, "The New Text of the Revolution"; Rojas, "Dilemas de la nueva historia"; Rojas, "Cultura e Ideología en el Poscomunismo Cubano"; Rojas, *El Debate Historiográfico y las Reglas del Campo Intelectual en Cuba*; Rojas, "Orígenes and the Poetics of History"; Rojas, "Los Nudos de la Memoria".

say that it is conditioned by our purpose with the past in this very moment – and in the future.]<sup>6</sup>

Keeping in mind the central analytical concept presented by Kayser Nielsen, that of the historical trope, understood as the imaginary direction of the Bar-in-Between, this chapter will investigate how the post-1959 Cuban state attempts to install a new cultural memory to underpin its ideology, by reforming the educational system and re-charting the map that guides Cubans across time and space.

As suggested further above, Silvio Rodríguez' proposal to change the uses history in Cuba was not new at the time when he wrote *Playa Girón*. Nicola Miller has argued that the speech given by Fidel Castro at his trial for the attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953, commonly known by its concluding statement: "History will Absolve me!", became the foundation of the new regime's *raison d'être*: "The centrality of 'History will absolve me' to the revolutionary struggle meant that history, rather than constitutionalism or ideology, was the key legitimating force behind the Cuban revolution."<sup>7</sup> The interpretation of Cuban history is one that repeats itself in circles of oppression and rebellion thwarted by external forces, which can be broken by Castro's insurgency. In her article, Miller works backwards from the insurgency to assert that the authority behind "History will Absolve Me!" rested on a foundation of revisionist historiographical work moving the agency in the struggle for Cuban independence away from foreign interventionism and towards what became construed as Cuban national sovereignty. It argued that the dynamics that ensued from this revisionist historiography were an expression of the centrality that this perception of the past plays in ideological structures in Cuba through the rewriting of

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<sup>6</sup> Kayser Nielsen, *Historiens Forvandling*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, "The Absolution of History", 147-148.



history that followed the US intervention 1898-1901.<sup>8</sup> It is this revisionist school of thought that Oscar Zanetti, in his review of Cuban historiographical production after 1959, has called “la historia heredada,” asserting that “No ha de sorprender que la historiografía nacionalista, con su denuncia de las tendencias anexionistas, el intervencionismo y la dominación de Estados Unidos, ofreciese un efectivo arsenal al nuevo discurso histórico.”<sup>9</sup> In the following, the thesis will, however, work forward from 1959 to the point where narratives coincide with the education of my interviewees.

## **From Revising the Ivory Tower to Historical Absolution: Reform and History**

### **Teaching after 1959**

Shortly after Fidel Castro’s first declaration of the socialist nature of his government in April 1961, revolutionary veteran Armando Hart travelled to the USSR, as the first minister of education after 1959, in order to study the Soviet school system and implement a similar model in Cuba. It was under his overseeing that the Makarenko Pedagogical Institute for teacher training and several polytechnic schools were created after the Soviet model in the early 1960s.<sup>10</sup> This period lasted until May 1964, when the Cuban government adopted Resolution 392, which was to bring radical change to the school system in the years 1965-1971. The changes mainly focused on the involvement of farm labour and industrial work in education, a programme also known as *escuelas en el campo*.<sup>11</sup>

In their history of educational thought of the Cuban revolution, professors and investigators at the Enrique José Varona Pedagogical University, Justo Chávez and Gustavo Deler, divide the period from 1959 to 2005 into five phases.<sup>12</sup> The first

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<sup>8</sup> Pérez, “In the Service of the Revolution”; Quinn, “Cuban Historiography in the 1960s”.

<sup>9</sup> Lecuona, “Medio siglo de historiografía en Cuba”.

<sup>10</sup> Cheng and Manning, “Revolution in Education”, 366.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 377; Blum, *Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values*, 60.

<sup>12</sup> Chávez Rodríguez and Deler Ferrera, *Antología*, 3.

phase (1959-1962) was characterized by enthusiastic efforts sparked by the momentum of the insurgency, perfectly illustrated by the ambitious project of the literacy campaign of 1961. Teaching was organized rapidly, ad hoc and with the means at hand.<sup>13</sup> The second phase (1962-1975) is in Chávez' and Deler's analysis defined as a transition towards a socialistic educational system and pedagogical theory and is divided into two so-called sub-phases: 1962-1970 constituting a continuity of the revolutionary changes in the system, and 1971-1975 a restructuring and improvement in the national school system. The first sub-phase is marked by a further fortification of the principles of broad dissemination of education, based on a systematisation and institutionalisation of the ad hoc campaigns of the first phase. This second sub-phase was launched by the Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura in April 1971, where the changes to the national educational system were drafted, and the implementation relegated to the newly founded Centro de Desarrollo Educativo, according to Chávez and Deler with substantial Soviet assistance.<sup>14</sup> The Congress furthermore led to the establishment of the Centro de Desarrollo Educacional, which primary goal was to take stock of the educational system and present policy proposals based on investigations with the assistance from Soviet and East German specialists.<sup>15</sup> This study led to a policy of institutionalisation launched in 1975-1976 under the name *perfeccionamiento*, mainly focussed at educational efficiency, expansion of education to include citizens that had not had access and furthermore streamline the education in Marxist-Leninist ideology.<sup>16</sup>

The implementation of a curriculum corresponding to the reorganisation of the school system followed more or less the lines of the reorganisation of its institutions:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4; Gott, 188-189.

<sup>14</sup> Chávez Rodríguez and Deler Ferrera, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Chávez Rodríguez, "Education in Cuba" 48.

<sup>16</sup> Lutjens, "Educational Policy in Socialist Cuba".

First the higher education and only later the wider school system.<sup>17</sup> In 1959, revisionist historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, known especially for his contribution to the pre-1959 revisionist debate *Cuba no debe su independencia a Los Estados Unidos*, published a collection of declarations and policy advice for history education from the congresses held by the *Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Históricos e Internacionales* (SCEHI) since its first congress on 27 February 1942. In a prologue to these declarations, Leuchsenring assesses the value of the historiography that has been produced in Cuba since its independence, and comes very close to conceding to Fidel Castro the absolution that he claimed would be granted in 1953 by agreeing with the premise of “History will Absolve me”:

Bien es verdad – lo hemos dicho más de una ocasión – que los primeros tiempos de vida republicana fueron para Cuba difíciles y tumultuosos; que apenas constituida la República, vimos salir a la superficie de la tierra los mismos vicios y defectos que los hombres que concibieron y realizaron la revolución emancipadora se proponían a extinguir: [mentions a series of infractions towards republican order]

Pero todo ello no significa el fracaso de la obra revolucionaria emancipadora cubana, ni puede dar motivo, ni pretexto tampoco, para el repudio, ni mucho menos el desprecio, hacia los mambises libertadores.<sup>18</sup>

Keep in mind here that the revolution which Leuchsenring here mentions refers to the anti-colonial struggle of the nineteenth century, for which he in the prologue gives a wide definition by letting it begin with the thinking of Félix Varela: “...la revolución vista ya, en la remota fecha de 1824, por la mirada genial de Félix

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<sup>17</sup> Chávez Rodríguez and Deler Ferrera, 5.

<sup>18</sup> de Leuchsenring, *Revaloración*, 12.

Varela, como el único medio de que Cuba logrará por la fuerza de las armas lo que jamás España iba a concederle por las buenas...”<sup>19</sup> After the prologue, the declarations of the congresses of the SCEHI follow in what reads like a synthesis of the core messages of the revisionist turn of Cuban historiography; condemnations of colonial mechanisms of Spain as well as later neo-colonial mechanisms of the United States,<sup>20</sup> a celebration of independence movements in Cuba as well as in the wider context of the Americas,<sup>21</sup> an insistence on a singular, although transcultural, Cuban nation and the essentiality of its sovereignty,<sup>22</sup> as well as a long list of considerations regarding the interpretation of the thoughts and actions of specific personalities.<sup>23</sup>

Two years after the publication of this guide to the interpretation of Cuban history, mainly directed at fellow historians, a series of lectures by Sergio Aguirre were published in a manual for the preparation of history teachers for the restructuring of the education of history in Cuba.<sup>24</sup> This brochure, just short of 100 pages, published by the *Instituto Superior de Educación* (ISE), contains four transcribed lectures by Aguirre. After an initial lecture on the colonization and early colonial period of Cuba’s history, of which the conclusion remains that Cuba was exploited by the colonial mechanisms of Spain and that this exploitation resulted in the delayed development of its national industrial economy, the second lecture begins with the analysis of Cuban nationality with concepts borrowed from Joseph Stalin: “Sabemos que el estudio de las nacionalidades, [...], ha sido formulado por Stalin un criterio marxista que se orientó por las opiniones de Lenin.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 52 & 185-195.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 89-133.

<sup>24</sup> Rodríguez Ben, *Historia y Educación*, 77-78.

<sup>25</sup> Aguirre, *Lecciones de Historia de Cuba*, 7-19.

This second lecture is primarily dedicated to construing an argument that the development of Cuban class-structures is a result of colonial exploitation.<sup>26</sup> The third lecture takes the cue from the former with its dedication to the struggles of the nineteenth century interpreted as class-struggles. It is noteworthy in this regard that the upper-class is cast as Leninist useful idiots for imperialist causes, first the Spanish and later the United States: “No olvidemos que el reformismo había sido integrado básicamente por los poderosos productores cubanos azucareros y tabacaleros.”<sup>27</sup> In Aguirre’s lectures, reformism is a term used to collectively describe the political efforts in Cuba during the nineteenth century to integrate Cuba more closely in the Spanish monarchy, and there is little doubt of the conclusion that he wants the new history educators to pass on to their future students: “El fracaso del reformismo había sido total. En la práctica sólo faltaba a los terratenientes cubanos ensayar una nueva pelea: la lucha armada por la independencia.”<sup>28</sup>

Following this scathing judgement of all nineteenth century efforts to reach conviviality with the Spanish metropole, the efforts to solve this problem by seeking integration in the US state structure get the same treatment by equating the oppression of Spain and the United States: “...Cuba empezaba a tener, de hecho, en los años comprendidos entre 1845 y 1855, una metropolí política y otra metropolí comercial. [...] Así pensaban muchos cubanos. Para ellos la anexión equivalía a dejar caer sobre la isla un torrente de prosperidad.”<sup>29</sup> After an analysis of annexationism as an idea whose main goal was to consolidate the class system established by the imperialist machinery, the anti-colonial struggles of the second half of the nineteenth century are emplotted as the only ethical responses to the historical structures of Cuba: “Cuando se produjo el fracaso del reformismo en

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 21-32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 62.

la Junta de Información, 1867, ya el anexionismo tampoco podía ser una salida para Cuba. La salida tenía que ser otra: la lucha por la independencia, que estalló en 1868.”<sup>30</sup>

The difference between Leuchsenring’s nationalist republican approach and Aguirre’s Marxist analysis of history with concepts explicitly borrowed from Stalin seems obvious. The two texts exhibit two slightly similar but yet radically different ways of interpreting the past: one that sees the nineteenth century struggle against Spanish colonialism as an affirmation of an independent culture with a need for sovereign politics under the guise of a republic, and another that begins with the same argument, but interprets this same struggle as evidence of class-struggle, uses this to argue for the use of Marxist terms to understand society and by extent argues for the interpretation of the rule of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) as a natural outcome of the 1950s insurrection.

These differences might seem like any trivial dispute that happens in staff kitchens in any history department in any university, but in the context of the political restructuring of Cuba in the 1960s, it can be seen as an example of the ideological controversies that ultimately led to real change in Cuban knowledge production in the direction of serving the state apparatus in its consolidation. Under the leadership of Aguirre, the School of History was founded at the University of Havana. Kate Quinn writes that:

Under the direction of Sergio Aguirre, the School of History provided an institutional base for an unapologetically political history, primarily concerned with ‘re-interpreting existing sources to coincide with Marxist-Leninist theory

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 74.

and terminology' [...]. Detailed archival research was, as Aguirre himself conceded, the first casualty of the School's primary agenda: the rapid production of histories for mass political education, rewritten along 'correctly' revolutionary lines [...].<sup>31</sup>

An example of how this agenda unfolded can be found in the 1965 manual for the instruction in historical methodology printed for students at the school in the wake of the university reform. The manual, entitled *Fundamentos de la Historia*, is a translation of a book from the Czechoslovak Republic to address "La carencia absoluta, en idioma español, de un manual sobre el método histórico escrito desde el punto de vista del materialismo histórico."<sup>32</sup> The methodology proposed to the students emphasizes participation in agricultural and industrial labour in order to enhance the understanding of class structure and class struggle, with a strong focus on history as a scientific discipline, based on the work of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The approach of the manual connotes a positivistic, almost teleological vision of the relation between past, present and future, which are indisputably framed in a narrative of a nation's struggle against imperialist oppressors.<sup>33</sup>

This interpretation did not go uncontested. Late Cuban historian Fernando Martínez Heredia formed part of a group of thinkers in the Department of Philosophy which in the second half of the 1960s was dedicated to the development of theoretical insights into Cuba's new political reality based on a more nuanced interpretation of Marxist thought. The editorial of the first edition of its journal *Pensamiento Crítico* reads:

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<sup>31</sup> Quinn, "Cuban Historiography in the 1960s", 384.

<sup>32</sup> Hosak L, *Fundamentos de la Historia*, VII.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 12, 23, 30, 32, 82 & 96.

Hoy todas las fuerzas sociales de nuestro país están en tensión creadora; lo exigen la profundización y la magnitud de las metas de la Revolución. Contribuir a la incorporación plena de la investigación científica de los problemas sociales a esa Revolución es el propósito de esta publicación. Nuestro punto de partida: por una parte, que las teorías surgen o se desarrollan en el análisis de las situaciones concretas; por otra, que la formación teórica es indispensable a los investigadores.<sup>34</sup>

The journal re-printed critical Marxist thinkers from Cuba, and all around the world in an attempt to address the complexities of current Marxist theory. The project was however short lived and closed down in 1971. In an interview with Emir Sader, for *Crítica y Emancipación*, Martínez Heredia reflected on the time when this change occurred:

Sobrevinieron cambios importantes y un recorte del alcance del proyecto revolucionario. En ese marco se produjo la desaparición del grupo de la calle K, es decir, del Departamento de Filosofía y de la revista *Pensamiento Crítico*. [...] Opino en general que la dirección revolucionaria entendió que debía sacrificar su izquierda intelectual como parte de la adecuación a la que se veía forzada.<sup>35</sup>

The sacrifice of the critical leftist intellectual interpretation of the past in favour of a modernization of Cuba along strict Marxist-Leninist lines meant that the past was not an appropriate topic for philosophers, but one that should be relegated to pedagogues, echoing the lyrics of Silvio Rodríguez above. This debate fell along the lines of the debate on Cuban dependency on the USSR. In her PhD thesis, Isabel

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<sup>34</sup> "Presentación", *Pensamiento Crítico* 1.

<sup>35</sup> Sader and Martínez Heredia, "Entrevista a Fernando Martínez Heredia" 146.



Story details how the institutionalisation of cultural and artistic practices was part of a rigorous debate between politicians who insisted on a sovereign Cuban form of Marxism-Leninism and those who were more Soviet leaning. This debate was settled through the approval of the first post-1959 constitution, in which the modus of the institutionalisation of culture, ideology and education was clarified:

“[The constitution of] 1976 represents, then, not a turn away from the USSR and the end of a period of supposedly pernicious Soviet-style influence, but rather a clarification of the basis of the cultural relationship between the two countries and the structural apparatus that directed culture.”<sup>36</sup>

The 1976 constitution firmly prescribed that all education in Cuba should be founded upon Marxist-Leninist concepts, that education should be provided by and should benefit the state, which “superior leading force” is determined as the PCC.<sup>37</sup> In order to implement these wide-ranging policies, the Central Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (ICCP) was established in 1976 in order to conduct investigations into possible pedagogical and didactic improvement of the school system and produce school curricula and programs.<sup>38</sup>

At this point, it is almost no longer necessary to point out the importance of the emplotment of historical consciousness into a cultural memory through ISAs as a foundation of the establishment of ideological hegemony; by inscribing this into law, the Cuban state made this argument itself, and the thesis here mainly investigates this as a premise. By taking the interpretation of the past out of the hands of philosophers such as Martínez Heredia and assigning it to the realm of pedagogy,

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<sup>36</sup> Story, *When the Soviets Came to Stay*, 138-139.

<sup>37</sup> Chávez Rodríguez and Deler Ferrera, 35-38; PCC. *Constitución de la República de Cuba*, §5, §38, §50, §54.

<sup>38</sup> Chávez Rodríguez, 49.

which then falls under the centralisation of the ICCP, the curricula produced by the ICCP become core documents in an investigation of cultural memory in Cuba at the time of departure of the interviewees of the thesis. Pérez has investigated this dynamic thoroughly, and noticed how historical emplotment in the material produced by the Ministry of Education (MINED) “...was structured within a self-explanatory teleological framework, given to an understanding of the past as a process culminating on January 1, 1959.”<sup>39</sup> Pérez continues with an analysis of this teleology in teachers’ manuals and lesson plans, produced by the MINED, to come to the conclusion that the main focus was to instil a Marxist-Leninist understanding of Cuban history with the leitmotif of “cien años de lucha,” that framed the 1950s insurgency and subsequent government not only as natural, even ethical, conclusions of this struggle but also as the very essence of Cuban identity. As Pérez puts it: “The rationale of the revolution had become inseparable from the moral of the past, for this was a process so very much conceived within the historical logic of national formation.”<sup>40</sup>

### **From Debates among Historians to Manuals for Teachers**

This following section will further explore the documents from the *Centro de Información para la Educación* (CIED), which is a division of the archives of the MINED dedicated to public information. The documents mainly consist of lesson plans for both students and teachers, and often include the desired learning goals for the students, making them very informative material.

The first of the manuals found at the CIED was printed in 1973. Elaborated by historian Edilio Torres Miranda for the MINED, it gives a detailed description of a series of seminars for history teachers. For each seminar, it presents the objective,

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<sup>39</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 255-261.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

the themes, the students' individual activities and the bibliography on which it is based.<sup>41</sup> History is framed as a process based on Marxist criteria with a focus on how the understanding of the past should inform the consciousness about the future, while simultaneously also being seen as a process that is moved forward by certain heroes. From the independence wars, heroes like José Martí and Antonio Maceo are mentioned. From the republican era we find founder of the Communist Party Julio Antonio Mella and finally heroes from the insurrection of the 1950s, like Frank País and Camilo Cienfuegos. The plan tells the students that these heroes arise from confrontations with, and problems within, the capitalist and imperialist system.<sup>42</sup>

The first wave of Spanish colonization is presented as exploitation and domination, the nineteenth century presented in the light of the failure of annexationist ideology, and (total) dependence on the United States. The interpretation of the Zanjón Pact emphasizes a Cuban will to continue the war, and president Tomás Estrada Palma's commercial policy towards the United States its "terrible consequences for Cuba".<sup>43</sup> The plan tells teachers to ask the students questions such as "Who governed Cuba?" and "How was the money of the people disposed of?" followed up by the reminder to keep the "republican decadence" in mind.<sup>44</sup> There is no question as to what the right answers are.

The specific objectives of each seminar are presented in bullet points and provide an essence of how Cuban history is to be interpreted. This presents us with a master narrative consisting of four basic elements: 'The bad guys', 'the good guys', 'the victims' and 'the solution'. The 'bad guys' rarely have names and are more

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<sup>41</sup> Miranda, *Plan de Estudios*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 5-7, 13-15 & 22-25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 33.

confined to the indefinite structures of capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

Exceptions to the rule are the Spanish king Felipe V, and the US ambassadors Enoch 'Bert' Crowder and Sumner Welles.<sup>45</sup> The 'good guys' on the other hand often have names, their actions are triggered by the evil system, and the manual explicitly requires the students to value them. Examples are many and range from one of the supposed founders of Cuban nationality, Father Félix Varela, to the independence hero José Martí and the founder of the communist party Julio Antonio Mella.<sup>46</sup> Oddly enough, Ernesto Guevara does not form part of this pantheon.<sup>47</sup> This could be due to the fact that authorities during the institutionalisation process were not completely sure how to approach Guevara's interpretations of socialism, and therefor simply chose to leave him out.<sup>48</sup>

"The victims" in the emplotment in the programme are native Cubans, black slaves, or the Cuban people.<sup>49</sup> There is, however, a vast difference in the agency ascribed to these different categories: the native Cubans in the plan are reduced to almost the same status as the very land that the Spanish colonizers were in possession of.<sup>50</sup> The question of slavery is treated with a focus on the economic exploitation of Cuba. The actual slaves are hardly mentioned.<sup>51</sup> The Cuban people are portrayed as the most horribly violated of the three, as North American Imperialism actively assaults the Cuban people and commit genocide against them. The event is also the only one written in all capital letters.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, the plan directly states that its intention is to provide a historical consciousness that should inform the consciousness of the future.<sup>53</sup> It is, therefore, be easy to determine the historical

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 6 & 31.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 12, 25 & 33.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>48</sup> Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of dreams*, 196-199.

<sup>49</sup> Miranda, 5 & 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 5 & 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1.

consciousness that the book intends to impose: The history of the world is emplotted as an evil system driven by capitalist exploitation, which poses a recurring threat to the development of the Cuban nation. When evil strikes, a Cuban hero rises up and the Cuban people have to follow him in order to rid itself of the evil structure.

Very similar to the programme from 1973 are the plans for the history programme for the education of schoolteachers from 1975 and 1976.<sup>54</sup> Already in the objectives for the courses we see the juxtaposition between the exploited Cuban and the foreign exploiters. Interestingly, the oligarchs who exploited the native Cubans and the black slaves throughout Cuban history are described as Spanish, which conveniently puts them on the side of the foreigners and marks the limit of who can be described as Cuban.<sup>55</sup> The bibliography in both programmes seems to be taken from the 1973 course plan edited by Miranda and the chronology is precisely the same.<sup>56</sup> In the booklet with techniques of historical investigation that accompanies the 1976 course plan, we see some of the same characteristics as in *Fundamentos de la Historia*: a strong revocation of Marxist-Leninist doctrines of history and imperialism, with a strong focus on particular historical events as a transition from one historical period to the other.<sup>57</sup>

The lesson plans found at the CIED leave very little room for interpretation by the teachers that were supposed to apply them in the classrooms. The very first sentence in a course programme from 1976 makes this abundantly clear: “El programa de historia es un documento estatal de obligatorio cumplimiento por parte de los profesores de historia.”<sup>58</sup> The following 6 pages of the manual after this statement are exclusively dedicated to exalting Marxism, historical dialectics and a

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<sup>54</sup> Rodríguez, *Historia de Cuba*; Díaz, *Historia de Cuba*.

<sup>55</sup> Rodríguez, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> *Programa de Historia*, 3.

rather crude analysis of historical class struggle as the utmost scientific ways of approaching the past, with added praise to the authors of this conception, Marx and Engels, and also to the political application of these concepts by Lenin.<sup>59</sup>

Although it is interesting that the programme seems to value the knowledge about past events very little compared to the teaching of a single teleological force that moves societies forward in time, it is even more interesting to read the rationale behind this emplotment. This reason is given unambiguously in the chapter: “Importancia instructiva y educativa de la historia”, which explains that the purpose of the history teacher is to contribute to the formation of a moral and revolutionary personality.<sup>60</sup> These goals are further elaborated in the chapter on “Objetivos generales de la asignatura”, which includes “formación en los alumnos de la concepción marxista-leninista”, “educación de los alumnos en la fidelidad a: la causa del Partido Comunista, los ideales del comunismo, su preparación para luchar por su realización”, “Educación moral comunista”, “La educación estética de los alumnos”, “Formación en los alumnos del sistema de los conocimientos históricos”, “Formación en los alumnos de las habilidades de trabajo independiente” and “Desarrollo del interés hacia la historia de la patria y la historia universal, hacia la vida socio-política y la comprensión del valor de los conocimientos históricos y los objetivos del estudio de la historia.”<sup>61</sup> The Rankian principle of *wie es eigentlich gewesen* is valued significantly less than the pedagogical element of installing a historical consciousness that is explicitly emplotted to serve in the ideological framework of the PCC. A canon is being formed, high priests of memory selected, and the lines of power are charted.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 3-9.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 21, 22, 23, 24 & 25.

The programme continues with an overview over the topics to be covered, complete with a note detailing how many classes are to be dedicated to each topic, as well as practical assignments that the students are expected to complete. The general emplotment of history in this programme follows two lines. The students are first presented with universal history in abstract terms, moving neatly according to Marx's teleology through the establishment of capitalist societies, crisis of capitalism exemplified by colonialism, slavery and world wars, followed by anti-colonial struggles and revolution, with plenty of space dedicated to coverage and praise of the Russian revolution.<sup>62</sup> Following universal history, the students move on to Cuban history, framed in somewhat of a contrast, as it is specific in naming years and dates, heroes and villains. This emplotment casts Cuba as an island swimming in a sea of capitalist, imperialist and neo-colonial plots to rob it of its freedom; a problem that is only solved through the insurrection of the late 1950s and the new government, which heroically leads the country to the constitution of 1976 in spite of evil plots to thwart its sovereignty by the United States.<sup>63</sup>

The educational plans that are published in 1977 and 1978 are only slightly different and history is emplotted along the same pattern. The narrative enhances a perception of a besieged Cuba, fending off all kinds of imperialistic endeavours. Furthermore, these plans also contain the same focus on future development based on events in the past and the creation of the political structures after 1959 as an inevitable result of a historical teleology.

### **Canonisation of Memories // Creation of ISA**

Although the debates among revisionist historians prior to 1959 are interesting material for analysis, a case needs to be made for this simple, repetitive and frankly

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 35-58.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 59-86.

boring educational material. The debates are exciting in their establishment of a new narrative, while we in the latter find a regurgitation of abstract universal history moving neatly along teleological Marxist lines versus a Cuban history full of named nationalist heroes battling imperialist villains for Cuban independence in a circular movement, which they are only able to escape through the various metaphors that appear for 1959. The revisionist debates remain important to understand the origin of the emplotment of history in Cuba that allowed for a contestation of ideology and ultimately the political change centred in 1959 and later 1976. However, for a study of the oral history interviews in the thesis, the understanding of the revisionist debates comes only second to the understanding of the hegemonic narrative, that emerged from revisionism, emplotted along simplified lines in an interpretation of history. The importance of this emplotment is apparent, given that the political apparatus of the late 1960s and 1970s promoted and ultimately insisted on it in the very manuals that teachers were using. The manuals make this more than clear: the teaching of history is ultimately a tool of the PCC to gain ideological hegemony and form the students into political cadres.<sup>64</sup>

The analysis above shows only one fragment of how this ISA was pushed towards a canon of cultural memory. Pérez notes that: "Historical knowledge came in many distinct genres and expanded into public spaces: from preschool to university, in mass media and popular culture, in cinema, literature and music. History was news. Weekly magazines and daily newspapers gave past events almost as much attention as they did current events."<sup>65</sup> After recounting all the different arenas in which this happened, Pérez comes to the conclusion that: "Historical education implied a special epistemology, a way to heighten consciousness of a revolutionary." And that: "Historical knowledge was structured within a self-explanatory teleological

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 3-16.

<sup>65</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 255.



framework, given to an understanding of the past as a process culminating on January 1, 1959.”<sup>66</sup> The analysis of the educational material above is thus not asserting any new premises, but the fundamental question here remains different, as it intends to take the analysis yet one step further: to the question of what happened to my interviewees, who grew up within this framework.

One issue that arises when we consider the strong ISAs in Cuba’s 1970s and 1980s alongside the stories in the oral history interviews is that it becomes clear that Althusser’s concepts can only give us fragments of the full picture of ideology. The state institutionalization of the emplotment of history was comprehensive, but in the case of many of my interviewees not effective enough to fully capture the horizon of expectation as conceptualised by Reinhart Koselleck: “...in differentiating past and future, or (in anthropological terms) experience and expectation, it is possible to grasp something like historical time.”<sup>67</sup> In the cases of some of the interviews below, historical consciousness was replenished with narratives passed down through mechanisms that reached beyond the post-1959 ISAs: family, church and architecture are central components to their cultural memory, all leading the emplotment of their cultural memory to differ from the one described above. Other interviewees are interesting, as they grew up in a family that subscribed to the new ISAs, but crucial to the understanding of the cultural memory espoused by these is that they noticed that it did not actually produce a *hombre nuevo* but rather a *doble moral*,<sup>68</sup> which was not able to realign with neither the cultural memory nor the ideology promoted through the ISAs. This underlines one particular point in the study of cultural memory and ideology: these two categories rely on a mutual reinforcement, which maintains stability if one of them has inconsistencies.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>67</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 2-3.

<sup>68</sup> “*Doble moral* in Cuba refers to the psychological, political and moral attitude of individuals who manifest a double standard between their public stances and their private behaviors.” Díaz, “Cuba at the Onset of the 21st Century” 59 note 19.

If, however, neither of these categories seems consistent, the mechanism fails, and the subject is forced to seek a new historical trope in order to maintain a comprehensive conception of historical time.

### **From Narrative Emplotment to National Security: The implications of imagination**

In the analysis above, in various other mentioned investigations as well as in the educational material itself, it is made very clear that the dominant historical narrative emplotment of the past was to be interpreted as singular: both in its legal and cultural superiority to other narratives; in its singular line from the beginning of history to its culmination in the one true Cuban government; and finally, its conception of a singular nation in conflict with exterior forces. This leads to the hypothesis that the ideology of the Cuban ISAs after 1959 increasingly produced a hegemonic cultural memory of combat – or what A. Assmann would call a canon (see p. 36) – in which there was increasingly less space for subjects standing outside this conflict, or even worse: subjects who stood on the other side of the conflict or even those who lost. Those falling outside of the hegemonic narrative were confined to a position outside of Cuban history, a position from which they necessarily had to emplot themselves in a new trope in order to maintain their subjectivity. What comes to mind here is the semi-autobiographical work of María de los Angeles Torres:

Politics permeates the search for this history. Memory in a sense is a militarized zone. Topics perceived to affect the country's national security are always difficult to navigate. Cuba's "communities abroad" are a topic of national security concern because they are a result of emigration that has been likened to treason. To complicate matters, there is great suspicion about those of us who are engaged with the topic, since most of us who

have emigrated live in a host country that is not only antagonistic toward our homeland but that has used émigrés to fight its war with the island.<sup>69</sup>

The move that De los Angeles Torres here makes from the realms of memories and history to the realm of national security takes its point of departure in an analysis of political reality, but the argument will here move back to the highly poetic language of Olsson. As mentioned before, Olsson highlights the simultaneous temporal and spatial aspects of memory through the paraphrase of Kant, asserting that imagination is the human faculty used to make the absent present. Phrased simply, imagination is the faculty used to call forth places that are not *here* as well as places that are not *now*.<sup>70</sup> The interpretation of an imaginary, when limited to one dimension only gives limited explanations. The dynamics arising from the semiotic exercise of collectivising a subject position in a combined spatial and temporal imaginary have been researched in depth by Michael Billig and Benedict Anderson, with the most prominent work of the latter announcing this mechanism in the title: *Imagined Communities*.<sup>71</sup>

Applied to the case of Cuba, we have now come closer to the point where De los Angeles Torres' militarization happened: a multi-dimensional interpretation of imaginaries became a tracking system of subjects in a context of this national security regime. With a loose paraphrase of Benjamin, at a moment of danger, the border between subjects becomes important, whatever the subject position of the narrative might be. By subscribing to a cultural memory that deviated from the one emplotted in the ISAs, my interviewees came to stand outside of the Cuba that was imagined there.

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<sup>69</sup> de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors*, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

### **A Moment of Danger: Operationalisation in Crisis**

As the section above made the case for using “the simple, repetitive and frankly boring educational material” as sources for an investigation of the main avenues of provenance of Cuban and Cuban American historical consciousness through cultural memory, it went through a discussion about how the Cuban school system became a venue for the promotion of ideology by the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), especially through its emplotment of history. The argument in the following pages will not attempt to argue for the importance of the material that it discusses, as the main focus of analysis will be on the newspaper *Granma*, which enjoys the convenient subtitle: *Órgano Oficial del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba*. If the PCC positions the newspaper as the voice of the party, the thesis will take their word for it and apply the working hypothesis that it can indeed be seen as an expression of ideological currents in Cuba’s political hegemon.

In terms of the significance of the historiography in *Granma*, the argument furthermore relies on the work by Sara García Santamaría, based on models of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as proposed by Ruth Wodak. Her discussion of the publications in *Granma* around the IV and VI congresses of the PCC lead her to conclude that discourses on nationality, revolutionary politics and political change towards a better future centre around the nodal point of history. Emptied of real significance, this nodal point becomes a floating signifier that is available for signification according to the needs of the powers that be.<sup>72</sup> The thesis rests on the argument that the writing of history, historiography, is a particularly strong vehicle of cultural memory; it is intended to be perceived as the truth about the past. This argument reflects Astrid Erll’s statement that: “[...] history is but yet another mode of cultural memory, and historiography its specific medium.”<sup>73</sup> Following Rüsen’s

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<sup>72</sup> García Santamaría, “La Construcción Histórica”, 107-137.

<sup>73</sup> Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies”, 7.

interpretation of Hayden White, historiography, or as he calls it, representation, is the second half of a historian's research process (the first being interpretation).<sup>74</sup> Rüsen's argument is amplified and expanded in Juan L. Fernández' incorporation of the writing process into the process of interpretation.<sup>75</sup> García's argument, however, presents a historiography that serves a political purpose, rather than one of academic research, adding this dimension as a layer to Fernández' "Historical Knowledge Epistemological Square" (see p. 64). As this argument lays the foundation for a debate on how historiography, interpreted as any representation of truth in the past in writing, plays a role in cultural memory and ultimately in the possible agency within an ideological framework, García's argument is interesting:

Más que en noticias de corte claramente histórico, el recurso recurrente a elementos con una alta carga histórica es visible en las noticias que cubren el IV y VI congresos del PCC y los periodos de debate que los precedieron, que evocan constantemente la remembranza de un pasado heroico.

El papel de un proyecto hegemónico como la Revolución cubana es 'construir y estabilizar puntos nodales que sirven como bases para un orden social, su principal objetivo siendo el de convertirse en parte del imaginario social' hasta el punto de naturalizarse en el imaginario colectivo [...]. En otras palabras, la articulación de los principales elementos que articula la Revolución tiene como objetivo la naturalización de los mismos en el imaginario y las prácticas colectivas a través de una construcción elíptica de la historia que la conecta con el presente y con el futuro.

[...]

La historia aparece discursivamente dotada de un poder unificador sincrónico (entre todos los cubanos de una misma época) y diacrónico,

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<sup>74</sup> Rüsen, "A turning point in theory of history", 97-100.

<sup>75</sup> Fernández, "Story Makes History, Theory Makes Story", 79-84.

estableciendo una continuidad temporal entre los valores y funciones de los cubanos de distintas épocas. La prensa estatal ha contribuido así a la creación de puntos de significación estables en el tiempo, o puntos nodales, capaces de representar los rasgos identitarios del 'buen' cubano.<sup>76</sup>

Before García, Rieke Trimçev has worked on the application of tools from the CDA toolbox to the analysis of memory, both in her work on the universalization of European memory practices and her contribution to the development of concepts such as the before mentioned mnemonic signifier, the latter in collaboration with Feindt et al:

Insofar as acts of remembering are a phenomenon of discourse, their objectifications are a semiotic phenomenon. We therefore suggest designating these objectifications as mnemonic signifiers, which can refer to any socially relevant figuration of memory. [...]

Different interpretations, distant in time and space respectively, of the same mnemonic signifier ascribe changing meanings to it. By virtue of this, a mnemonic signifier forms the intersection of different mnemonic signifieds. Insofar as the mnemonic signifier enables relating different interpretations, it provides access to the discourse of memory, its comprehensibility and social scope.<sup>77</sup>

Whereas García argues from a perspective, where references to history become a floating signifier that is filled with a-historical meaning, *el pueblo*, Feindt et al. argue for the use of a model where the signifier allows for mnemonic signification. That is, the direction in time and space that *el pueblo* is supposed to be headed. Following

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<sup>76</sup> García Santamaría, 128-130.

<sup>77</sup> Feindt et al., "Entangled Memory", 631-644.

García's analysis, history is the main signifier used to create a stabilizing discourse supporting the ideology of the PCC during the IV and VI congresses of the PCC. The moment in time chosen by García is however of crucial importance for the argument that the empty signifier of history works as a simultaneously synchronous and diachronous unifying value, as the moments of codification of the goals of the PCC, during the congresses, in its very nature needs to be one that unites the party and, by extension, the Cuban people. However, with Benjamin's sixth thesis of history in mind (see p. 50), it would be interesting to analyse the coverage of *Granma* at a moment where the Cuban state found itself in crisis, as this would result in different relations between mnemonic signifier and signified.

For a line of comparison to be drawn between the historiography in *Granma* and the educational plans analysed further above, a couple of additional steps are needed. As mentioned above, Nietzsche attempted to condense all uses of history down to three categories: the monumental use (that looks to the past for examples to embrace and condemn), the antiquarian use (that aims to preserve the past on a scale 1:1 with the idea that it carries intrinsic value per se), and finally the critical use (that breaks the past into pieces and examines the value of each piece at any particular time).<sup>78</sup> Historians such as Ulf Zander and Klas-Göran Karlsson have worked on expanding on Nietzsche's thoughts with more complex typologies. That is, methodological frames that focus on identifying the type and purpose that any given expression of history has. These studies are all useful when applied in the investigation of the intent behind historiography: what a particular piece of historiography *is*, or, in the terminology of Feindt et al., of the mnemonic signifier. What these, and other typologies of uses of history, however, do not offer is a framework that allows for analysis of the mnemonic signified nor the mnemography

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<sup>78</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*.

of spatialities and temporalities that open up discussions of agency within ideology. In other words: what historiography *does*.<sup>79</sup>

What Nietzsche, Zander and Karlsson have in common with García and Trimçev is that the focus of their analysis is directed at the expression of history, historiography, or memory. This means that although a specific type of use of history, a mnemonic signifier or a discursive framing of history as a floating signifier are useful tools to analyse representations of truth about the past and even the frames that they operate within, they remain limited to portraying an almost synchronic image of how a particular discourse or historiography is infused with meaning from the past. They do not enable us to see what understandings of temporality they activate within the interpreter and how agency becomes possible. Viewed through a semiotic lens, the focus is on the signifier, the signified and the sign, not on the process of semiosis that they go through when they are interpreted. This is where the thesis suggests a model based on the interpretation of Kayser Nielsen's historical tropes as mnemonic signifiers. That is, a signifier produces a signified in its passing through a process that includes a diachronic aspect, a Bar-In-Between where imagination projects memory across time and space (see p. 65). This framework allows for a complex analysis that can go beyond the actual historiography and shed light on the signification of its spatial and temporal aspects. Here we might pause to explain the Danish word that keeps haunting me while writing these words: *mellemrum* [space-in-between]. The first thing that happens when you separate the composite word consisting of *mellem* [in-between] and *rum* [space or room] is that it loses its singular signification and gains value in its focus on the space between things, concepts and places. What happens next is that you notice how its first component, *mellem*, is a palindrome, poetically emphasising the

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<sup>79</sup> Zander, *Fornstora Dagat, Moderna Tider*; Karlsson, *Historia som Vapen*.



emptiness between things. When you take the next step and reverse all letters of the concept, it becomes *mur mellem* or 'wall in between'. In conversation with Driesse, the concept of *mellemrum* becomes more complex, as she tells tales of the Nahuatl concept of *nepantla*, which, in a sense, can be translated as 'being *mellemrum*'. In collaboration with Isaac Landeros, she has published her thoughts on the meaning of *nepantla*, defined as a term that: "[...] conceptualises the state of 'in-between-ness'. It can refer to the act of resistance in which a part of something (eg. culture) that cannot synthesise into a new situation is left behind, but other parts become part of the new situation."<sup>80</sup>

To put an emergency brake on this wild train of thought, the assertion is that it is in the space-in-between that we can find agency, as it is the emptiness that we cannot sense that we need to fill with imagination. As it is so difficult to see emptiness and guess what people do there, the method proposed in the thesis focuses not on the *mellemrum* but the *mur mellem*, not the space-in-between but the walls in between – all the while never forgetting the importance of the emptiness. This will allow for the establishment of the possible tropes which historiography gives the imagination. In the case of the research question here, the walls are defined by the historiography published in *Granma* during the Mariel Crisis.

### **Framing the Walls of Imagination**

In García's previously mentioned article, she notices a series of discursive strategies in the historiography published in *Granma* in the two periods of national crisis that she covers in her investigation: the onset of the Special Period (1990-1991) and the Period of Actualisation of the Economic and Social Model (2010-2012). The analysis of the discourse by García renders a result in three stages: first and foremost, the

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<sup>80</sup> Driesse and Landeros, "Urban in-betweenness", 163-167.

unifying signifier of *el pueblo* is infused with moral meaning by the Cuban hero; a figure taken from a given period of Cuban history in which (s)he was confronted with anti-Cuban forces that are then equated to contemporary forces that *el pueblo* is facing. A second discursive strategy pointed out by García is based on the intergenerational element of *el pueblo*, especially in the period 2010-2012. This aspect is formed through the equivalential chain that departs from past conflicts between *el pueblo* and a foreign invader and links it to the present through the signifiers *el partido* and *la revolución*. García goes on to conclude that “Este discurso es particularmente útil para desestimar la posibilidad de derrota, prometiéndole en su lugar la eternidad de las victorias cubanas frente al enemigo.”<sup>81</sup>

Jan Gustafsson has conducted an analysis of a series of Cuban films: *Fresa y Chocolate*, *90 Millas*, *Larga Distancia*, *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*, *Guantanamo*, *Lista de Espera*, *Personal Belongings*, *Boleto al Paraíso*, *El Inventario Secreto de la Habana*, *El bailarín ruso de Montecarlo*, *El Navegante Dormido*, as well as novels such as *Dime algo sobre Cuba* and *La Nada Cotidiana*. This has led him to a conclusion very similar to García's, adding to the discussion the notion of those who are excluded from *el pueblo*:

La Revolución, según se denomina el proyecto utópico cubano, luchará por sus ciudadanos y ellos deben luchar por la Revolución. La tensión entre presente “bueno” y futuro “mejor” contribuye a constituir a la utopía como obligación más que simple posibilidad para el sujeto. Como consecuencia, el que se va del país no solo abandona el buen lugar, sino también su compromiso y obligación con el futuro y con la patria; abandona la lucha de todos, se convierte en cobarde y traidor.

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<sup>81</sup> García Santamaría, “La Construcción Histórica”, 107-137.

[...]

La identificación de una noción de compromiso ético-político con la pertenencia nacional-territorial de este metasujeto que es la Revolución ha tenido como consecuencia que el sujeto individual desidentificado –por voluntad propia o en contra de ella– quede excluido no solo del proyecto político, sino del espacio nacional en sentido figurado o físico.<sup>82</sup>

The contention of the thesis is that García and Gustafsson do not capture the entirety of the ideological discourse in their respective research focuses. What they do is to capture discourse on identity, who is a part of the nation and who is to be excluded, and which floating signifiers define this mechanism of belonging and exclusion. What is left out of focus is how these respective discursive formations enable and prescribe agency and power to the Cuban subject and naturally so: agency is not visible nor written down and power is not explicit.

The following sections will transpose Olsson's thoughts on geography and map-making to the production of historiography and go through the coverage of *Granma* during the Mariel Crisis in order to assess how the references to history, that is, truths in the past, function as the points of reference of the larger meta-narrative in order to assert which tropes they form and discuss how these frame the possibilities for agency in the space between the frames set up by this historiography.

In order to understand this framework, the argument here turns towards Olsson's explanation of how cartographic reasoning in particular prescribes power. It will employ the mnemonic signifier as a semiotic construct that includes a simultaneous temporal and spatial aspect in the Bar-In-Between and thereby

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<sup>82</sup> Gustafsson, "Entre el Buen Lugar y el No-Lugar", 157-158 & 172.

produces what Kayser Nielsen calls historical tropes. These tropes, the lines steeped in power that tremble when named, journey through the space-in-between, in each instance of cartographical reasoning activating memory, and delineate the agency that is available for the subject at that time.

### **Mariel, or How Girón Stopped a Nation from Drifting in Circles**

A recurring theme in almost all of the oral history interviews in Miami conducted for the thesis focuses on the year 1980 when the notorious Mariel Boatlift took place. To recapitulate, the events took place shortly after Cuban Americans in 1979 were allowed to visit Cuba in high numbers for the first time since 1959, bringing gifts with them that were wildly luxurious by Cuban standards. Coupled with a series of unfortunate incidents that had put pressure on the Cuban economy (failed harvests, missed mining targets, swine-flu, etc.) as well as a policy held by many Latin American countries not to grant Cubans asylum when applied for legally, but paradoxically accepting them when they gained access to the embassies in Havana using violent means, the Cuban government was put under pressure in the early months of 1980. When a bus full of Cubans hoping to gain asylum crashed the gates of the Peruvian embassy 1 April 1980, the Cuban government chose to remove the guards in front of the embassy, allowing discontented Cubans to enter in order to teach the embassies a lesson. This strategy backfired, as the embassy filled with more than 10,000 people within 72 hours. In order to salvage this embarrassing situation, the Cuban government announced on 21 April that private Cuban American vessels would be given free entry at the port of Mariel to pick up disenchanting Cubans.<sup>83</sup> According to the US Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) this exodus lasted until September 1980 and the total number of arrivals during this period amounted to up to 124,779 Cubans.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> LeoGrande and Kombluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 214-219.

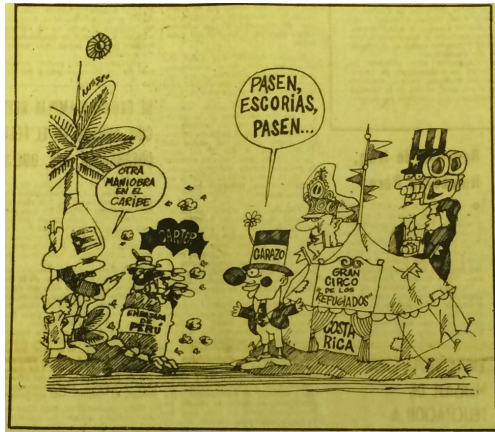
<sup>84</sup> Skopp, "Race and Place in the Adaptation of Mariel Exiles", 454.



The investigation of the material from *Granma* begins when the crisis really takes off in Cuban public space, namely with the coverage of the large march that had taken place on 20 April. This issue confirms the results reported by García above: the front page of the 21 April issue is entirely dedicated to a large picture of the fifth avenue in Miramar, Havana, where the Peruvian embassy lies along with most other embassies in the city, sprawling with masses of Cubans carrying banners and flags. The headline hovering over the photo spells out what García asserted: “¡ESTE SÍ ES EL PUEBLO!” [sic].<sup>85</sup> The following pages are dedicated to close-up photos of participants of the march with captions emphasising the large numbers of participants, the defence against an aggressive foreign power, the unity of *el pueblo* across generations and a photo of Ernesto Guevara’s father linking discursively to the signifier of the Cuban hero, much like in the analysis by García mentioned above. One caption reads: “Más de un millón de gargantas reiteraron a los imperialistas y sus lacayos que aquí en Cuba nadie perderá el sueño con maniobras militares u otras provocaciones.”<sup>86</sup> The threat of US naval exercises, and the resistance and mocking of them by *el pueblo*, comes up regularly in the *Granma* coverage in this period, most notably in the comics. The issue of the exercises in the

<sup>85</sup> Granma, 20.04 1980, 1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 2-3.



vicinity of Cuba had come up in unfruitful negotiations between the Carter administration and the Cuban government in the years leading up to the Mariel Crisis, which might explain their positioning in the framing of the threat from the United States in the material.<sup>87</sup>

The text headlining the photos closes a loop of time in its direct comparison of the march to the Cuban victory over the invasion force on the beach of Girón in the Bay of Pigs in April 1961: “OTRA VICTORIA, COMO EN GIRÓN”. This linkage between *el pueblo* and the struggle against a foreign invader through the signifier of Girón is emphasised by several of the captions underlining the photos on the pages: “...si hubo un Girón en abril, también puede haber Girones en mayo y en cualquier mes del año.”<sup>88</sup> In an interesting example of words in *Granma* reaching beyond the printed pages, one of the centrefold pages of the 23 April 1980 edition is dedicated to slogans found on the banners during the 19 April march. Out of the approximately 312 slogans, 29 explicitly mentioned Girón.<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, Pérez mentions this very same page of *Granma* in his *The Structure of Cuban History*, as he makes the argument that the post-’59 government primarily derives its legitimacy from a Cuban nationalism framed as a historical struggle for independence from foreign power.<sup>90</sup> The desire to leave Cuba for the United States is equated with support for US interventionism in Cuba, as well as the larger Caribbean, and as this nationalism is framed as an adherence to the idea of the post-’59 government as a final fulfilment of the struggle for independence, the Cubans gathering in the Peruvian embassy

<sup>87</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, 197-200; Comics above: *Granma*, 21.04 1980, 5 & *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>88</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, 197-200.

<sup>89</sup> *Granma*, 23.04 1980, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 245-246.

and later leaving through the port of Mariel are not only framed in political opposition to the government, but as non-Cuban, non-human and a-historical beings. Their story is told in a trope of recurring invasions of Cuba, which does not fit the trope of Cuban nationalism being one of revolutionary break with this circular movement of time.

The principle of defending the nation against foreign invasion by expelling elements that do not fit the trope of revolution is apparent in the historiography in *Granma* during the early days of the Mariel Crisis on two levels: a geographically national level in which a revolutionary government breaks with a circular movement of time, and an international level in which the timescales of Marx apply. An example of how these two levels interplay can be found in the 23 April edition of *Granma*, which dedicates its entire second page to the biography of Lenin and the value of his contribution to Marxist theories of history by adding revolutionary praxis and the continuous struggle against (neo-)imperialism that societies face when revolutions happen. On page three, mirroring the celebratory headlines and photos of Lenin on page two, we find a series of reportages of celebrations taking place in Cuba to mark the 110th anniversary of his birth. These include a reportage of the planting of 110 trees in Parque Lenin as well as the inauguration of an exhibition of "Lenin in the present" in the Museo de la Revolución. In the middle of the page, however, lined with a fat black line, we find a call for all Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR) in Cuba to prepare for the Mayday Parade, "...para con nuestra presencia ser participes de otro gigantesco Girón al imperialismo, también en mayo."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *Granma*, 23.04 1980, 2-3 & 5.

The internationalisation of these two historical tropes finds its intermediate stage in the references to historical heroes from other Latin American countries. On the final page of the 23 April edition of *Granma*, Luis M. Arce published an article titled “La gran batalla de Cuba es también una batalla por la dignidad y soberanía de América”, in which he employs the idea of recurring threats to not only Cuban national sovereignty, but the fulfilment of national sovereignty in all former colonies in the Americas: “Esta ofensiva yanqui, que tiene como centro de sus acciones a Cuba, está dirigida también a luchas de liberación nacional en América, particularmente de los pueblos centro-americanos y caribeños que combaten a las tiranías militares y coloniales”. The conclusion of the article is that the mass-mobilizations against the United States during the crisis “...dan fe de que los bravíos pueblos de Bolívar, Juárez y Martí preparan sus armas para la gran contienda.”<sup>92</sup>

The fluctuation between these three levels of historical interpretation – that of Cuban national history being one of repeating struggles against imperialism in a circular pattern that was broken at Girón, that of aligning this struggle with other nations that have not yet broken this circular pattern and finally the Marxist-Leninist macro-historical structures of stage-wise development towards socialism in opposition to imperialism – repeats itself time and again in the pages of *Granma*, especially in the pages dedicated to carefully curated person-on-the-street-interviews. On 23 April, page three of *Granma* is entirely dedicated to these interviews, that each detail the revolutionary dedication of the interviewees to their jobs, as teachers, production workers, and military personnel. The interviews contain a high degree of specificity when it comes to summing up their education, production value and participation in mass-mobilizations, but if you take the titles given to each interview, they combine to make an interesting read:

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 8.



“Exhorto a todos los pueblos latinoamericanos y del caribe a que se solidaricen con Cuba”

“Van a realizar una práctica de invasión real a nuestro territorio”

“La historia se encarga de valorar en toda su dimensión y significado, la gigantesca marcha”

“Si piensan los yanquis que estas maniobras van a ser una victoria psicológica [sic] contra el pueblo cubano están fritos”

“Cuba está lista para repetir la hazaña de Girón si las maniobras militares yanquis se convierten en algo más”

“Todos estaremos en la plaza en esa nueva cita con la patria el día primero”

“Los niños también estuvieron presentes en la marcha del pueblo combatiente”

“Si antes no teníamos miedo, como vamos a tener miedo ahora”

“El primero de mayo será otra demostración de fuerza del pueblo”

“Defender la patria con nuestra sangre”

“Los yanquis: principales guerreristas del mundo”

“Si Carter deja empujar a una nueva derrota, allá él”

“En Santiago de Cuba este primero de mayo va a ser histórico”

“La victoria de Girón se puede repetir en cualquier momento”<sup>93</sup>

In combination, the titles of these ‘person-on-the-street’ interviews form a very clear narrative: *El pueblo* (García’s floating signifier here performing an extra-textual link between the interviewee, the reader and the nation) is positioned as an agent defending Girón (the break from the circular movement of history) against the forces of imperialism (the Marxist-Leninist entity in opposition to the move from one stage of history to the next) and this historical moment of defence is right around the

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 3.

corner. The pages of *Granma* dedicated to international news further accentuate this structuring of history by publishing, on the one hand, a long series of declarations of support for the Cuban government from various political organizations from Denmark to Guatemala, framed as support for opposition to imperialism, and on the other hand condemnations of US foreign policy, such as the article on Henry Kissinger calling him a “visceral enemigo de la paz”.<sup>94</sup>

The use of Girón as a signifier of revolutionary break with the circular movement of struggle against imperialist aggression takes on a particular international meaning in the coverage of the failed US rescue attempt of the hostages in the US embassy in Tehran on 26 April, where we find the headline: “Catástrofe Yanqui en Irán, la Comparan con Girón” on the front page of *Granma*.<sup>95</sup>

In the coverage of an event closer to home, a fire in a kindergarten in Marianao, García’s conclusion, that *el pueblo* is infused with the morals of heroes of Cuban history, is spelt out in big letters in the headline: “El héroe fue el pueblo”. The lead, here appearing above the headline, reads: “Los enemigos del pueblo, una vez más, quisieron golpearlos. En esta oportunidad se trató de una provocación gigantesca, macabra, diabólica, donde estuvo la mano del imperialismo y de la CIA. Fue, sin duda, un acto de terror sin precedentes contra nuestro pueblo. Se intentó, en acto monstruoso, quemar vivos a cientos de niños. Ese mismo pueblo, sin embargo, demostró una vez más esa tarde su heroísmo, su valentía y su serenidad.”<sup>96</sup>

Although investigations by the Cuban Ministry of the Interior (MININT) concluded that this was a case of arson, the link to the CIA seems circumstantial at best.<sup>97</sup>

Besides the obvious relation between the event, García’s floating signifier *el pueblo*,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 5, 7 & 8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>97</sup> Eured. “Sabotaje al Círculo Infantil Le Van Tam”.

the attribution of the arson to the CIA and the opposition to imperialism, the historical significance of the event is emphasized in the article describing the assistance of students from a nearby secondary school to the rescue efforts, with the headline: “Los ‘niños héroes’ de la secundaria ‘Aguilera Maceiras’”: “Cada uno puede relatar una Historia – así con mayúscula – que se inscribe fielmente en los momentos culminantes que vive actualmente la patria amenazada. [...] Son los ‘niños héroes’ de la patria de Martí y Fidel, son los héroes del verdadero pueblo.”<sup>98</sup> Not only do we here again find the floating signifier of *el pueblo* in direct relation to heroism, we also see the link to *patria* through Martí and Fidel, but we even find a conscious attempt at linking all of these to the concept of history with a capital H.

The linkage of *pueblo* to *patria* to *héroe* through the tropes of circular repetition of struggles against imperialism and the escape of this circle and the move towards national fulfilment through 1959 and Girón is also present on the pages of *Granma* dedicated to cultural activities. In the 10 May 1980 edition of *Granma*, an interview with artist Wifredo Lam frames events according to the operationalisation of history discussed above: The Cubans leaving via the port of Mariel are considered a-historical and thereby placed outside of the nation: “Esa escoria social muestra una debilidad enorme. Son gentes que no tienen una conducta real, y histórica y quieren vivir en una etapa anterior ya desaparecida aquí.” Further down in the interview, Lam mentions with amazement that he admires Fidel Castro and “his *pueblo*” for not only mounting a revolution but also for leading “internationalist victories” in Angola and Ethiopia. This amazement at the successes of Fidel circles around the mention of Girón, framing Cuba’s national context before as one plagued by anarchy and “politiquería” and the international one as plagued by all the evils that Lam witnessed during the Spanish Civil War, mirrored in the post-Girón era as one of

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<sup>98</sup> *Granma*, 10.05 1980, 3.

pride, artistic success and health. An interesting anecdote from a meeting Lam had with Pablo Picasso even links the ethos of fighting the evils of the Spanish Civil War with the heroes of the Cuban wars of independence: “Trás la derrota de la república salí de España por los Pirineos. Así llegué a París donde conocí a Picasso. Lo primero que me dijo fue que él conspiraba contra la monarquía que entonces se quería instalar. También que me cantó sobre Maceo, con música de son guajira: ‘Cuando Maceo saca su machete / cada ratón coge su machetazo’”.<sup>99</sup>

The references to the Cuban wars of independence through the image of the machete reappear on several occasions in *Granma*. On 12 May we can find an interview with Admiral Liborio, alongside interviews with UN officials, leaders of the Cuban Federation of Women and declarations from militias, which deserve a little introduction: Liborio is a fictional caricature “...used in the island vernacular as the symbol of everything Cuban, as the sum and substance of Creole humanity.”<sup>100</sup> This caricature had jokingly been given the rank of admiral of the Florida Straits in *Granma* a couple of weeks earlier.<sup>101</sup> In the 12 May interview, titled “Liborio: Hoy traigo el machete afilado por los dos lados”, Liborio lets the reader know that he is ready to take up the symbolic weapon of the nineteenth century wars of independence to fight the perpetrators responsible for the arson of the Le Van Tam kindergarten, while also expelling the *escoria* and CIA agents from Cuba. Liborio’s inspiration comes from the heroism of *el pueblo* that saved the children of the school from the sinister triad of CIA, Pentagon and White House, who are in the interview

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>100</sup> Martínez, “The Multiple Meaning of Liborio in the Novels of Carlos Loveira”, 92.

<sup>101</sup> *Granma*, 29.04 1980, 4.



also held responsible for killings during the government of Batista, the blockade against Cuba, the explosion of the freighter El Coubre, Girón as well as the explosion of a Cuban airliner over Barbados. The comic on this page, placed right above the interview, leaves little to the imagination.<sup>102</sup>

In the 15 May 1980 edition of *Granma*, mostly dedicated to informing about yet another “Marcha del Pueblo Combatiente”, an article by Ricardo Alarcón puts this march in a historical perspective. Beginning the arc of the historical narration with the final voyage of Christopher Columbus in the early sixteenth century, Alarcón sets the Caribbean stage as one which has: “...sufrido la intervención de colonialistas, esclavistas, piratas, traficantes y aventureros.” This line serves to tell the entire history of Spanish dominance of the Caribbean, whereafter Alarcón shifts the centre of colonial power towards the United States, referring first to the neo-colonial efforts that secured its control over Puerto Rico and Cuba at the turn of the twentieth century, the interventions, military and otherwise, in Haïti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Guatemala, in order to lead up to the 1961 attack on Cuba at Playa Girón. This long-scale build-up is then used to assert that the Cuban forces that repelled the attack at Girón were backed by indigenous peoples, African slaves, Toussaint L'Ouverture, *mambíses* who fought in the Cuban wars of independence, everybody who had resisted colonial dominion since the times of Columbus. The message of the article is found in the repetition of the refrain that dominates the pages of *Granma* in these months: “Ya se lo hemos

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 2.

dicho: Girón ocurrió en abril, pero también puede suceder en mayo. En mayo como en abril o en cualquier otro mes del año. En 1961 o en 1980. Porque desde aquel glorioso 19 de abril la Historia [sic] del Caribe entró en una fase nueva y los pueblos permitirán que dé marcha atrás.”<sup>103</sup>

In order to sum up the first months of *Granma* coverage since the Mariel Crisis really took off, the first conclusion is that García's analysis of *el pueblo* as a floating signifier is correct, but that it lacks a discursive factor that gives it agency within the discourse of *Granma*. In the pages above we see that the factor that pushes this floating signifier out of its tailspin of *La isla que se repite*<sup>104</sup> and adrift into a revolutionary future is the directionality implicit in the mention of Girón. Whereas *el pueblo* is infused with the national identity and morals implicit in the binary of *pueblo* vs. non-*pueblo*, it is timeless, and its only narrative is one of antagonism. Girón, on the other hand, comes to engender all Cuban history in a mnemonic signifier that arranges this antagonism in a progressive, revolutionary trope of a break with the repetition of pre-'59 history and a move towards a better future.

### **Dancing to the Beat of Girón**

Over the last pages, the attention has been on the presentation of history in *Granma*, in which the mnemonic signifier of Girón has come to epitomise Cuban history in a revolutionary trope of history. This is, however, not a manifestation of these being just a few outlying incidents but rather as a qualitative investigation into a recurrent phenomenon. The examples mentioned above are merely the incidents that most clearly expressed the dynamics, whereas its elements are so overwhelmingly present throughout the entire period, that they become the norm rather than the exception. During the month of April 1980, the titles of 42 articles made reference to Girón or an

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>104</sup> Benítez Rojo, *La Isla que se Repite*.

imminent threat to Cuba from the United States framed within the historical discourse of imperialism,<sup>105</sup> not counting the international declarations in show of support of Cuba in the face of US aggression, the articles portraying the Cubans in the Peruvian embassy as *escoria*, the articles referring to dire situations in imperialist countries, etc. The result of this constant coverage of a threat from the United States in historical terms, means that Benjamin's moment of danger becomes eternal (see p. 50). This brings to mind an interview with media theorist and musicologist Martin Scherzinger on the radio programme Afropop Worldwide for an episode dealing with trance music, in which Scherzinger stated that the musical patterns leading into trance require an: "...experience of a transformation through repetition. Or a very good way of putting it would be to say, this is transformation posing as repetition."<sup>106</sup>

Now, to argue that the historiography in *Granma* somehow induced a state of trance in the Cuban population during those months in 1980 would perhaps be to take the argument a little far. However, the notion of a "transformation posing as repetition" is useful to describe the dynamics of the historiography found in *Granma*, as The Mariel Crisis, in some way or another, marked a turning point in the narratives of most of the oral history interviews in the thesis. As the representation of a circular movement of history in a constant struggle of a heroic *pueblo* against foreign invaders in the words of García is used to "...'construir y estabilizar puntos nodales que sirven como bases para un orden social, su principal objetivo siendo el de convertirse en parte del imaginario social' hasta el punto de naturalizarse en el imaginario colectivo,"<sup>107</sup> the circular trope of repeated struggle against foreign invaders coupled with the revolutionary trope of overcoming this circle at Girón becomes the repetition that this transformation is posing to be.

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<sup>105</sup> Latin American Network Information Center, "Granma Archives Index for 1980".

<sup>106</sup> Scherzinger, "Phantom Patterns".

<sup>107</sup> García Santamaría, "La Construcción Histórica", 128.

## **PART III. INTERVIEWS**



## CHAPTER 4: WHY AND HOW TO INTERVIEW

The previous chapter outlined how history became broadly instrumentalized to serve the post-1959 government in a flow from debates among historians through the institutionalisation of a singular revolutionary trope of history through the steady channels of education material as well as the historical tropes presented through mass media in a moment of danger. The following chapters will move closer to the investigation of cultural memory in Miami and continue to develop a theoretical framework that will serve as the basis for a methodological approach that can uncover its dynamics.

### Tropes of Memory: How Oral History Interviews Reveal Patterns of Cultural Memory



The advert above is a part of a recent Bacardi campaign to promote their new rum: Havana Club. The spirit was launched in a reignition of the struggle between the Bacardi family and the Cuban government over the right to call their rum by this name, and in a much broader sense *Cuban*. In the following, the narrative of the campaign, as well as the theatrical production that it contained, will be employed to elaborate the methodology, that has been developed and applied over the course of the thesis, to the context of the Cuban diaspora.

The so-called rum-wars have been going on ever since the Santiago-based Bacardi family and the Cárdenas-based Arechabala family, who owned the Havana Club brand, moved out of Cuba after their assets were appropriated by the new Cuban government in 1960 and 1964, respectively. The Arechabala family stepped out of the rum business when they moved to the United States and did not renew their trademark name, when it expired in 1973 and was overtaken by the Cuban government, who began collaborating with French Pernod-Ricard in the production of a rum also called Havana Club. In 1994, Bacardi filed its own application for a US trademark on the name Havana Club after having gone into partnership with former rival family Arechabala. The legal battle has been raging back and forth ever since.<sup>1</sup> The advert above is a sign of how Bacardi is now relying not on the judgement of Dike, the Greek goddess of justice, but rather on Clio, the muse of historians. The purpose is not to claim the final word on Cuban American cultural memory, ideology or imaginary, but rather to experiment with these concepts in order to explore the dynamic that diasporic experiences have in a situation as unique as the Cuban formation of ideology among migrants in Miami.

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<sup>1</sup> Gjeltén, *Bacardi and the Long Fight for Cuba*, 316-329; Montgomery, "Havana Club vs. Havana Club".

Billboards from the Bacardi campaign were to be found all over Little Havana while I was doing my fieldwork. Their narrative was framed to formally formulate a guideline for the interpretation of history to activate a historical consciousness, understood as the interplay between the interpretation of the past, the perception of the present and the expectations of the future, in the consumers. By doing this, the campaign was set up to form part of the cultural memory of Cuban Americans. As a part of the campaign, the Bacardi company sponsored a theatre production of the oral history of the Arechabala family in a narrative that mimicked the complex temporal scheme of memory; not following a linear narrative progression, but rather skipping from memory to memory as they came up.

The performance started with what appeared to be a cocktail reception at a cigar shop on Calle Ocho, complete with a clichéd Cuban jazz band, canapés and free cocktail samples. At a certain point, the audience was divided into groups, and taken out on the street where we were met by stereotypical US tour guides, complete with little flags, horribly pronounced Spanish words, obvious factual errors and intentionally badly performed friendliness *á la américain*, ready to take us on a walking tour of Little Havana. During this tour, a young Cuban American man in the audience would not stop complaining in this particular Cuban way of complaining, until he got angry, and took over the tour. He was also an actor.

He walked us to the iconic Ball & Chain nightclub, pointing out some Little Havana sights on the way. At the Ball & Chain, he hushed us together and told us that he was taking us through a time portal. We went through the back entrance, and in the patio, there was a scene from what should look like a pre-59 Cuban cabaret, with the actors frozen in their dancing poses. When the other groups of the audience had arrived, the actors unfroze, and we were suddenly at a New Year's party in 1956, where one of the Arechabalas was meeting his wife-to-be. At a certain point in the

story, time froze again, and our new tour guide took our little group away, into a little hallway dressed as the security checkpoint at the Havana airport in 1960. Several actors had joined our little group there, trying to get past an airport security guard. After having searched some of us in the audience for contraband, the security guard started yelling and abusing one of the actors in the group, and another actor took the opportunity to grab me, and take me with him into the toilets. Alone with the actor, he begged me to help him, took off one of his shoes gave me a bundle of five dollar bills he had hidden there and started frantically counting money with me, repeating over and over that: "It wasn't enough, it wasn't enough." When we went back out to the hall, we were all let through security, except this actor.

Back in the patio, another New Year's scene happened, now in 1958, where after we were taken out into another little vignette, in another place now in 1963. Like that we kept jumping back and forth across 1959 in a strangely coherent, yet fragmented and non-chronological narrative, until at some point we were at the last New Year's Eve, now after 1959, where revolutionaries stormed the place, arrested the attending actors and our tour guides whispered to us to "Come! We need to get out of here! Tenemos que irnos!".

Now together with the other little tour-groups, we were ushered towards the entrance from the patio into the nightclub, where a seascape was projected onto sheets around and in front of us, the actors formed a boat-shaped chain around us and the sound of the sea was mixed with the "Fuera gusanos!" and "Escoria!", which slowly faded away, until at mid-sea, one of the actors broke into singing a lullaby. The sheet in front of us kept getting lighter, until it was lifted away for an actress to welcome us in the United States, and usher us into the nightclub for a final scene, marking the United States as an endpoint for the narrative.

The Amparo Experience is mentioned here because it offers a valuable introductory illustration for the mnemonic dynamics that are at play in Cuban American cultural memory in Miami through the tropes that we can read out of the play. This type of narration forms a typical U-trope: in a three-part structure, it frames representations of the past as better than the present, and obtainable in the future through the right actions. What distinguishes the U-trope in the narrative of the performance from the related trope of descent is the agency prescribed in its framing. It paints a picture of a pre-revolutionary Cuban past that is both aesthetically pleasing, connotes wealth, and, since many of the Cuban American spectators have lost the direct connection to this past, provokes nostalgia. The personal point of view, through which the spectators are taken through the memories of the Arechabala family and the loss of their property in Cuba, adds to the sense of the loss of this past as unjust. Finally, the theatre production frames this nostalgic past as (re-)obtainable, primarily due to its role as part of the commercial branding campaign of Bacardi's new Havana Club. All you have to do in order to return to the wonderful warm New Year's evenings of 1950s Cuba is to have a sip, and thereby, the representation of this nostalgic past provides its viewers with a frame in which their ideology gains a concrete agency; from being a synchronic system of ideas, it becomes a diachronic system of ideas that instigates a desire for a particular future.

If this was any other narration used in the promotion of any other product in any other historical context, this would merely be a clever marketing scheme. This piece is however different; first and foremost, I saw young Cuban American members of the audience cry real tears, and one elderly man even faint, stopping the entire production for about fifteen minutes before it could resume. Secondly, it took place in a historical context where the idea of recovering this lost past was prevalent. The death of Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro's then-imminent withdrawal from the Cuban

presidency furthermore added to this sense of having the past within reach in the near future.

Keeping the findings from Chapter 3, as well as in the far-reaching investigation by Pérez in mind,<sup>2</sup> we find that the memory promoted by the Amparo Experience is in its structure very little different from the one promoted by the Cuban government, as it is framed within the same basic trope: Wrongdoing happened to us, the Cuban people, we reach back into the past for a solid moral ground founded on nationalism, and finally we project these ideas onto a utopian future that is always just around the corner from us. The condensation of these “maximum amount of meanings in a minimum number of signs” (see p. 43) into the Bacardi Havana Club-brand creates a mnemonic signifier that draws lines steeped in power. The process through which these lines are conceived and projected forward is the one set out by Olsson. In just five lines quoted on p. 49, five concepts of a high level of complexity are introduced: semiosis, memory, mimesis, metaphor and metonymy. With semiosis, Olsson refers to the interpretation by Umberto Eco of Charles Peirce’s theory of endless semiosis in a string of utterance, interpretation by a subject, re-utterance and reinterpretation. Olsson’s conception of memory is therefore much like the one that the thesis subscribes to: the metaphorical representation of truth. Metaphor here understood as a sign that represents something else, in this case, a narrative in the present that represents a truth in the past. Mimesis here is the basing of cultural understanding on an existing canon of text.<sup>3</sup> The concept of metonymy is, however, for the thesis the most interesting.

As metonymy refers to the representation that happens between a sign and a meaning that is closely aligned, the interpretation by Olsson of spatial phenomena

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<sup>2</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 171-172.

<sup>3</sup> Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 554.

as signs means that they have metaphorical and metonymic meaning. The sign Cuba metaphorically refers to the place in the real world that is Cuba, but its metonymic meaning goes beyond this meaning in the present and starts a semiotic process into past and future. In this understanding, memory becomes the storage-space of meaning while simultaneously being the semiotic transformation of this meaning through communication of this memory. If we to this interpretation add the thoughts of J. Assmann on cultural memory as the phenomenon when collective memories are disseminated in the form of canonical text, here interpreted as any petrification of canon in actual words on paper, but also in statues, music, architecture, and in some cases of wide interpretation also ritual and tradition, and the interpretation of these texts becomes relegated to an intellectual elite within the culture where the memory asserts its hegemony, the creation of this storage space becomes what Eagleton terms semiotic closure and formation of ideological hegemony.<sup>4</sup> Any investigation of memory therefore becomes an investigation into the temporally and spatially possible directions of ideological agency. The difference between the Amparo Experience and the historiography promoted by the Cuban government consequently lies in the spatial delimitation of this agency. Although both use the same emplotment of U-tropes in time, the role of spatial directionality sets a clear limit for who can act where within the ideology. In the case of The Amparo Experience, the ideology acts towards a re-insertion of diasporic Cubans into a frame of Cuban nationality. In the case of officialist history, it excludes them.

Although the analysis of The Amparo Experience, through the lens of an interpretation of memory in the light of Olsson's cartographical reasoning, has revealed how we can expose the lines of power that delineate agency, the theatrical performance remains to be somewhat distanced from the subjective experience and

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<sup>4</sup> Eagleton, *Ideology*, 196-199.

expression of the Cuban Americans of Miami Dade County. It has been carefully written, edited and performed to fit the socio-cultural nature of the expected spectators, as well as carrying elements of branding and politics related to the Bacardi family. The oral history interviews, conducted in Miami in the month of February 2018, will however be analysed using the same approach.

The 10 interviews in Miami had the purpose of allowing Cuban Americans to create their own subjective narrative. Interviewees were found with the help from a colleague, who assisted in getting in touch with a few people. Others, I either met on the street, engaged while drinking coffee, or through other interactions in public space. After having conducted an interview, I would ask if they could point me towards other interviewees that would fall into my range. The range that I based my group on was aimed to make sure that they had gone to school in Cuba during what Chávez and Deler have called the second phase of educational thought of the Cuban revolution (see p. 90), as well as their time of migration from Cuba to the United States was set between the time around the Mariel Crisis in 1980 and the Balsero Crisis in 1994. I did not strictly select based on gender, which resulted in only two of the ten interviews to be with women. Three interviewees identified as homosexual either during the interview or thereafter.

In order to enable the interviewees to elaborate their own narratives, I used a semi-structured line of questioning, dividing the interviews into four sections, aiming to tease out:

- 1) The personal story of the subject, including the story of family and other relations, considered close to the subject.
- 2) The story of the transition of the subject from Cuba to Miami.
- 3) The story of the Cuban American community in Miami.



4) The expectations of the future of Cuba.

This auto-biographical approach to the interview process was never intended to generate a reliable historical account of the experiences of the interviewees. Rather, the approach intended to allow for the generation of narratives that are neither true, nor lies, but rather subjective. To the historian in the tradition of Ranke, a scientist looking for truth, this might seem disquieting. Responding to the panel *From Nowhere to Now Here*, convened at the third congress of the Memory Studies Association, Olsson wrote an essay named after the seething brains of lovers and madmen, where he boils this problem down to an equation:

To the scientist a disquieting revelation, to the experienced craftsman yet another illustration of how different materials require different connectives.

The consequence is of course that the truth of *this is that* does not automatically lead to the truth of *that is this*. On the contrary,

$$(a = b) \neq (b = a)^5$$

For Olsson, the problem is however not problematic. Based on this equation, a broth boiled down from “Seething Brains”, we can build. In the Cuban kitchen, the broth becomes *ajiacó*, the traditional stew that changes over time as new ingredients are added to the leftovers from yesterday, each ingredient adding to the composition of the dish while maintaining individual taste.<sup>6</sup> However, before we sample the brewing of culture and head down the slippery slide of semiosis, let us try to taste truth. A. Assmann points towards a place where we can look for it in her reading of Koselleck’s distinction between objective and subjective truth: the latter one that is

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<sup>5</sup> Olsson, “Seething Brains”.

<sup>6</sup> Ortiz, “Factores Humanos de la Cubanidad”.

claimed by the individual who experiences the world and the former one that is constructed by the professional, let's say the historian. It is between these poles that A. Assmann attempts to assert how memory studies have taken over from the studies of ideology that filled academic journals in the 1960s and 1970s; a conceptual change that, as A. Assmann mentions, has seen its share of criticism. It is in one of those critiques, levelled by Susan Sontag, quoted by A. Assmann, that we find the frame in which we can understand truth as a mediating factor between memory and ideology:

All memory is individual, unreproducible – it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings.<sup>7</sup>

In the understanding of A. Assmann, Sontag here allows her understanding of ideology to engender mechanisms that are too many, too different. As she continues her argument, A. Assmann breaks down Sontag's conceptualisation into various pieces: individual memory, stipulation, what in White's terminology is called emplotment, in Olsson's mapping, archival, and mediation.

To counter the criticism of skeptics such as Susan Sontag and Reinhart Koselleck, it must be emphasized that the step from individual to collective memory does not afford an easy analogy. Institutions and groups do not possess a memory like individuals do; there is, of course, no equivalent

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<sup>7</sup> Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", 52-53.

to the neurological system. Institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, governments, the church, or a firm do not "have" a memory—they "make" one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Together with such a memory, these groups and institutions "construct" an identity.<sup>8</sup>

It is in the latter step of A. Assmann's rationale that ideology re-enters the stage, and we can sense power as the empirical scientist and noble truth-seeker points his finger. Following this line of argument, the Legasov character got it backwards: the modernist T ruth might not care about our governments, our ideologies, our religions to lie in wait for all time, but as governments, political convictions, religions construct their post-modern plethora of truthss, neatly arranged not into, but by ideologies, then the search for T ruths starts with the dual search for their provenance and directionality.

In search of the provenance and directionality of the historical consciousness of my interviewees, the interviews were each built up following the four steps laid out further above, allowing each subject a certain degree of freedom to lead the narrative in their own choice of direction, while giving it a structure that could be compared to other interviews. The part of the interview which I left the most open for every interview was its setting. When arranging each meeting, I asked the interviewees to think of the place in the city which to them was the most Cuban. One interviewee chose a Cuban restaurant, one met me in a park, but most interviewees simply met me in their homes. In most cases, the choice of place formed part of my overall analysis, as I interpret space as a cultural phenomenon forming part of J. Assmann's canon:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

... group memory has no neurological basis. This is replaced by culture: a complex of identity-shaping aspects of knowledge objectified in the symbolic forms of myth, song, dance, sayings, laws, sacred texts, pictures, ornaments, paintings, processional routes, or – as in the case of the Australians – even whole landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

The intention with this approach was to create documents relaying the stream of consciousness of the interviewees as they narratively construct their past present and future. What is interesting in the interviews is not the particular details that are revealed, but rather the recollections of fears, friendships, social geographies and other relations that emerge out of the mnemonic metonymies related to the triggering event me interviewing them. It is these imagined relations that the investigation takes place.

Since the interviews allowed the subjects to express their own conception of time, space and history according to the historical tropes that they saw themselves living in, the content of the interviews differed widely. This is why they in the following will be presented in groupings according to the main trope or theoretical element of the narration, introduced by a presentation of the trope in context of the corresponding theory. Each of these groupings is followed by a discussion of how the tropes fold into the theoretical framework that presented in the thesis.

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<sup>9</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 72.

## **Before the Revolution: Ideology // Before Ideology: Time**

### **Or how to travel in time through space**

When working with almost any Cuban narrative after 1959, there is one trope of history that needs addressing in every research project, no matter which discipline or approach might be behind the methodology applied, namely that of revolution. The ambiguous concept has multiple uses, referring to an abstract category of time, a trope of history, a mode of governance as well as political and even cultural identity all at the same time. Before moving to the analysis of the first interviews, the concept will here be addressed in light of the theoretical and methodological framework lined out in Chapter 1.

The complex Cuban understanding of the term ‘revolution’ stems from the pre-1959 revisionist paradigm among Cuban historians. As discussed in Chapter 3, their work fomented a foundation of abstract modes of thought regarding history on which a post-1959 ideological framework was developed and institutionalised by the government over the following two decades. Following Kayser Nielsen, these foundational abstract modes of thought can be envisioned as tropes of history when they are framed in narratives in the present. In order to discuss the narrative operationalisations of these tropes, two additional concepts presented in Chapter 1 will play a role. First, the idea of historical consciousness, understood as the collection of knowledge of the past that is available to a subject at a given time, indicating an imagined state before historical tropes bend this knowledge in a narrative operationalisation. Secondly, historical time, introduced by Koselleck. Rather than referring to any sort of events or interpretations of the past, this concept addresses the sheer fact that human beings distinguish between past, present and future.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that there is no progression from historical time to

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<sup>10</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 2-3.

historical consciousness and finally a narrative operationalized into tropes, but that these three happen simultaneously. In combination, however, these three concepts become tools or frameworks with which we can address the varying degree of interpretation a subject can apply to the past: Historical time being a concept referring to the idea of time with least interpretation, as in time void of events; historical consciousness then the concept of time coupled with events that are considered to have, in terms of Leopold von Ranke, really happened;<sup>11</sup> and finally, the tropes of Kayser Nielsen as metaphors for the operationalisation into a narrative emplotment in the present.

At this moment it is worth remembering Benjamin's sixth thesis on the philosophy of history: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."<sup>12</sup> What Benjamin presents us with is a bridge between the three concepts discussed above, affirming the role of historical articulation as a political act with agency in and of itself in every step of the process. Benjamin's critical mention of Ranke's dictum furthermore addresses the subjectivity of "what really happened", asserting that historical consciousness is by no means real in the sense of an abstract omnipresent truth in reality, but rather the subject's collected information that, by mechanisms that are inherently socio-cultural, has been given a value as truthful, such as historiography but also religion, popular culture, literature and/or art.

An illustrative example of the value of the combination of these concepts in an analysis of the trope of revolution in the Cuban context is highlighted by Sader's interview with the late Martínez Heredia:

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<sup>11</sup> For a review of Ranke's concept of history and objectivity, see: Boldt, "Ranke".

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 255.

En marzo de 1959 fundamos una modestísima y efímera revista del Movimiento en Yaguajay, llamada 'Juventud'. Escribí el editorial del primer número. Recuerdo con una sonrisa la prosa que quería ser elegante, pero el contenido era muy radical: "Cuando 82 vinieron para traerle la libertad a millones, no venían a acabar con 7 años de tiranía, sino con 400 años de explotación del hombre por el hombre". Le fijaba esa misión tan ambiciosa a la guerra revolucionaria que acababa de concluir y al poder revolucionario que se iniciaba desde mi ideología, pero yo no tenía ninguna relación con los comunistas, y no me sentía comunista.<sup>13</sup>

Although this quote has to be interpreted with the same methodological caution as any statement about the past, as it is retrospectively construed to fit a present situation in which values and ideas might have changed, what Martínez Heredia is describing here is of vital importance for the argument of the thesis: before fixating on a certain political movement, and even before forming a distinct ideological outlook on the world, Martínez Heredia was thinking in time and following an emplotment of elements from his historical consciousness into a trope of history that ultimately led to a hope for the future. This dynamic takes an almost ethical form in leading to the only possible conclusion for him at that given time: to support the revolutionary movement in the building of a new political leadership of Cuba.

Benjamin's moment of danger is for Martínez Heredia a moment of revolution. To explore this notion, the following pages will dwell for a moment on the thoughts on the revolutionary moment set forth by Hannah Arendt. In her introduction to her edition of Benjamin's work, she notices how, at a time when Marxist philosophy of history was predominantly occupied with dialectics between superstructure and

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<sup>13</sup> Sader and Martínez Heredia, "Entrevista a Fernando Martínez Heredia", 118.

substructure, Benjamin does not let his “Angel of History” move dialectically through history, but rather face the past in horror at catastrophes while being hurled towards a future he is not able to see by a gruesome storm blowing from paradise, a storm which Benjamin names progress.<sup>14</sup> A couple of observations are worth making here: in Benjamin’s parable, time is made timeless and becomes a spatial category. The storm from Paradise, across which the fictional Angel of History sees catastrophe and horror, is what Koselleck would call historical time. This, in turn, means that the Angel of History seems to employ the trope of a history of decay; once there was paradise, but progress has blown us across a wasteland of catastrophe towards the unknown where all hope is lost.

A similar but yet radically different figure can be found observing time in Arendt’s “What is Authority”. Here, the ancient Roman god Janus is introduced as the primary metaphor for Roman thoughts on history, coupled with Minerva, goddess of remembrance and wisdom.<sup>15</sup> With his faces turned towards both past and future, Janus is able to see both the foundation of Rome as well as its future imperial expansion. This is a key point in Arendt’s search for the source of authority, as she finds it in the Roman reverence for the mythical foundation of the state. The importance of this ideology is set out by Arendt through the argument that “Rome’s political and spiritual heritage passed to the Christian Church”, with the apostles serving as new “founding fathers”.<sup>16</sup> After establishing how the metaphorical Janus finds his way into Christianity, Arendt argues that this ideology can be found in the thinking of revolutionaries of the 18th century:

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<sup>14</sup> Arendt, “Preface”, 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Arendt, “What is Authority?”, 121.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.



... the men of the French Revolution no less than the founding fathers in America insisted on making the fear of an "avenging God" and hence the belief in a future state part and parcel of the new body politic. [...] Thus the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, consciously designed as a political device by Plato and perhaps no less consciously adopted, in its Augustinian form, by Gregory the Great, was to survive all other religious and secular elements which together had established authority in Western history.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of voicing immediate distrust of the idea that the vision of history as a two-faced Janus has organically grown from ancient Rome to the dawn of modernity, transcending millennia and skipping the influence of the history of ideas of medieval Europe, it is worth remembering that, as Kayser Nielsen would paraphrase Hegel whenever asserting that any iteration of the past is only truly valid in its contemporaneity,<sup>18</sup> "The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the falling of dusk."<sup>19</sup> The importance of Arendt's contribution is an addition to Benjamin's theses on history, as articulating the past must mean seizing hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger, in order to use that memory to reach a desired future. It is the desired future that is key in this argument: whereas Benjamin's sixth thesis on history could be read as an allegorical paraphrase of the first paragraph of Karl Marx' 18th Brumaire to Napoleon Bonaparte (quoted below), adding only the sentiment of horror in the angel's eyes, Arendt rephrases Benjamin's horror and Marx' anxious nightmare into an authority that designs the future.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 133-134.

<sup>18</sup> Besides his informal tutorial sessions before his untimely death, it is also found in: Kayser Nielsen, *Historiens Forvandlinger*, 37-45.

<sup>19</sup> Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, 16.

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language.<sup>20</sup>

In Martínez Heredia's account of his actions and thoughts immediately following 1959, he emphasizes not the importance of the borrowed names, slogans and costumes, but the hope of a reversal of 400 years of oppression. The addition of a hope for the future coupled with Benjamin's angel of history leads us back to Olsson and the spatiality of memory evoked through the paraphrase of Kant, asserting that imagination is the human faculty used to make the absent present. Thereby, it is also the faculty used to re-member perceptions of the past and expectations for the future, both of which are by definition never present.<sup>21</sup> The mechanism used to make the past and the future present is thus not only related to our conception of time but also of space.

### **Revolutionary Disenchantments: Framing History**

The discussion above suggests that the methods proposed by Kayser Nielsen for the analyses of uses of history as the analysis of the direction of the narrative underlying each evocation of history as a historical trope, could be understood as

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<sup>20</sup> Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 120.

a method that gives form to the thoughts such as those of Koselleck, Benjamin, Arendt, Martínez Heredia and Marx, seen through the prism of the cartographic reasoning of Olsson.

The following paragraphs will introduce a historical trope that Kayser Nielsen terms the trope of rupture, which in specific historical circumstances is interpreted using the almost all-encompassing trope that has dominated understanding of Cuba during the past century: Revolution. Bertel Nygaard, a Danish historian working on the conceptual history of revolution, analyses the provenance of the modern concept of revolution, as well as its relation to the advent of the concepts such as history as a progressive force driven by people experiencing certain social circumstances. One of the lessons derived from Nygaard, inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein and Koselleck, is the idea that the modern concept of revolution developed dramatically from meaning a circular political movement to meaning a sudden break from a static status quo into a progressive movement into the future around the time of the French Revolution.<sup>22</sup> The implications of this change in conceptual understanding were, according to Nygaard, that the notion of the possible sudden progress of society based on popular involvement in politics is closely related to the hopes and dreams that people can conceive of regarding their social situation.<sup>23</sup>

Koselleck's work has been mentioned before in the thesis, but two notions need to be unpacked here. The first concerns the very fundament of what both Kayser Nielsen and Nygaard address above: the notion of historical time. In the preface to *Futures Past*, Koselleck lays out how he arrives at the core concept of his study by dividing time into three analytical categories. First the physical-astronomical time on which chronology is built. This category refers solely to the movement of the

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<sup>22</sup> Nygaard, "Revolution: Hvad, Hvorfor og Hvordan?"

<sup>23</sup> Nygaard, *Håb*, 40-41.

planetary system, and the phenomena that this causes in the human experience: the setting of the sun, duration of the day, seasons of the year, etc. The second category is related to concepts of growth and decay in the realm of biology as well as architecture, referring to the birth, life and death of things, both living beings but also the construction and subsequent ruination of the built environment, and other phenomena that have an observable life cycle. The final category, historical time, is the most complex of the three, and is introduced with the previously mentioned assertion that “...in differentiating past and future, or (in anthropological terms) experience and expectation, it is possible to grasp something like historical time.”<sup>24</sup>

The conceptualisation of historical time leads to the second notion of Koselleck which is necessary before continuing the analysis of my interviews, as he divides this concept into sub-categories: the dynamic between horizon of experience and horizon of expectation. In all its simplicity, the horizon of experience refers to all that a person can imagine about the past, and the horizon of expectation all that a person can imagine to possibly happen in the future.<sup>25</sup> It is through the notion of the horizon of experience that Koselleck’s ideas tie into the theoretical framework of memory studies, which, especially in Assmann and Assmann’s interpretations, addresses how knowledge about the past circulates, is canonized, archived or discarded in society.<sup>26</sup> The crucial difference between the concepts proposed by Koselleck and Assmann is that cultural memory refers to the wider societal structure of interpretation and representation of the past as well as its projection onto expectations of the future, whereas Koselleck’s concepts solely refer to the possible horizons of experience and expectation of individuals. One could say that Assmann’s cultural memory is the societal reaction to Koselleck’s horizons of experience and expectation.

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<sup>24</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>26</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 70-110; Assmann, “Canon and Archive”.

The French Revolution and the subsequent re-conceptualisation of the term revolution meant that the distance between horizons of experience and expectation grew wider, as the sudden complete reorganisation of government made it possible to radically reimagine society.<sup>27</sup> This modern interpretation of the term turned revolution into a meta-historical concept, meaning that it no longer referred to a specific political event, but rather the velocity of history, and its rupture with previous social, political or cultural structures.<sup>28</sup> In other words, revolution became a historical trope in the way that Kayser Nielsen would have characterised it. Returning to Koselleck's three categories of time, we now have ways of talking about all of them: astronomical time can be described in measures such as days, hours, seconds; biological time can be described in terms of young and old, growth and decay; and finally, historical time can be described using meta-historical concepts such as the tropes proposed by Kayser Nielsen, as the use of the concept historical consciousness in his work can be interpreted as a consciousness of historical time.

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<sup>27</sup> Koselleck, 45-49.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

## CHAPTER 5: TWO CONCEPTS OF REVOLUTION, OR HOW THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE INSTITUTIONALISED

It was with the lessons of Bertel Nygaard in mind that I first approached Cuba, academically and in real terms: growing up in Denmark, revolutionary romanticist discourse surrounding everything Cuba-related led me to expect finding a society where progress was front and centre. This was very confusing when I began reading publications on the internet by self-described progressive Cubans from within the island opposing The Revolution, which seemed contradictory, given that progress and revolution were synonyms to me. In fact, several of my first academic publications dealt with the way that progressive groups across the political spectrum in Cuba confronted restrictions on the use of the internet, coming to the conclusion that the Cuban government essentially had the same goal as their stated opponent in this matter, the United States: to control the narrative regarding the institutionalised production of truth in Cuba. One of the main complaints of these internet-users, labelled counter-revolutionary by official Cuban news outlets, was that this control over cultural institutions went so far that they were not able to advocate for the progress that they believed necessary for their country.<sup>1</sup>

In a search for the roots of this contradiction, I turned towards scholars researching the way history was conceptualised in the years surrounding the turning point of 1959. In her previously mentioned article for the *Journal of Contemporary History* in 2003, Miller laid out the strategies used by the new Cuban government around 1959 in order to embrace the concept of revolution as in fact a break with what was framed as a suppressive past and a progression towards a better future, applying what we could call a revolutionary trope of history, supposedly widening the distance

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<sup>1</sup> Henken and van de Voort, "From Cyberspace to Public Space?", 196-209.

between horizon of experience and expectation. Elements of this strategy centred on high-visible measures to show a rejection of the past: the re-naming of prominent buildings, celebrations of public holidays and the use of a calendar that named the years commemorating events central to the revolutionary struggle.<sup>2</sup> In Koselleck's terms, measurement of astronomical-physical time became tightly related to the conception of historical time. Although a rejection of the past is a feature of almost any political transition, the Cuban case remains particular, given that the influence of the representation of history runs particularly deep. Further above, I have presented Miller's argument that: "*The centrality of 'History will absolve me' to the revolutionary struggle meant that history, rather than constitutionalism or ideology, was the key legitimating force behind the Cuban revolution.*"<sup>3</sup> In the following, this argument will move a step further, and argue that "History will Absolve Me!" and the dynamics that ensue from it, is an expression of the centrality that cultural memory plays in ideological structures in Cuba.

Miller relies on Pérez's article "In the Service of the Revolution" to deploy the notion that the conception of history central to the discourse of "History will Absolve Me!" was founded on revisionist historiographic discourse produced from the early twentieth century through the 1940s as a response to what Pérez calls "*...the imperial manifestations of North American historiography*".<sup>4</sup> In a revision of the influence of Cuban revisionist historiography on the post-'59 production of historical narratives, Quinn elaborates two points. First, she argues that the revisionist trend before '59 can be defined under two categories: the liberal-nationalist category, with the leader of the Cuban Society of Historical and International Studies, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, setting the tone with his *Cuba no debe su independencia a los*

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<sup>2</sup> Miller, "The Absolution of History", 147-148.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 150-151; Pérez, "In the Service of the Revolution", 81.

*Estados Unidos* This trend narrowly focuses on the Cuban independence struggle as a development sui generis, with stark criticism of the influence of US imperialism. The latter also includes Marxist historians of the 1940s and traditionalist historians working on hagiographies of revolutionary personalities in the 1900s.

The second point that Quinn elaborates is that, although she acknowledges that the post-'59 political regime to a large extent constructs its ideology with what Freedman would call the building blocks of revisionist historians, a selection took place of the discourses made available by these historians when they were institutionalised during the creation of the School of History at the University of Havana. Quinn stresses that this selection should not be interpreted as a top-down process of politicians drafting a historical narrative suitable for the new political regime, but rather a selection process guided by the political currents that historians interwove their narratives into, after which these discourses subsequently were appropriated into political discourse as a building block of ideology underpinning the teleological argument that all Cuban history eventually and necessarily culminated in the post-'59 political regime.<sup>5</sup>

Central to the investigations of these three scholars is the argument that a mutually re-enforcing relation existed between the production of historical narratives, the ideology of the post-'59 political regime and its realisation by its government. The latter leads into the second argument that the three scholars address: the institutionalisation of the production of truth as a legitimising force of the government. This institutionalisation is best described by Quinn in the part of her article dedicated to the notion of "One Hundred Years of Struggle", in which she shows how the birth of the nation was located by historians and politicians alike in the beginning of the first

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<sup>5</sup> Quinn, "Cuban Historiography in the 1960s", 380-388.



war of Cuban independence, in 1868, and the historiographical efforts centred around showing how each struggle that took place on the island since was in fact a part of the same movement towards the post-'59 regime.<sup>6</sup>

The discourse of One Hundred Years of Struggle equals Cubanness to the struggle against empire, and ultimately, the only real Cuba, home to the only real Cubans, the one that emerged after 1959. To elaborate the point made above, using Koselleck's terms, the close relations between measurement of astronomical-physical time with the conception of historical time, framed in a trope of revolution, was absorbed by political and politicised institutions that in their very nature are prone to adopt conservative policies. In my master's thesis I researched the treatment of topics related to race and racism in the production of historical research in Cuba by investigating publications related to race and racism in the journal *TEMAS* from 1995 to 2012. In the light of the studies presented above, the results were frankly a bit boring, as they merely confirmed that investigations into topics that diverge from the direction of the revolutionary trope were either not published or met with reprisal in order to uphold a canon affirming that social issues related to race improved following the teleological line described above, and that they could only exist outside the revolution in a temporal as well as geographical sense, meaning either before 1959 or outside the country. Interestingly, the very phrase that was used in the reprisal against one scholar who dissented from this discourse, was that he "lacked a sense of history," framing him not only as a bad historian, but also as a scholar operating outside the revolution and in the widest interpretation, non-Cuban.<sup>7</sup>

The underlying contradiction of an institutionalised revolution, the fundamental break with an oppressive past, and progression towards a better future grounded in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 385-386.

<sup>7</sup> van de Voort, *Deceiving the Races*.

institutions that actively inhibit progress, is contested by Kapcia. In *Leadership in the Cuban Revolution*, Kapcia applies a periodization of Cuban politics after 1959 based on a reading of its processes as cycles of crisis-debate-certainty that contests ideas of the government of Cuba after 1959 as a singular monolith and emphasizes how the Cuban leadership is more complex than could be expected of a state “*with one single party, controlling the daily newspapers, radio and television, and with non-competitive elections*”. It has to be pointed out, however, that the debates held in the Cuban system in order to address issues of crisis are organised and held within institutions selected by the government, with well-prepared guidelines for their conduct, meaning that their nature is still one of institutionalisation.<sup>8</sup>

One example of this dynamic is described by Quinn, as she describes the polemics held in the adaptation of revisionist historiography to the post-'59 political reality. The most poignant point is made as she refers to late Cuban historian Jorge Ibarra Cuesta, and his critique of the institutionalisation of a Cuban revolutionary romanticism: “*El culto a las tradiciones revolucionarias del pasado llegó a convertirse en una mística popular. Este ambiente no podía menos que estimular los estudios históricos.*”<sup>9</sup>

What is interesting is that even in the interpretation of the Cuban government since 1959 that casts it as the least monolithic, there is a clear picture of an institutionalisation of the production of historiography. The trope of history produced is one of revolution, meaning a break with an oppressive past, and progression towards a better future, all the while the political establishment in its most progressive interpretation develops in a circular movement, if not dictated from above then institutionalised into the structures set up to conserve teleological

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<sup>8</sup> Kapcia, *Cuba In Revolution*, 25-45; Kapcia, *Leadership in the Cuban Revolution*, 18-21.

<sup>9</sup> Quinn, 394-396; quote taken from: Ibarra, “Historiografía y Revolución” 9.

interpretations of history. This does, however, not mean that we are to dismiss the concept of revolution as inadequate for a description of what happens in Cuban political and cultural development, but rather that we need to distinguish between two revolutions: one that functions as a trope of history, as the human possibility to radically widen horizons of experience and expectation and imagine a future better than the past, based on the narrative employment of history as such, and another revolution that can best be described by the appropriation of these modes of thought in order to legitimise political dominance, that in Kapcia's understanding moves more according to the conception of revolution that Koselleck found before 1789: in circles.

The thesis is not arguing that it is inherently bad for political movements to appropriate tropes of history, templates of time or cultural memories. As outlined in the discussion on the relation between ideology and cultural memory, this is impossible. What it is arguing is that abstract conceptions of time and real-world politics are not, and can never be, one and the same thing, which is something that the interviewees in Miami were acutely aware of.

### **Oscar: The Loss of Familiar Bohemia**

Oscar has a special place in my series of interviews in Miami, as he was the first interviewee I met over the course of my trip. I met him on Calle Ocho, the central street and main artery in Little Havana, where he was having a *cafecito* at a *ventanita*, a window-based café, on the corner of Calle Ocho and 12th Avenue.

I had walked there from my rented room, around 49th Avenue and Flagler, meaning I had walked at least 7.5 kilometres through Cuban America, with a few stops at the classic sights, such as the Versailles Bakery, where older Cuban Americans had gathered to discuss the news of the day. Fidel Castro's son, Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart, had committed suicide the previous day, or as they put it: "they suicided him".

I was jetlagged, sweaty and thirsty, and stood out at the *ventanita*, especially because I ordered my coffee wrong; earlier that day I had overheard someone order “una colada” and copied this order at the *ventanita* on Oscar’s corner, not knowing that this meant an entire styrofoam cup full of strong, sweet Cuban coffee. Oscar, a friendly, well-dressed man, helped me get my order right, whereafter we stood at the window-café and chatted for a bit; first about the weather and the news of the day. Oscar also believed that there was definitely something fishy about the suicide. Then about my Spanish accent carrying peculiar combination of the unshakable melody and intonation from having lived with Argentinian migrants in Spain, as well as the lazy replacement of the rolling -R at the end of words with the unmistakably Cuban -L, turning *hablar* into *hablal* and *vivir* into *vivil*, revealing that I have spent time on the island. This led us to my purpose in Miami, and my quest to find Cuban Americans to interview for my PhD thesis. Due to my jetlag and general over-impression of the Cuban-ness of Little Havana, it was not until this point in the conversation that I realised that Oscar could fit the requirements for an interview. He told me that he had come to Miami in 1981, and that he worked as a barber a little further down the road. When I casually asked why he had left Cuba, he said that he felt forced to leave. He had been a boyfriend of Reinaldo Arenas, the famous Cuban writer who was imprisoned in the 70s for ideological subversion. A few days later, I met him after hours, and conducted the interview sitting in his brightly lit salon.

The romantic Cuban ballads flowing out of the radio speakers, although utterly complicating later transcription of the interview, set the scene in an interesting way; what was most particular about Oscar was his romantic perception of pre-1959 Cuba. As he expressed himself, this view of the pre-1959 situation of the island was deeply rooted in his childhood memories of living with a grandmother who held lively *tertulias* with invitees from all social layers of cosmopolitan Havana:

Me crié con mis abuelos. Mi mamá vivía en Venezuela. Una crianza, ya te digo, en el capitalismo. Y te puedo decir que fui criado como un príncipe. En todo, en cuanto a bienes materiales, libertades. Muy controversial, porque mi abuela era una mujer extremadamente bohemia. Me crié en un ambiente en alrededor de no menos de 20 personas en las reuniones todas las noches. Me criaron a la inversa, o sea, dormía de día y estaba despierta todas las noches y toda la madrugada, oyendo conversaciones fabulosas en unas tertulias de gente increíble, donde todo era mixto. Era la Cuba de antes de la Revolución, donde era una mezcla de París con el confort americano y entonces eran los periodistas del diario de la Marina, gente de mucho dinero, mucho, mucho dinero, gente pobre, intelectuales, y era un mundo mixto, cosmopolita, era fascinante.

As Oscar was born in 1955, the memories he recounted to me were ones of his earliest childhood, emphasizing how memory indeed flies with Minerva's owl at dusk and that the Angel of History can only look backwards from here and now. When I asked him when he realised that these late nights with his grandmother were so special was: "Bueno a los dos años, que si a los dos años a ti te ponen a ver un show de Tropicana de antes de la Revolución, imagínate tú." At this moment it is tempting to dismiss the interview, as a cynical case could be made regarding Oscar's mode of remembering as retrospectively construed into a nostalgic image of happy, festive and open-minded liberties, and it is even possible to go so far as to say that what he misses is not the possibilities granted to him by a pre-1959 Cuban state, but what he misses is a childhood where he in his own words was treated as a prince. I will however not engage in these questions, as all memories in their very nature are retrospectively construed, re-membered and re-embodied narratives, and the focus of this study is their importance to ideology, no matter their degree of truth. It is true that Cuba in the 1950s under no circumstances can be described as a

country in harmony. The government was led by a dictator who repressed his opponents, the political opposition fragmented, student demonstrations clashed with police and the armed forces, the Cuban middle class was in crisis, and the sugar economy had ceased to produce growth and could no longer sustain economic development. Not to mention a certain group of insurgents that continued to expand their operations from the Sierra Maestra in the eastern part of the island.<sup>10</sup> The importance for this study is however not whether or not Havana in the late fifties was a cosmopolitan moveable feast or not, but rather that, in Oscar's memories: "En aquella época, en la Habana, existían todas esas cosas. Y todo el mundo se mezclaba. Era como en París. O sea, en lo mismo encontrabas gente de mucho dinero, o sea, la mentalidad, era muy abierta, muy, muy, había mucho. Y yo me crie en todo eso." It is this nostalgic image that Oscar mirrors across the turning point of 1959, and thereby becomes the starting point for the trope of history that underpins his narration.

The narrative framing of 1959 as a turning point that took Oscar's fabulous cosmopolitan childhood away from him, makes it a point in astronomical-physical time against which all measurements of historical time are made. Talking about the first decade after this turning point seemed to cause Oscar difficulties, and his responses were emotional yet carefully worded. In a matter-of-fact way, he described how he was not allowed to continue to university to study architecture but was allowed to choose from three agrotechnic educations: "Esa fue la época de las tantas etapas que tuvo el proceso de la revolución Cubana. Esa fue la etapa en que se quiso revolucionar toda la agricultura." As he could not get access to the education he wanted, his mother was able to find him a job through her second marriage with a photographer who worked at the *Departamento de Orientación*

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<sup>10</sup> Pérez, *Cuba*, 210-233.

*Revolucionaria* (DOR). Here he was shuffled around various departments given that he did not seem to fit in anywhere.

Entonces, a mí me metieron a trabajar en el DOR, y como todas las cosas en Cuba, que nada funcionaba y todo podía suceder, pero todo era prohibido y era muy complejo, era una cosa Fellinesca. Y entonces, yo recorrí todas las cosas que tenía el DOR, en todas, porque yo no encajaba en ninguna. [...] Tú entiendes todo lo que está pasando, todo el aparato, como está funcionando de mal, pero tú vas con el aparato, porque no hay otra alternativa. [...] El darte cuenta que nada funciona, que todo es arbitrario, tener consciencia de todo eso, pero hacerle el juego y seguir la marcha.

This frustration with what Oscar names “las cosas de Cuba” in his professional life were however not the only obstacle that he saw the post-1959 system put in the way of his happiness; also, his family life was frustrated due to political differences, which in the Cuban context often go hand in hand with the topic of exile. The first step into exile was taken by his grandmother, who, as mentioned above, has a central place in his upbringing:

Me tocó el golpe con mi abuela [...] En esa época, cuando alguien se iba del país, era para no volver. En esa época no te podías ni cartear. Ni cartas. Ni llamadas por teléfono como ahora. Cuando hablabas por teléfono, si te permitían la comunicación tenías que hablar en clave. [...] Ella sí no aguantaba más. Ella era una generación todavía más fuerte que la mía. Yo cogí algo, pero. Y ese fue el golpe más grande que me pudo haber dado la revolución cubana.

Left without the central figure, the narrative of Oscar's family life is one of conflict imposed by political ambition. In 1969 his mother managed to get him a visa to Mexico through the father of his sister, a Venezuelan who had been in political exile in Cuba, in an attempt to allow Oscar to leave the country before he had to go into military service at 15 years of age. With the vaccinations in order and the visa in hand, his mother took him to see his biological father in order to get the signature that would allow him to leave the country as a minor.

Me consiguieron la visa por México. Yo tenía ya 14 años, [...] ese día mi madre fue conmigo a donde mi padre. En ese momento era viceministro. Mi abuelo por parte padre era fundador del Partido Comunista Cubana [inaudible] Ese día fui yo, y cuando mi mama le dio, o sea le explicó que me había conseguido la visa mexicana, que me firmara. Como era menor de edad me tenía que firmar la autorización. Y delante de mí él tiró los papeles y dijo: "Yo no firmo eso, porque eso me perjudica por el Partido."

These examples illustrate how Oscar was affected with regard to his family by the political shift in 1959. Together, they constitute one of the two major conflicts expressed in the interview. The other one came up when I asked him whether or not he had a good time while attending secondary school:

No. Para nada. Fue una época, en mi generación, ya te digo, la revolución cubana ha tenido muchas etapas. En la época mía, en los finales de los 60, si te agarraban con un disco de los Beatles, te metían preso.

The phrase regarding the Beatles is important, as it in various other interviews came back as a refrain referring to a repression and lack of access to cultural influences from outside the island. It has to be mentioned that there seems to be a discrepancy



between the perceived illegality of US and European rock music in Cuba by my interviewees and the actual Cuban laws at that moment. In his “Censure of the Beatles: Myth or Reality?”, written as a conclusion to the proceedings from the First International Colloquium on the Significance of the Beatles’ Work in Cuba, colloquium organizer Ernesto Juan Castellanos worked through the legal body of the time without being able to find any direct law prohibiting the music of the English group. He continues to conclude that this strong perception of their illegality is the result of the combination of self-censorship, self-appointed protectors of Cuban culture within both law-enforcement as well as the citizenry, and finally the laws against ideological diversionism.<sup>11</sup> In Oscar’s interview, the refrain was a steppingstone to talk about the persecution he witnessed in the period in which he attended secondary school:

Fue una época de persecución constante. Todo era malo. Y entonces para mi generación que habíamos nacido antes de la revolución, que teníamos más conocimiento, que estábamos más en contacto con una generación que estaba al día, de todo, para mí era, imagínate tú, oír que, o conocer personas que porque llevaban, lo agarraban en la universidad con una revista Times, que la llevaba a escondidas, por cierto, pero te botaban de la universidad y te mandaban, en este caso, yo lo conocí, un muchacho brillante. Y porque lo encontraron con ciertos magazines, y descubrieron que el muchacho se mantenía al día de, trataba de mantenerse al día de la realidad fuera de Cuba, lo metieron en Mazorra.

One of the things that is worth noticing in this quote is the way in which Oscar moves between first person plural and third person singular; he is talking about an

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<sup>11</sup> Castellanos, “Censure of the Beatles”; Pacini Hernandez and Garofalo, “Between Rock and a Hard Place”.

us that is exemplified by the case of a young man he knew who was committed to Mazorra, the psychiatric hospital of Havana. The use of psychiatric framing of sexuality and political unconformity has been studied in depth by Lillian Guerra and Jennifer Lambe.<sup>12</sup> The latter study shows how the profession of psychiatry became involved in the diagnoses and criminalisation of counterrevolutionaries and anti-social behaviour, closely related in its post-1959 institutionalisation to the emergence of the Ministry of the Interior (MININT). The latter diagnosis included offenses such as homosexuality and inclination towards political dissent.<sup>13</sup> The young man that Oscar talked about was submitted to electro-shock treatment in Mazorra and ended up committing suicide.

The lack of academic opportunities, professional stagnation, systemic dysfunctional work environment, estrangement and division in his family and the suppression of political, cultural and sexual otherness together to a large extent constitute what Oscar understands by The Cuban Revolution: a conservative, strangling force rather than progressive, liberating one. Interestingly, some of the most repeated phrases are “my generation”, and “that period”, used to describe the context that he frames as his Cuba, using the same mechanism to divide the Cuban diaspora in Miami. This became particularly clear when I asked him whether or not he would ever go back to Cuba, to which the answer was a resounding “NO”. When asked why, Oscar answered: “Mi generación siempre ha quedado con resentimiento. Para mí, particularmente, el resentimiento más grande, que yo tengo, es contra los mismos cubanos.” What is interesting here is not only that his biggest resentment is not the Cuban state or government, but rather the Cuban people and their reactions in times of difficulties; what is further interesting is that he acknowledges that he is part of a

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<sup>12</sup> Guerra, “Gender Policing, Homosexuality and the New Patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965–70”; Lambe, *Madhouse*.

<sup>13</sup> Lambe, 186–197.

group of people who share a particular set of views on Cuba due to the periods of Cuba's recent history that they experienced. When I followed up by asking him if he did not have any good memories from Cuba and whether or not he felt nostalgia, he gave a long but interesting answer:

Esa es la ventaja de estar en Miami. O sea, cuando tenga nostalgia, si tuviera nostalgia, no sé, no creo que la he sentido, pero me imagino que debe haber algo cuando oigo, por ejemplo, el acento cubano, ese fuerte [laughs] y los disparates esos, que, todos los dichos cubanos [laughs] lo disfruto cantidad. Disfruto la música. [...] Soy muy abierto, compro música cubana de la que se está produciendo en ese momento. [...] Pero aquí, y cuando yo quiero. Mira, el otro día – como anécdota – comprando en el grocery, la muchachita que me estaba atendiendo, que estaba de cajera, una cubanita acabada de llegar. El acento era, pero fuerte fuerte fuerte [...] le pido dos cajetillos de cigarros, de las que yo fumo, que es Virginia Slim Regular, y entonces eso le digo, le digo: "¿Me puedas dar dos cajetillas de Virginia Slim Regular?" Y ella me mire y me dice: "¿QUÉ?" [highlights de accent, laughs] Pero era tan cubano. ¿Ves? Y esas cosas yo las disfruto. Esa espontaneidad cubana así. Sobre todo la forma. "¿Que? " como '¿En qué idioma tú me estás hablando?' [laughs]

The connection of his nostalgia, his good memories and his loss to certain seemingly timeless aspects of Cuban culture, and his lamentation of the loss of cosmopolitan liberties in a mirroring across 1959 made me think that, for Oscar, the Cuba that he left does not exist anymore. His careful delineation of periods and generations allows us to fathom an understanding of delineations in historical time closely related to questions of nationality. His homeland is not only a place in space,

but simultaneously a place in time – time gone by and lost in a trope of revolutionary decline.

### **Alejandro: Revolution or Rebellion?**

Alejandro belongs to one of these “other generations” that are omnipresent in the narration of Oscar. Born in January 1970, and having left Cuba in 1992, he belongs to a group of people born after the initial turmoil following the political shifts of 1959 and the establishment of a new form of governance. It is therefore easy to expect that Alejandro would not employ the same trope of revolutionary decline as Oscar, since he has no experience of his own of a Cuba before 1959. He did not struggle with issues of sexual otherness. Another vital difference between Alejandro and Oscar is their family ties to sides in the ideological struggle in the aftermath of 1959. Whereas Oscar’s family was split due to political differences, Alejandro very much grew up in a family that worked within the frames set up by the new government. His father was an economist from Camagüey, his mother a theatre performer turned economist from Santiago de Cuba, who met in Havana after 1959.

Había muchas cosas que hacer en Cuba. El teatro no era lo más importante. Cuando en los primeros años después de Castro, muchas personas le dieron cosas que hacer, ¿no? Tú tienes que ir a esta fábrica, tú tienes que ir a este lugar, tienes que hacer esto, entonces, you know, a ellos le dieron, a mi papá le enviaron a un, a mi padre le enviaron a un central, a administrar un central azucarero.

Alejandro grew up in a household where Cuba’s financial development was discussed and visited factories along with his father. Contrary to Oscar, the social circle of Alejandro was very much made up of people who worked within the systems set up by the post-’59 government. His parents worked as economists

in industrial projects, many of his cousins became pilots in the Cuban Air Force, and he expressly described his upbringing throughout the 1970s as a bubble made up of his social circumstances:

Cuba nunca ha dejado de ser una sociedad estratificada, ¿no? O sea, mi estatus social era de personas privilegiadas. Mi padre y mis hermanos tenían buenos trabajos, teníamos un coche, que era difícil en Cuba tener un coche, teníamos, ah, qué sé yo, televisión en colores, que entonces no, no existía, ¿no? Podíamos ir de vacaciones a Varadero. Podíamos ir de vacaciones a Viñales. Cosas así, que no, you know, no todo el mundo los tenía, pero, dentro de tu estatus social, todos tus amigos los tienen, entonces tú estás dentro del mismo, you know.

Another factor in the creation of the bubble in which Alejandro spent his early years was one created by the media. As an avid reader, he recounted to me how he noticed certain trends in reporting on the tone employed to describe development in Cuba in relation to other countries:

La impresión que así que había en Cuba era que era un país en vía de desarrollo, ¿no? Un país que tenía mucha resonancia internacional. Una cosa que... No se hablaba mucho de los Estados Unidos. [...] Sí, Estados Unidos era el enemigo, pero no se mencionaba tanto, no era tan, no era tan presente. Se hablaba más bien de los amigos, no de los Estados Unidos. O sea, la Guerra Fría, lo que yo recuerdo de la Guerra Fría en Cuba era, no empezó hasta, no se sintió tanto no. Hasta después de la elección de Ronald Reagan. Pero hasta, que fue en los 80, pero hasta los 80, los Estados Unidos no parecía una preocupación grande del gobierno cubano.

In the interview with Alejandro, you get the sense that for him 1980 is what 1959 is to Oscar: A turning point in physical-astronomical time that is of vital importance for his understanding of historical time. In the case of Alejandro's narrative, the turning point is one of personal reckoning, compared with Oscar's understanding of 1959 as a turning point after which the direction of history went downwards. For Alejandro, 1980 is about Mariel. The sudden realisation that other Cubans did not have the same privileges as he did, the hypocrisy of the public acts of shaming Cubans who wanted to leave, although they had previously been good citizens and the loss of childhood friends all created a dissonance between what the media presented him with and what he saw in his daily life.

Los 80, El Mariel, la embajada de Perú. Mariel fue un choque tremendo. Tú puedes decir que en Cuba hay una, bueno, en mi generación hay una división entre el 80, y después del 80. Amigos míos que se fueron, que yo tenía ni la menor idea que se iban a ir. Personas, you know, un día vivían en tu vecindario, les hicieron mítines de repudio, you know, tirando piedras en la casa, cosas que aún cuando eras niño de diez años las veías y era desagradable.

The acts of repudiation, that Alejandro is talking about here, refer to the acts of collective violence that were promoted through government structures.<sup>14</sup> Another important aspect that characterises the 80s for Alejandro is the onset of his teenage years, with the rebellion that comes along with that, in his case manifested by listening to rock music in English.

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<sup>14</sup> Sierra Madero, "Here, Everyone's Got Huevos, Mister!"

O sea, cuando yo crecí en Cuba, la música en inglés estaba prohibida, no se oía rock'n'roll, te podían botar de la escuela por tener un disco de los Beatles.

Notably, contrary to the case with the interview with Oscar, Alejandro lets his narration of his youth rebellion and the refrain of the prohibition of The Beatles flow directly over in an account of hope prompted by Gorbachev's speeches on openness and restructuring. These hopes did not materialise in Cuba, which Alejandro retrospectively interprets as a delaying of a fundamental direction that historical time is bound to take.

Y ya llega el parte de lo que es la caída del campo socialista, la perestroika, glasnost, que en Cuba se vivió como una, al principio como algo, bueno, que es algo que hay que hacer, no? Como una especie de que ya era hora de salir del estalinismo y la época gris de Brezhnev, y reformar el socialismo.

Whether or not this was the case in Alejandro's interpretation during the course of the 80s in Cuba is hard to determine, but what remains noticeable however is his increasing divergence from institutionalised ideology over the course of the decade. An important development is his exit from the military school he attended during his teenage year because he wanted to be a pilot like many of his cousins.

Me fui a la escuela normal. Y allí, ya fuera de este ambiente de lo militar, o sea, voy a una universidad normal, que es un bachillerato, no? Ahí sí, hay compañeros de clase de todas las partes de la Habana. No es solo un grupo estratificado, no? Sino de todas las partes de la Habana. Y ya tenía una especie de rebeldía en contra lo militar, la disciplina. Empecé a escuchar rock'n'roll.

Although the comment in the quote above about the social stratification of military school and the influences from other social groups in the regular school are most likely a retrospective analysis on Alejandro's part, there is a coherent narrative starting in a protected social circle of a family that has positioned itself well in terms of work and access to goods, the reckoning of Mariel, the encounter with contradictions in the educational system, and the disillusionment of Perestroika and Glasnost not reaching Cuba sets the narrative up to culminate in his university student days, where he as a design student is tasked with developing a logo for the Federation of University Students in spite of his rebellious record. Tired of the *doble moral*, maintaining a strict discourse loyal to the system while exhibiting behaviour that is not, that dominated student politics, Alejandro is allowed to leave Cuba to work on the national museum of Belize straight out of university in 1992, where he met his first wife, with whom he moved to Miami.

### **Revolution: Stagnation or Progress?**

A notable difference between Oscar and Alejandro is their diverging hopes for the future. While Oscar is severely pessimistic, Alejandro has been actively engaged in efforts to lobby for the United States to improve its diplomatic relations with Cuba through the lobbying group CubaNow, which had active debates with the Obama administration in the year before the joint declaration of former presidents Obama and Raúl Castro on 17 December 2014.<sup>15</sup> When I asked him whether he believed political change in Cuba was either going to happen in the short or long term, or whether it was already happening, he adamantly expressed the view that he saw changes all the time, and that the efforts by the Obama administration had been key in this development.

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<sup>15</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 437-439.



Although the difference between Oscar and Alejandro described above is significant, their meta-narratives reveal a strikingly similar interpretation of historical time. Both interviewees described the Cuba they left as a system where progress moved at glacial pace, that inhibited the consumption of cultural products deemed politically dangerous and where they had little influence over their social, cultural and political circumstances. Going back to the lessons on revolution that I carried with me when I first engaged with Cuba, it is obvious that what Oscar especially calls “the Cuban Revolution” has very little to do with the radical break with the past and sudden progress towards utopia, or the widening of distance between horizons of experience and expectation. On the contrary: horizons of expectation within Cuba seem to have shrunk for both of the interviewees. When I write above that there is a striking similarity between the interpretations of history of Oscar and Alejandro, I do not refer to their interpretations of individual events or processes, but rather to the metaphorical interpretation of Koselleck’s historical time. Both interviewees diverge from the interpretations of history as a handmaiden for the revolution and as 100 years of struggle that name and frame the political development in Cuba after 1959 as a revolution with the driving force for change and progress placed within Cuba.

Oscar’s perception of historical time related to Cuba places progress and the possibility to initiate and influence progress outside Cuba in terms of time: only before 1959. Since Alejandro is of a later generation and therefore did not invoke a pre-1959 Cuba in his narration, there is no trope of decline or decay. The turning point in his story, the Mariel exodus of 1980, rather than being a turning point in political terms, is one of personal reckoning and of existing structures being revealed. His move out of Cuba due to his perception of the Cuban system not giving way for progress, on personal and societal levels, places progress and the possibility to initiate and influence progress outside Cuba in terms of space. Both apply the faculty of imagination in the Kantian sense of the concept to envision a

political force in Cuba that is not present – in both senses of that word – whereby the historical trope acquires spatial qualities taking them across the Florida Straits.

### **Untangling Notions of Space, Time and Identity at the Border of Imagination**

In the two interviews above, it became clear that the trope of revolution is not only determined by and determinant for understandings of time, but also of place. In Oscar's narration, Cuba became a place in the past, while in Alejandro's, Miami was the future. Oscar's imagined crossing of the political boundary of the change of government in 1959, and Alejandro's crossing of the political boundary of the border to the United States accentuates how De los Angeles Torres' assertion that "Politics permeates the search for this history. Memory in a sense is a militarized zone,"<sup>16</sup> mentioned in Chapter 3, section From Narrative Emplotment to National Security, is indeed applicable to these cases. What plays a particular role in the drawing of these boundaries is the notion of nationality and the question of how far Cuba and Cubanness can extend itself.

In the preface to the second edition of *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson acknowledges the need to operationalise thinking about time as well as space, when analysing the concept of nationalism. Anderson here specifically mentions the work of Thongchai Winichakul, who in his research on the relation between mapping practices and Siam nationalism argues for the importance of the idea of a territory in the formation of nationhood.<sup>17</sup> If we now, again, bring this argument into Olsson's realm, where the bar between the signifier and the signified has an inherent transformative capacity and "...the map is the territory," then that is where we should go to look for national identity. The notion that is put to the test here is whether the mapping of time – that is, the historical trope dominating a narration of past-present-

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<sup>16</sup> de los Angeles Torres, *In the Land of Mirrors*, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, xiii-xiv; Winichakul, "Maps and the Formation of the Geo-Body of Siam".

future – serves as a similar territory, taking into account, yet again, the idea that cartographical reasoning in the Bar-In-Between simultaneously limits and transforms:

The self conversing with its likes in the Bar-in-Between is always a self in the making, for the limit of an object (regardless of whether that object is material or conceptual) is intrinsic to its being.<sup>18</sup>

In the following two interviews, it becomes clear how the operationalisation of historical tropes serves to untangle and describe the conflation of concepts of time, space and national identity in its limiting of the conceptual object Cuba.

### **Jesús: The Story of Tragic Rupture and Resistance**

Most interviews that I did in Miami in February 2018 were held in an informal tone, with a rapport close to intimacy due to very personal nature of questions of migration. In what almost seemed a contrast to these other meetings and interviews, I did an interview with a gentleman by the name of Jesús. Jesús preferred formality, addressing me always as “usted”, to which I responded by calling him by his last name, and was very specific in his particularly chronological narration of specific facts, places and dates, as if he had rehearsed the story for future recounting.

My contact with Jesús deserves a brief description. On my way home in a taxi from Little Havana to my rented room on 32 Northwest and Flagler, I had noticed a house with a sign saying: “Municipios Cubanos en el Exilio”. As it was located just a couple of blocks away from my place, I made a mental note and decided to visit it at a later date. I almost forgot about the house, but when I one day found myself with no

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<sup>18</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 109-110.

particular plan, I decided to take the ten minutes' walk and knock on the door. I was greeted by an elderly man, Cuban, of the wave of the golden exiles. He showed me around the house, told me about the work of the society, as well as snippets of his own background. The personal story turned into politics, and politics turned into geopolitical conspiracy theories involving the Clinton and Rothschild families. Since this man was too old to be included in my sample of interviews, I decided to ask him whether he knew anyone who would better fit my parameters and he mentioned that he knew one man. He called him immediately and we arranged the interview.

We met at La Carreta, a Cuban American restaurant also mentioned when I asked Rafael, an architect whose interviews will be analysed below, where you could find the Cuban American community in Miami:

Aquí está el Versaille, y la Carreta. [...] O sea es una institución habanera, cubana, de comida, es un restaurante gourmet, un poquito, con, no gourmet-gourmet, pero con un toque de comida típica tradicional cubana. [...] Ahora esto es un chain. [...] la Carreta es un proyecto habanero como todos los proyectos que se repiten. [...] El exilio es un mirror, un espejo, una réplica, vamos a decir de lo que es Cuba.

The structural similarities between the story of Jesús and the Amparo Experience, mentioned above, are hard to miss. As a young boy of 12 when Fidel Castro's forces took over the Cuban government, he witnessed the downfall of what was for him an idyllic life in a small town in Pinar del Río. His favourite uncle was tried for participation in Batista's forces and executed, his father lost his job working with the local police forces, and the youth clubs to which he belonged were shut down, first the Boy Scouts, and later the Juventud Acción Católica (JAC). With the latter Jesús

recalled violent clashes with newly established communist youth organisations in the early years after 1959.

Eran mayores que nosotros, con 15-16 años, pero dimos palo. Esa fue mi primera acción como eso, como anticomunista.

In Jesús' narration, we are presented with the world of a young teenage boy, who saw injustice and decided to fight it. This struggle was first fought through the structures known to him, the JAC, and when these broke down, he sought out more drastic measures. What he emphasised in this part of his story is the loss of this nostalgic childhood, the political persecution and censorship that followed 1959, and the disconnection between the portrayal of his world by radio, television and education and the reality he experiences himself.

Implementaron una libreta de abastecimiento. Donde usted tenía que comprar específicamente en una bodega una cantidad de alimentos, que le asignaba el gobierno. [lists the contents of the ration card, red.] Entonces decía: "Pero y esto qué cosa es? Esto no es el beneficio que se dice por la televisión y la propaganda comunista que esto es para el proletariado, o para el pueblo de Cuba." Y sin embargo veía como los grandes integrantes del sistema comunista sí disfrutaban de buenas viviendas. [...] En síntesis, eso conlleva a una cosa, yo quería conspirar contra el sistema comunista.

Hereafter, Jesús narrated a story of how he as a fifteen-year-old boy enlisted in the revolutionary forces in the hope of stealing weapons, hiding them, gathering like-minded supporters, and heading to the mountains to fight a guerrilla campaign against what he experienced as an occupying force of his nostalgic past. This plan was thwarted, as Jesús was arrested and imprisoned twice, first for about half a

year for refusing to work in what he called forced labour during his time in the FAR, and later when dishonourably discharged by the FAR he was arrested in October of 1964 for conspiring against the state authority and intent of rebellion [intento de alzamiento, red.], as one of the co-conspirators turned out to be an agent for the state security apparatus. The latter trial resulted in a prison sentence of which he fulfilled four years, as he was a minor of 17 years of age.

The words he used to refer to his imprisonment were “preso político”, and “allí estaba en el gulag de Castro”. He furthermore told me how he could have received a milder treatment, had he accepted a programme of political re-education, but that he refused, as he saw that as a capitulation of his ideals in the face of what he saw as an occupation of his homeland. In prison, he rose to be an organiser between the political prisoners and the guards, coordinating the medicating of the prisoners, enjoying respect and recognition by both.

Following his release in 1968, Jesús returned to civil life in a small town on the border between greater Havana and Mayabeque, and the following ten years of his life in Cuba are riddled with confrontations with local authorities for refusing to participate in votes for local government, for example. During this period, Jesús was marginalised due to his activities and stances regarding the situation of Cuba until he decided to leave Cuba during the Mariel Crisis.

The first years in the United States are described by Jesús as difficult, with a young family and difficulties finding a sustainable income. He narrates the story of how he almost got involved in drug trafficking through a contact who offered him a transportation job but backed out when he realised what he had been asked to transport from the swamps outside Miami. As is the case with most aspects of his narration, he told it with a certain degree of dramatic elements:

Cuando levanto la cabeza, había todos los tipos de la camioneta, estaban todos los 10 o 12 ahí con R15, metralletas Uzi israelí, pistolas en la mano y todo. Dígole, mira Pepe, te voy a decir algo muy importante que ustedes se parecen a los comunistas de Cuba. [...] Ustedes dan cargo sin consultar con uno.

Continuing the story, Jesús told me how, ultimately, he found work as a truck driver, to slowly find his place in the Cuban American community on his merits as what he calls a former political prisoner. In his description of the Cuban American community, Jesús draws a sharp line between what he considers honourable exiles, and economic migrants: the Cubans who migrate to the United States in order to obtain their residency under the Cuban Adjustment Act, make money and then travel back and forth between Cuba and the United States.

O sea, están, como diría yo, desprestigiando a ese otro exilio histórico en busca de libertad.

This honourable historic exile is clearly where Jesús identifies himself. Various times during the interview he emphasised that he never took his children to Disney World, as he dedicated all his time to various groups that trained in the Everglades in order to participate in future military action in Cuba:

Sacrifiqué a mi esposa a mi hijito chiquito. Yo nunca llevé a mi hijito mío Disney World, como que no había dinero, o no había tiempo. Cuando había tiempo no había dinero. Yo nunca llevé al hijito mío a un juego de pelota o un juego de fútbol. Yo nunca llevé a mi esposa a divertirnos en un buen nightclub, porque ponía por delante la libertad de Cuba, y el sábado y el

domingo en el que tenía que dedicarlos a mis hijos, yo estaba en mis entrenamientos militares entrando militarmente a diferentes grupos.

As with most autobiographies, Jesús portrays himself as the hero of his narration. In the quote above, it could be construed that there are certain regrets about his activities, but that he tells a heroic story of overcoming overwhelming odds and defying occupation of a homeland. In the final part of the interview, this regret is expressed through the acknowledgement that he has not achieved his goals. This is particularly expressed through his pessimism regarding the future in Cuba, and violence administered by the honourable Cuban Americans as the only sustainable option for the country's viable future:

Tenemos que ir [long pause] con la biblia y la zanahoria en una mano, pero en la otra mano tenemos que tener un garrote. ¿Un garrote para quién? La biblia y la zanahoria para ese cubano que quiere de verdad un cambio en su vida, un futuro para sus hijos y para sus nietos, y el garrote él que cuando caiga el sistema quiere venir a poner bombas como lo hizo Fidel Castro, que en una noche explotaron cien bombas en cines en la Habana, darles con el garrote en la cabeza y matarlos.

In the interview, Jesús draws a sharp dividing line between what is Cuban and what is non-Cuban, based on a narration that unfolds around the imposition of a foreign system of government in Cuba. The rupture between what he considers a free Cuba and what came after 1959 is three-fold: a rupture in historical time, as a revolution of immediate decline, a rupture in space, moving the free Cuba from the island to Florida and a rupture between real Cubans, willing to take up arms to fight for a return to the time before 1959 and the false Cubans, profiting from the current



political situation by either being involved with the government in Havana or by migrating for financial reasons.

### **Rafael: The Long Story of Connectivity**

The experience I had interviewing my subjects in Miami was structurally very similar to the one I had in the Amparo Experience – framing pre-1959 Cuba as a golden age, inserting either 1959 or 1980 as a turning point that drove them to migrate and a future imagined through the experience of migration to the United States towards a brighter future – except for one very notable interview with the architect Rafael. As with every interview, I began by introducing myself and giving him a risograph print of a short essay that Driesse, my wife, had written for a conference in Amsterdam, after having strolled around Cojímar in Cuba with Cuban writer Ahmel Echevarría and Spanish artist David Ortiz Juan in the summer of 2016. In the short exploratory essay, she reflects on the architecture of the fishermen's village as a carrier of a cultural memory of resistance – from Dutch invasions in the seventeenth century, to resistance to the scarcity of the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Other interviewees had looked at the colourful piece of paper without really knowing what to do with it, but Rafael opened it, grinned, and then started looking among the stacks of paper on his desks and bookshelves, and handed me a folded A4-paper with a short essay he had written in 1996. Like Driesse's thoughts on Cojímar's connection to her Netherlands through the fortification built to defend Cuba from Dutch invasion, Rafael had written about the way the architecture of his hometown connected to another world of his: Key West and Florida.

In the essay, describing an experimental architectonic project of creating a new Key West-Havana ferry station, Rafael paints a picture of the Western Union Telegraph

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<sup>19</sup> Driesse, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Building on Uncertainty".

Cable House in Cojímar as the mirror image of its counterpart on the marina of Key West, noticing how similar the algae and shorelines are, he builds up a connective story between what he calls “the green alligator and the imperial eagle”. Beyond merely noticing similarities in their architectural structures, Rafael connects the two structures to his own family story, telling his daughter who still lived in Cojímar to go to the cable house whenever she needed to talk to him, promising that he would be on the other side to hear her stories. He also went back in time: the cable houses were built in the 1860s as a cooperation between the Spanish and the US governments to connect the Caribbean islands to the continents to the north and the south. These thoughts reveal a personal aspect when he is reminded of the stories told by his father, who travelled north from Cojímar to Key West on the ferry, continuing north along the US east coast on the train line built by Henry Flagler.<sup>20</sup>

It was along this same train of thought that he narrated his family history, when I asked him where he went to school. He told me how his father had home-schooled him on important subjects before going to actual school, and how this was a family tradition coming from his father’s side of the family, specifically from his paternal grandfather, who was born in Ocala in Florida, on the US side of the Ninety Miles. Without needing much more encouragement from me as an interviewer than a couple of guiding questions such as “where is that?”, “really?”, and the occasional “hmm hmm”, he quickly expanded his grandfather’s story of provenance to encompass the entire story of Cubans in Florida:

R: Mi abuelo por parte padre, que es importante, porque es él que crea este estilo de enseñanza, mi abuelo ese es nacido aquí en los Estados Unidos. En Florida.

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<sup>20</sup> Fornés, “Ninety Miles to Cuba”.

S: ¿Acá en Miami o en otra ciudad?

R: No no, en Miami no. No existía prácticamente cuando eso. Él nació en Ocala

S: ¿Dónde queda eso?

R: Aquí al norte de Florida. Poco arriba de Orlando. Aquí está la ciudad de Ocala, ahí estuvo Martí. ¿Tú sabes que Martí – José Martí – estuvo mucho en Florida no? [...] O sea, la migración cubana a los Estados Unidos es antiquísima, no tiene nada que ver con. Esto es uno de las grandes nuevas olas migracionales, pero la relación Cuba- Estados Unidos desde la colonia, desde la flota, [...] viene desde la Habana a San Augustine. San Augustine, o sea, llena de cubanos. Hecha por cubanos, vivían allí cubanos. El Padre Varela vive en San Augustine toda su vida de niño. Cuando muere sus padres se queda huérfano. Su abuelo era el jefe de la guarnición del castillo de San Marco en la Florida Española, y él viene a vivir con su abuelo. Allí aprende el inglés con los irlandeses. Que los irlandeses estaban muy conectados con los españoles por el catolicismo.

The interview was remarkable because of Rafael's interpretation of his nationality: on one hand, he insists on the transnationality of his family history, but on the other, he is very aware of what he considers Cuban, US-American as well as what is pertaining to other nationalities such as the Irish.

In the historical space that he creates in his narration, between what is today Cuba and the United States, Florida is not only the place where the part of his family originates that he is most keen to talk about, but also a place where Cubanness

originates from the people living there. Talking about his paternal grandfather, he says:

...él nace aquí. Pero son de estos cubanos que siempre quieren regresar a Cuba. Allí estuvo incluso Martí en casa de ellos una noche. En Ocala hay un barrio que creo yo se llama Liberty City, o Cuba, o I don't remember. No me acuerdo. Un barrio allí que es cubano completo, y allí estuvo Martí. Ellos vivían allí. Y Martí se quedó una noche con ellos en la casa. [...] ...te estoy hablando del exilio anterior a este exilio más reciente. Ves, o sea, las layers de exiliados?

There are a couple of important notions in this quote that are worth unpacking. The history of Ocala is investigated by David Cook, who loosely mentions a neighbourhood under the name of Havanatown or José Martí City and mentions various visits by Martí to the city in the 1880s.<sup>21</sup> Whether Martí, in fact, stayed the night at the house of Rafael's grandfather is not important. It is, however, important to point out that he, without thinking twice, casts his grandfather as Cuban even though he has never been to the island, and that he backs this statement up mentioning Martí. In this short passage aimed at explaining his provenance, Rafael puts himself outside the "exilio más reciente", and into a larger narrative of connectivity in a nationalistic space before the militarization of nation-state borders. By enlarging his narrative both in time and space, Rafael moves the focus of nostalgia to the cosmopolitan, intellectual and creatively active lives of his father and grandfather – a past that he can align with his current life as an architect working between Europe, the Caribbean and the US east coast.

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<sup>21</sup> Cook, *Historic Ocala*, 26.

When I asked after the nature of his student life during the 70s, Rafael recounted how the higher education system was reformed:

...la escuela era muy fresca, muy viva, y había muchos extranjeros también dando clases. Italianos, argentinos, tú sabes, o sea, es interesante. Después vino, y se rigidizó todo.

Rafael did at first not seem to be upset by the prohibitive government policies of the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> He could hear rock'n'roll music through the radio stations of Florida and Arkansas and read US magazines that were passed around among his friends, he saw the artwork of Antonia Eiriz hidden in the basement of the Museo Nacional when he was working there. The stories about circumvention of prohibitive cultural policies, and the ease with which this seemed to be possible, are fascinating, but regarding his own field of study, however, Rafael was more pessimistic. Talking about the architecture of Havana, Rafael related how many of the most influential projects had arisen before 1959, primarily pointing out the projects initiated by Batista.

...la arquitectura no la puedes esconder. Está allí. Clarito. Igual que la arquitectura de la revolución, el desastre total, tú sabes, las barbacoas y todo cayéndose, está allí. Entonces los chinos estos [a delegation of Chinese representatives who recently undertook a tour of Havana with Rafael, red.] que fueron conmigo, decían: “¿Y aquí qué cosa es nuevo?” Aquí no es nada nuevo. Todo lo que es nuevo es la destrucción.

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<sup>22</sup> Weppeler-Grogan, “Cultural Policy, the Visual Arts, and the Advance of the Cuban Revolution in the Aftermath of the Gray Years”.

The quote above, along with Rafael's story about how he acquired cultural products from the outside, reveals a couple of important factors regarding Cuban cultural memory. Aware of the spatial element of cultural production, Rafael's practice of cultural remembrance could not be contained by the cultural memory promoted by the Cuban government, as it goes beyond its limits set in time and space. This is why he is able to come to the conclusion that:

Nací en Cuba, en el Vedado, en una geografía. Pero incluso yo tengo una teoría de que todos los cubanos somos cubanoamericanos.

The difference between the two places, and the reason that Rafael does not declare himself an American, is the metonymic placement of Havana in his conception of time:

La Habana dura tanto porque es una ciudad sólida, hecha a la romana, la antigua. Es como Roma, que aguanta lo que sea, man. Aguanta diez Castros y sigue aguantando.

The difference that Rafael notes between Havana and Miami strongly reflects the difference that Benjamin noted between Paris and Naples when he wrote about the way Neapolitan citizens use their private and public space. In his work on the way the different architectures produce modern and pre-modern urban space, Benjamin notices the difference between the fundamental element of the privacy of the family home in cities in Northern Europe and the way he saw private life move out of the homes and onto plazas and streets in Naples. Interestingly, Benjamin relates this intermingling of social life with the ruination of the city. As noted by Graeme Gilloch:

In 'Naples', Benjamin aims to reveal the process of construction as the production of instant ruins. Naples is the perpetual ruin, the home of the nothing-new. In the ruin, the cultural merges into the natural landscape, becoming indistinguishable from it.<sup>23</sup>

Rafael's juxtaposition of Havana and Miami, in a dichotomy of pre-modern and modern, places them on different time scales: Miami is new, fast, breakable, whereas Havana is old, stagnated and solid. The correlation with his personal story of encountering cultural barriers in Cuba, then leaving to be able to work without the constraints of conservative cultural policies of the Cuban government, corresponds directly to this tale of modernisation.

### **Walking the Saussurean Line over an Abysmal Florida Strait**

What is remarkable about the interviews discussed above is the way the interviewees returned to their memories of childhood to retrospectively explain their outlook not only on the past in Cuba, but also to explain their outlook on the future of the country, as well as who could be included in that future. This makes it very clear how de los Angeles Torres' statement about memory being a military zone (see p. 106) is not only appropriate in the subjective understanding of the past or the present, but also in its expectation of the future.

Rafael's cosmopolitan upbringing, with family members on both sides of the Florida Straits, conditioned his narration of past, present and future in a way that enables him to imagine a historical progression of his community, broadly defined as Cuban American in a sense that he went so far as to call the upper part of the Caribbean basin "the real melting pot". The past in Rafael's narration is far away, going back

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<sup>23</sup> Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 26.

to the construction of resembling fortifications from St. Augustine, Havana, San Juan de Puerto Rico to the northern coast of the South American continent. This metonymic relation between his mapping in time and space and his conception of past, present and future stands in a remarkable contrast to Jesús's. Jesús cannot imagine a story of connection because, although his interview is by far the longest in my sample, his story is short, and the high priests of memory are limited to people in his immediate surroundings. His kindred spirits in the struggle for freedom in Cuba in La Carreta. The past to which he connects his nostalgia is a narrow period of glorified childhood, which ended abruptly through traumatic events in the wake of 1959. The people that Jesús identifies as agents within his ideology are narrowly defined as honourable Cubans, whereby he limits the possible actions of change.

In the terms of Kayser Nielsen, Jesús narrates in a U-trope. His nostalgic childhood and the dictatorship of Batista are framed as good times, interrupted by the imposition of bad times by a power foreign to him, against which he took action in order to return the country to its former harmony, much like the narration of the Amparo Experience. Rafael, on the other hand, narrates in a continuous line of slow progression and international transgression, only slowed down by a force endogenous to the cultural dynamics he describes. Having delineated the respective storage spaces of memory of these two gentlemen, it becomes a simple task to insert these into the semiotic process elaborated on the base of Olsson's interpretation of spatial phenomena: the possible agency of either ideology is set out by the metonymic relation between the sign Cuba, in time and space, and the meanings of its past and future extrapolated from this. As long as the cultural memory of Jesús, the mnemonic dynamic deriving from his surroundings, such as the ex-combatants of the para-military forces from his days in the Everglades, his lunches in la Carreta, and other institutions promoting the U-trope of historical



narration, such as the Amparo Experience, we can see the formation of an ideological hegemony that promotes actions to reconquer the past.

If we, however, insert Rafael's trope of progress and connection into this model, a whole other series of actions become possible, as the conception of a Cuban future not only rests narrowly on regaining a lost nostalgia but rather on expanding the connectivities of a shared cultural memory. The horizon of expectation at the end of Rafael's trope of progress only becomes visible to him because of the interpretation of the cityscapes of Miami, Key West, Havana and the further Caribbean as metonyms for temporal and spatial connection, and thereby as points on Olsson's map. This highlights the necessity of considering as many sources of cultural memory as possible. Whereas family played a vital role in the construction of Oscar's memories, the close social relations of Alejandro played a role alongside music, media coverage and literature in his, Jesús relied on the multidirectionality of two mnemonic discourses and, finally, Rafael let architecture form his canon. The power of the lines that the historical tropes, analysed in this chapter, drew across the metaphorical map, based on these different types of points, allows us to see the where in this cultural memory the borders between Cuba and Cuban America are drawn, and, in the words of De los Angeles Torres, how they are militarised.

## CHAPTER 6: NAMING THE LINES

Whereas the discussion in the last chapter allowed the historical tropes of Kayser Nielsen to draw lines on the metaphorical maps of my interviewees in order to locate the militarized borders of memory, this chapter will zoom in on the lines themselves in order to understand the power they wield. The second to last interview conducted in Miami in February 2018 was with Bernardo, early afternoon in José Martí Park between Flagler Street and Calle Ocho, next to the Miami River. The interview followed the usual scheme, using open-ended questions that allowed Bernardo to author his own narrative. When we came to the part of his story where he left Cuba, he skipped through the narrative rather fast, as if wanting to move quickly from A to B, from Cuba to Miami. To allow him to dwell a little more on the transition between the two dots on the map, I asked him what he had packed to bring with him from the island:

B: Bueno, yo soy muy nostálgico. Yo soy una gente que me gusta tener mis cosas de recuerdos. Yo recuerdo que entre mis cosas que me llevaba, yo me llevaba muchos discos que yo tenía. De música. Y libros. Y alguna ropa, pero no mucha ropa, porque era un maletín pequeño, pero sí recuerdo que llevaba discos de Pablo Milanés, de, hasta de Silvio Rodríguez, llevaba Elena Burke, música cubana tradicional. Porque ya después, de un tiempo me empezaba gustar la música cubana. [...] Creo que, sí como desde el año '90 por allí, ya empezó como a interesarme más las cosas de Cuba, no. Y como sabía que me iba me querría llevar pedacitos de, de, de mí, ¿no? Y los discos.. En los discos encontré que habían cosas mías.

This story reminds me of the first pages of the very first of my many books on Cuba that fill my home today, where the author shares an anecdote about how he in the

summer of 1995 would use the music of Cuban American singer Gloria Estefan and Cuban singer-songwriter Silvio Rodríguez in his work with newly arrived Cuban migrants during the Balsero Crisis. In spite of identifying the former as a musician in favour of the governmental system that they had risked their lives fleeing from, the migrants very much enjoyed the music.<sup>1</sup> In his *Music and Revolution*, Robin B. Moore writes that the artists of *la nueva trova*, the genre pioneered by the first two musicians that Bernardo mentions above, could be described as culture brokers of international music trends, blending various styles in their music.

...nueva trova performers blend styles, many of the best-known pieces don't sound overtly Cuban but instead strike the listener as cosmopolitan and eclectic. One might describe trovadores as the 'culture brokers' of international music trends [...], strongly influenced by foreign pop and yet invariably changing and personalizing it for local audiences.<sup>2</sup>

This argument ties neatly into the fact that most of my interviewees who talked about their musical preferences during their life in Cuba showed some affinity for the music of the US airwaves. Much like the narration of themselves as Cubans with a yearning for the larger world, the perception of Silvio Rodríguez's work is that of Cuban music with a cosmopolitan outlook. Moore continues to describe the song "Unicornio" as a: "...slow, lyrical ballad that uses the image of a blue unicorn as a metaphor for fantasy, nostalgia, and desire."<sup>3</sup> In her *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym defines the key concept using Reinhart Koselleck's ideas of the space of experience, in all its simplicity encapsulating all that a person can imagine about the past, and the horizon of expectation, referring to all that a person can

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<sup>1</sup> Henken, *Cuba: A Global Studies Handbook*, xvii-xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, *Music and Revolution*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

possibly imagine happening in the future,<sup>4</sup> and coupled these with the shrinking of the distance between these two concepts, that is inherent in the progress of modernity.

Thus nostalgia, as a historical emotion, is a longing for that shrinking "space of experience" that no longer fits the new horizon of expectations. Nostalgic manifestations are side effects of the teleology of progress. Progress was not only a narrative of temporal progression but also of spatial expansion. Travellers since the late eighteenth century wrote about other places, first to the south and then to the east of Western Europe as "semi-civilized" or outright "barbarous." Instead of coevalness of different conceptions of time, each local culture therefore was evaluated with regard to the central narrative of progress. Progress was a marker of global time; any alternative to this idea was perceived as a local eccentricity.<sup>5</sup>

The prevalence of the spatial element is perhaps even more clear in David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country*. The title alone coincides with the argument that Boym makes above. After his lengthy discussion of how nostalgia developed from denominating a psychological condition to being the driving force behind the market for kitschy sunglasses to moustachioed hipsters, he concludes:

As nostalgia shifted from place to past – 'Odysseus longs for home; Proust is in search of lost time' – it went from medical malaise to chronic angst. How could anyone be cured of the past? One can return to a place, but never to a past.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 259.

<sup>5</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*.

<sup>6</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, 50.

Lowenthal's statement that one can return to place and not to the past in order to satisfy the feeling of nostalgia can be discussed and critiqued: only a few months before writing these words, I visited the town in the Netherlands where I lived the first eight years of my life, only to find that new houses had been built on my old street, that the supermarkets did not stock the same candy and that the older buildings that remained were significantly smaller than I remembered. The place was no longer the same. This means that neither travel in space nor time allows me to return to the sentiment of the street where I learned to ride a bicycle and I am left to making the absent present through the force of imagination. My travel to this street does, however, provide the support for my imagination necessary to relive those memories, as did other framing elements, such as the stories that my grandmother told me and her photos of me on that tiny bicycle. These elements framed a map to my own, personal past, guiding me to a space that is not reconstructed backwards but imagined forwards. Since the thesis subscribes to Olsson's notion that the three elements of the map, any map, consist of points, lines and a projection scheme, the points can be sensed and named, but the lines contain power.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the example of my trip to my hometown and my nostalgia for childhood memories of small bicycles and liquorice lollipops does not convey power on a particularly large scale, but we do not have to look further for the power of this sentiment than President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" and Brexit strategist Dominic Cummings's "Take Back Control". With only four and three words, respectively, these political slogans behind the greatest upsets in US and UK politics in recent history drew the lines between dots in the imaginaries of US and UK citizens into a U-trope, proscribing them with an agency that drove its subjects into

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<sup>7</sup> Olsson, conversation with Sjamme van de Voort et al.

action that has manifested itself through ballot boxes, political rallies and further actions to return to a nostalgic country of the past – just as possible as my shrinking to the size of a toddler about to learn to ride a bike. The case of Brexit as a phenomenon of nostalgia is discussed by Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell as a case of reactionary nostalgia, whereas they argue that the agency inherent in the sentimental trope can be harnessed in a progressive sense when intentions of dialogue and contextualisation are respected:

The bad press nostalgia has received supports what we suggest is a wilful dismissal of the legitimacy of class history and social experience. Distinguishing between progressive and reactionary uses of nostalgia is important. Central to progressive mobilisations of nostalgia is an emotive reminiscing about the past that does not turn away from the negatives of that past. Rather it utilises a critical balancing of loss and pride to identify those values that many wish to re-engage with, values that ultimately derive from collective experiences of economic and class disenfranchisement and disregard.<sup>8</sup>

If we accept that nostalgia is the search for a home in simultaneous space and time and if we accept that both the latter concepts are socio-culturally constructed through the mechanisms of cultural memory that frame the production of knowledge and truth of a particular subject, then nostalgia is one of Olsson's imagined lines, steeped in power, between A and B – in the case of Bernardo, Cuba and Miami. The question, however, remains what Bernardo is nostalgic for and how that nostalgia is made actionable through the framework of cultural memory that surrounds him.

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<sup>8</sup> Smith and Campbell, "Nostalgia for the Future", 623-624.

**Bernardo: Nostalgia. Whence, Where to?**

In Cuba, Bernardo's family situation was not a traumatic one, although not particularly stable either. His parents met in 1963 and moved from Holguín to Havana where Bernardo was born in February 1964. His father began working in graphic design but moved to a job in food sales, from which he could bring home groceries to his family. This situation was however not particularly satisfying and before Bernardo could start school, a certain period of upheaval followed, moving back and forth from Havana to Holguín until they found themselves living on the outskirts of Havana:

S: ¿Y usted entró en la escuela a qué edad?

B: Bueno en un periodo en que estaba un poco mala la cosa, mis padres se mudaron de vuelta a Holguín. Yo tenía cuatro años. Se fueron a Holguín de nuevo a vivir. Pero aquello no funcionó y fue peor todavía la historia.

S: "La cosa se puso mala", ¿qué quiere decir?

B: Que no conseguían trabajo y no podían.. Bueno, las condiciones de vivir eran peor en Holguín. O sea, no sé cómo, y nunca me lo ha contado mi mamá, cómo fue que ellos se decidieron a volver a irse a la Habana. Y entonces nos fuimos a la Habana y nos fuimos a vivir en el campo. A la parte fuera de la Habana. Un lugar que se dice el cordón de la Habana. Que había sembrados de café. Mi papá trabajaba en ese. Colectaba café, y me acuerdo que yo con cinco, seis años ayudaba con mi otro hermano a recolectar café por las tardes. Íbamos a la escuela por la mañana y por la tarde íbamos a colectar el café. Porque nosotros en la escuela no éramos

internos, ¿por qué? Mi mamá no trabajaba entonces ella nos podía cuidar y no nos daban el día entero en la escuela. Nos daban no más que medio día. Entonces a las 12:00 terminaba, íbamos a la casa y por la tarde le ayudábamos allí. Él nos decía: "Cogen, colectan" Yo me acuerdo que era un trabajo un poco difícil entonces nosotros no queríamos ir, pero bueno. Él nos mandaba y había que hacerlo.

What Bernardo here describes is by no means a story of extreme poverty, but rather an observation of parents who did not manage to find their desired position in the Cuba of the 1960s due to reasons that are beyond his comprehension, especially at the time. He does however make a direct link between the situation of his parents and that of what he calls his *carencias*:

B: Lo que yo puedo recordar era... A ver si puedo describir... No puedo detectar si había tantas carencias, porque no me daba cuenta, me entiendes, no sabía lo que estaba pasando. Pero sí, empecé a ver necesidades y como niño ya cuando llegaba la época de los reyes, me dolía mucho que había que esperar para poder comprarte un juguete y sufría mucho cuando no me tocaba nada, porque allí se hacía un listado y te tocaba lo que te puede tocar, entonces había como cierta piña, siempre había gente que cogía cosas buenas, y como niño allí empecé a ver que, coño, que esto no está... Las carencias, ¿no? Las carencias de.. Que era lo que me afectaba en ese momento. La comida no tanto, mi papá trabajaba en eso y conseguía comida, yo me recuerdo que traía comida extra, no la que encuentras, lo que te da el gobierno sino él conseguía, fuera, y ya, y después, tú sabes. La ropa tampoco había tanta necesidad porque mi tía era costurera y entonces ella cosía mucho nos hacía siempre ropa, nos surtía mucha ropa, ¿sabes? Esa necesidad no la vi. Después empecé, más



grande ya, a los 15 años a ver ya la necesidad, y ya me di cuenta que...  
Aquello era un horror. Y ya yo en el año '80, era jovencito, tenía 14 años,  
15 años, ya me tenía unas ganas de irme de Cuba enorme, porque...

S: ¿Por qué?

B: Porque me gustaba la música americana, la escuchaba  
clandestinamente, y no se podía escuchar, ¿me entiendes?

First of all, it is interesting that Bernardo here uses the term *carencia* to describe his own, personal situation, where the term in other interviews has been used to describe a general malaise of Cuban society at different moments in time, especially during the Special Period of the '90s. The poverty that Bernardo is describing here is a comparative one, which he seems to become aware of in relation to people around him, who had access to better toys and clothes than his family could afford with limited financial, social or political capital.<sup>9</sup> The fact that he of his own accord links this experience to the desire to migrate to the United States and subsequently to his affinity for the music of the US radio waves is equally interesting, as it means that he sees these three phenomena as closely interlinked. I proceeded to ask him what kind of music he was listening to, how he did that and with whom he shared this interest. After telling me that he listened to the sounds of John Travolta, Elton John and other 80's pop and disco icons, sometimes with his parents on the regular home radio, but mostly with friends, I opened up the interview to allow Bernardo to tell me more about the situations in which he would tune in to the US tunes.

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<sup>9</sup> On the notion of 'comparative poverty,' see: Batty and Flint, "Talking 'bout Poor Folks (Thinking 'bout My Folks)".

S: ¿Y usted solo? ¿O venían amigos? ¿Como era...? ¿En qué situación se escuchaba música?

B: Bueno, allí había momentos que sí, cuando ya tenía 15, 16 años, ya iba con amigos. Salía, íbamos a su casa, a la playa, alguien llevaba un radio, y escuchábamos. O a veces comentábamos: “Oye, hay una canción que escuché...” Coincidíamos. En la escuela tú hablabas de las canciones que escuchabas y tú te identificabas con la gente que más o menos podías hablar de esa tema, y.. Y eso, pero.. Con amigos mayormente salíamos así. Alguien llevaba un radio y era como muy escondido. No se podía escuchar. Que nadie te puede escuchar, ¿me entiendes? Era como, “vamos a pegar la oreja, vamos a escuchar allí”. Bajito, que nadie te meta preso, ¿me entiendes? Era...

S: ¿Metan preso?

B: Sí, sí.

S: ¿Por escuchar a Elton John?

B: Sí, había mucha gente que fue preso. Uf.

S: ¿Conocía a alguien?

B: Particularmente así, no me recuerdo, pero sí escuché historias. No, yo tendría 15 años, 16. No estaba tan... Pero sí escuché historias de gente más mayores que quizás escuchaban hasta más cosas, o escucharan noticias, ya por mi caso se empezó a escuchar Radio Martí, y en las casas que uno, más o menos escuchaban las novelas, [unintelligible] la gente a la hora de la novela, con el radio bajito, porque había un pito que era característico de

interferencia que ellos le ponían, como un sonido agudo para dañar la señal. Entonces, ese sonido estaba todo el tiempo, lo que la gente odiaba, pero era tanta la necesidad de escuchar algo diferente que la gente, ya ese sonido... Te ensordecía y ya no molestaba. Y así... Pero te digo, fue muy... Fue difícil un poco, porque ya después cuando te estás dando cuenta de que eres... Tener un poco de decisión, de independencia... Después empiezan las escuelas al campo, tienes que ir al campo a trabajar...

In this section of the interview, the notion of government repression is omnipresent, through the mentions of the supposed illegality of listening to Elton John and the distortion of US radio waves. However, in contrast to other interviews, where the main point seems to be to emphasize government repression, Bernardo mainly seems to mention it as a circumstance under which he came of age. Although the illegality of listening to western music was a case of perception rather than legal reality, as mentioned further above, this explains Bernardo's very real sentiment that his musical tastes were illegal, although he cannot point to any cases in particular where people were reprimanded for merely listening to non-Cuban music.

The period of Bernardo's life in which the fear of government reprisals for his affinity towards disco tunes is installed in him is marked by a further series of significant life events that come up in different parts of the interview. When we later talked about his time in school, he came back to these formative moments, when he was between 15 and 16 years old:

B: Cambié varias veces de escuela porque los primeros años que fui, vivía con mis padres. Después me fui a vivir con una tía al centro de la Habana, y estaba en otra escuela, o sea que ya iba con otro grupo de muchachos. (...) En el año '80, cuando viene el Mariel, yo... Me dije na' más que yo no

querría seguir allí porque... Yo no quiero ir a la universidad, porque no me motivaba estudiar carrera, que yo quería trabajar, que yo quería hacer cosas. Mi familia estaba pasando mal la situación. Mi papá ya no tenía... El trabajo sí, pero estaba muy mal en el trabajo. Y entonces ya me voy a... a estudiar tecnología química para que era más corta... Eran tres años na' más. Me fui tres años, estudié, me gradué, y bueno, ya empecé a trabajar, y trabajé muy bien los primeros cinco años.

S: Cuéntame de Mariel. ¿Usted estaba empezando el pre, me dijo?

B: Sí, Mariel lo viví un poquito bastante intenso, porque, yo vivía con mi tía en ese momento. Mi tía tenía un cargo en los CDR, pero ella no pertenecía a la cúpula. Ella como que estaba por estar. No sé. Ella estaba entonces... Los vecinos querrían irse, la gente no querría decirlo, porque te gritaban, te golpeaban, te rompían la puerta, te tiraban huevos, te robaban en la casa, te sacaban las cosas de la casa. Era terrible. [...] No sé si por la cultura o el clima, la necesidad, casi todos los vecinos estaban siempre en contacto. Entonces los vecinos que eran tus amigos tenían miedo de que la gente, alguien dijera algo que la [unintelligible] vinieron por la noche, traían, movilizaban los vecinos, para que los mismos vecinos tuyos te gritaran, te dijeran horrores, te tiraran huevos, te maltrataran, hasta te golpearon, y eso... Lo vi, lo vi. Mi vecina... No se me olvida que nos obligaron a salir a la calle, y por frente del edificio, teníamos que gritarle, ¿sabes? Yo me quedaba parado así, mirando aquello y no podía... O sea, gente que conocías. [...]

S: ¿Conoció a alguien que se fue?

B: Sí conocí, claro. [chuckles] Mis vecinos se fueron muchos. Conocí mi vecina de la puerta al lado, que ya el hijo de ella, el papá de él estaba aquí ya, el hijo de ella tendría como 30 años en ese mismo '80. Y ella se fue con él. Era mi vecina de la puerta allí, que nos veíamos día tras día, ¿me entiendes? Y mi otra vecina, que era lesbiana, y que estaba al lado de nosotros con su pareja, trató de irse, pero ella nunca se pudo ir. Ella sí se quedó en Cuba y todavía está en Cuba. Yo cuando voy siempre la voy a ver y la veo, y digo, mira, quién iba a decir... Ella tenía una hermana que vivía aquí y la hermana supuestamente la iba a traer, pero después la hermana murió y no vino. Se quedó mayor ya. Está bien mayor. Tiene unos 70 años. Y así. Y muchos vecinos míos se fueron. Están aquí, los veo cada rato. Algunos de ellos. Sí, se fueron mucha gente. Mucha gente.

The picture that begins forming at this point is that of an environment where a young man is growing up outside of the nucleus of his nearest family, finding himself engulfed in a national crisis that hits very close to home, as his guardian at the moment sees herself forced to participate in the shunning of close neighbours. Further above, the analysis of the mnemonic discourse in the Cuban media during the first months of the Mariel Crisis concluded that the Mariel migrants were placed outside the Cuban nation by framing them as a-historical, or at least as not forming part of Cuban history. The experience that Bernardo relates above, during a crucial time of his identity formation, needs far less theorization. He sees people he knows as members of a (Cuban) neighbourhood community being shunned for being affiliated with the United States, finding himself on the non-migrant, Cuban side of this perceived divide, all the while he is developing a taste for the music from US radio stations.

Besides this example of conflicted identity, Bernardo is, at the time of the Mariel Crisis, going through times that are made confusing as puberty kicks in with the discovery of feelings of sexuality – and in his case, homosexuality. This was not something that Bernardo mentioned to me before he relayed his choice of career, or rather, his reasoning for not going with the career of his choosing:

B: ... lo que querría estudiar era periodismo, y cuando yo fui a pedir lo que yo querría estudiar, que me salía a buscar... Yo no querría estudiar otra cosa, yo no quiero estudiar... Entonces fui a buscar periodismo, querría trabajar en la televisión. A mí me gustaba mucho lo que es la... Y al ver que yo no tenía oportunidad, porque primero yo no tenía... Mi familia no pertenecía a la cúpula del gobierno, yo no tenía ninguna forma de conseguir una carrera para la universidad sin... Aparte yo no era militante de la juventud, yo no estaba integrado al sistema, porque yo siempre fui apático, ¿tú sabes? Yo no estaba integrado al país, ¿sabes? Yo me sentía como un desafecto. Aparte, yo ya sentía mi inclinación sexual, yo allí iba a tener problemas porque los homosexuales en aquella... En esa época eran muy castigados, ¿sabes?

Again, Bernardo is here describing a situation of repression, but without pointing fingers at any culprits. The issue of his sexuality being a possible hindrance to a career of his choice only comes after he mentions the issue of his family not having any particular ties that he could lean on and his lack of interest in being integrated into the political machinery of Cuba at the time. Since this was the first time that he mentioned his sexuality as a decisive factor of his life in Cuba, I pointed the conversation in this direction:

S: ¿Cuándo se dio cuenta de que era homosexual?

B: ¿Cuándo me di cuenta? No sé. Eso se siente.. Yo creo que eso siempre..

S: ¿Pero lo sabía durante un tiempo, o...?

B: Sentía atracción por las personas del mismo sexo desde muy niño, pero no lo.. Claro. No lo reflejaba así porque no tienes todavía... Y ya uno cuando tiene 12, 13 años, busca acercamiento con amiguitos...

S: ¿Se enamoró?

B: No. A esa edad no. Yo me enamoré hasta en la maestra. Yo tenía novias, ¿sabes? Porque en esa época había que simular mucho. Y... ¿Sabes? Si no simulabas te hacía bullying, te decían maricón y siempre había alguien que se fijaba que tú no tienes muchas novias y empezaba a comentar: "Oye este nunca tiene novias", "Este es maricón". Entonces empieza así la burla.

From this point, Bernardo proceeded to elaborate on how he had continued to simulate interest in female classmates, especially during his time in the *escuelas al campo*, to avoid being outed as a homosexual. Sensing that he was not uncomfortable with this line of questioning, I continued to ask him about his self-discovery.

S: ¿Cuándo se enamoró? ¿Usted?

B: Yo me enamoré... No sé.

S: A ver, no puede ser. Yo recuerdo exactamente la cara de la muchacha que yo...

B: Pero tú eres más joven. Yo no tengo la misma edad. Ha pasado más tiempo. Es que yo al principio, lo que sentía era como atracción sexual, no... Yo no pensaba en el amor. Porque como era prohibido... Yo no pensaba que eso por uno... Por eso... Yo... A mí lo que me gustara era tener una relación con otro hombre y... Y sí... Yo me recuerdo que... Mira, te voy a decir. Con... Primero... Yo sé que me enamoré, si eso se puede llamar amor, fue con un compañero de aula. En el décimo grado, antes de empezar el tecnológico. Nos sentamos en la misma... Él al lado mío. Entonces hablamos de música. Hablábamos de esa, de las emisoras de radio. Él tenía un nivel de vida bastante alto. Su familia viajaba y tenían muchas buenas conexiones. Tenía una casa grande. Y yo me enamoré de él. Yo quería estar al lado de él todo el tiempo. Si solo... Yo me acuerdo que eso yo... Fíjate que el nombre se me olvidó. Entonces... Y yo quería siempre estar con él. Y él igual conmigo. Era recíproco. Yo no sé si él se dio cuenta. Era a un nivel platónico, ¿sabes? Era que... Pues yo me sentaba y yo... El pie mío se quedaba allí al lado de él y toda la clase yo no movía el pie de allí por sentir que él me estaba tocando. Cosas así. O el brazo rozábamos...

S: ¿Y eso a qué edad más o menos?

B: Yo tenía... Eso fue en el año... Eso fue cuando el Mariel. Eso fue en el año '80. Tenía 16 años. Fue antes de las 16, porque tenía 15. Porque... Tenía 15 porque eso fue antes del... Eso fue del '79 al '80. El Mariel fue en el '80 en mayo. Yo me recuerdo que en el '79 yo empecé con él en la escuela. Empezamos en el '79. Allí, y hablábamos mucho de... Y él me decía muchas bromas. Con doble sentido. Él era un poquito... Yo creo que un poco más mayor que yo. No me recuerdo bien. Como un año, quizás. Porque tenía más madurez. Yo era más... Yo era bien flaquito...



When transcribing the quote above, I was struck by a moment of sadness for Bernardo that could be characterised as unprofessional for an academic supposed to be unbiased in the approach to source material. As I mentioned to him in the interview, I remember the first person I was sure that I had fallen in love with and although this affair did not result in anything resembling a romantic success, I can still think back on that silly wide-eyed boy that I was and smile. Bernardo's circumstances imprinted the idea in him that the feelings that he had were forbidden.

The narrative that Bernardo presented about his past in Cuba gives the impression of a young man deciding to leave his country at a moment in time where he felt held back in his professional, cultural and sexual development, which is not something that would normally inspire nostalgia. When speaking about his arrival in Miami in '94, however, it became clear that this sense of nostalgia is partly born out of his disappointment with the Cuban American community that he found there:

B: Yo adoro a la Habana, y la Habana pa' mí es una ciudad con un... Con un magnetismo... Un... Increíble... Entonces, yo no veía aquí ese magnetismo de la Habana. Aquí yo voy a la Calle Ocho, la gente está corriendo, aquí no había... No se hablaba de arte, aquí no hablaban... Había muy poca gente que se interesara la cultura y a mí me ha chocado mucho aquello. Yo estaba con mucho callo, y me decía que esto no es lo que yo querría pa' mí. ¿No? Y allí empezó un tormento de cosas, de hasta quererme volver a ir por otro lado, porque no me querría quedar acá, ¿me entiendes?

S: Pero se quedó.

B: Me quedé porque empecé a descubrir el mundo, tú sabes, lo que se llama el... El... Ay, ¿cómo se llama...? El mundo... No. Yo iba a decir la

palabra... Surrealista no. El mundo... Underground... De Miami. La gente que sí hacía cosas, que podías hablar cosas de interés...

S: [overlapping]: ¿Qué cosas?

B: No que yo me considero una gente muy culta, porque yo tampoco... Yo no soy muy culto, pero me gusta... Sí me gusta rodearme con gente, me gusta rodearme a aprender, no desaprender, ¿me entiendes? Y sentía que la gente que estaba alrededor me... Se desaprendía. Porque la gente te hablaba... Era muy materialista, querían tener negocios, tener muchas propiedades y... Y yo, pa' mí aquello no era tan importante, ¿me entiendes? Yo sí querría tener una casa, o las cosas básicas, pero... No sé. A mí me faltaba algo. Y... Te digo, pa' mí, la Habana es una de las ciudades más... Sí he estado en Londres, he estado en Paris, he estado en Madrid, en Barcelona... Y yo puedo comparar la Habana con cualquier de esas ciudades. ¿Sabes? Muchas cosas. Muchas cosas. Quizás no al nivel tanto de ellos, porque la Habana se ha empeorado mucho, está destruida, pero la Habana es así con una historia, con... Y tiene un magnetismo. La Habana llega a hechizarte. Si tú no te cuidas, te hechizas a la Habana. Y tienes que ir a la Habana cada rato.

S: ¿Y qué tiene la Miami entonces? ¿Allí, en comparación?

B: ¿Qué tiene Miami...?

S: En comparación.

B: Bueno, Miami... Hoy en día Miami es una ciudad diferente que hace 24 años que yo vine. Yo vine mucho antes de... Unos meses antes de los balseros de Guantánamo. Los balseros... Aquello fue una revolución grandísima aquí... [unintelligible] Fue parecido a lo del Mariel. Me cuenta la gente que vivió el Mariel, yo no lo viví, pero bueno, más o menos parecido. Mucha gente... Empezaron a hacer trabajo... Pero a la vez, la cualidad de persona de la segunda esa no era tan mala que la del Mariel. O sea, la gente como empezó a trabajar más. Se incorporó más. Y entonces como vino otra generación de cubanos con otra mentalidad, como que la ciudad fue cogiendo otro color. La ciudad fue como que cambiando. La ciudad es una ciudad muy joven. Miami cumplió cien años yo estando aquí. Que fue... Creo que fue en el '96. No recuerdo bien. En '96 o '97 Miami cumplió 100 años. Una ciudad muy joven, no tenía tanta historia como tiene la Habana que tiene casi 500 años. ¿Tú entiendes?

Note here how Bernardo conflates a series of interesting concepts in his narration. The idea of “gente culta” in opposition to “gente materialista” is paired with the idea of the old city and the young city, folding into the concept of history as being a maturing and stabilizing factor in terms of culture and cultural production of a certain place. The conflation of all these emotions into the term history creates a dense conception of the term. If we for a moment remove the temporal and spatial aspects of nostalgia, then the term comes to mean a longing for a better situation, such as the young Bernardo’s hope for a place where he could freely listen to whatever music he liked and feel free in his sexuality, and the older Bernardo’s hope for a less materialist culture in which he could cultivate his cultural interests. Adding place back into the concept, the younger Bernardo longs for Miami, while the older longs for Havana. Adding time back into the concept allows us to see how younger Bernardo longed forward in time when listening to new and exciting music and older

Bernardo longed back to a past in which he could surround himself with 'gente culta'. The common denominator in these emotional projections is that of hope, transferred to a different place and time across history.

### **Is Nostalgia Hope, Backwards?**

As Andrew Gilbert, and many before him have pointed out, the concept of nostalgia has its limits. Besides arguing for the elaboration of a broader variety of historical emotions, Gilbert reminds us that, since its emergence as a typology used by anthropologists to address the changes happening in former socialist states in Europe in the late 1980s, debates have occurred about whether or not the accusation of being nostalgic is: "...a way of foreclosing the critical potential of nostalgia, to argue that there is no alternative to the present order of things."<sup>10</sup> The case of Bernardo, however, suggests that nostalgia is not a longing for the past from a static present, but rather a way for him to engage his memory and imagine change. As he had told me himself, Bernardo is a nostalgic person and, in the quotes above, there is indeed a lot of nostalgia. In this narration of hopes crisscrossing from one time to another, one place to another, Bernardo is presenting us with a map of his historical consciousness, laying out its points in time and space by pointing to occurrences and places that give the map a context. From Holguín and Havana to Miami, from his youth to his adult life, we can make sense of the historical space that Bernardo occupies. The nostalgia that Bernardo exhibits in his narration ties these points in space and time together with Olsson's 'lines steeped in power' and the power of the lines becomes clear when we see how they compel him to act in the face of hegemonic ideologies in Cuba and the United States, respectively.

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<sup>10</sup> Gilbert, "Beyond nostalgia: Other historical emotions", 296.

At this point, nostalgia has brought us to the doorstep of the Bar-In-Between, but does not let us come in. In the case of a promise with the possibility of keeping, such as the bride and groom standing in front of each other, knowing that they in a moment can lift the veil and kiss, we come close to the line; the signifier of the promise close to the promised signified. In the case of Bernardo above, the promise of a Miami where he can be free from oppression and a Havana where he can be free from materialism is, however, far removed from him across time and space. This turns the promise into hope – a hope that he knows cannot be fulfilled, a disillusion turned into nostalgia.

### **Nostalgia as the Unfulfilled Promise of Progress: The Instability of Janus**

It was Bernardo's unfulfilled wish for progress, what Boym characterized as an unstable relation between the horizon of experience and the horizon of expectation,<sup>11</sup> that resulted in his nostalgia. The question now remains, if the power of nostalgia rests in the line between points in time and space, the Bar-In-Between, that further above has been characterized as a hope, a promise, then what is the promise? What is the wish that is not fulfilled? In the same quote where Boym characterizes nostalgia as an unstable relation between the horizon of experience and the horizon of expectation, she notices that: "Nostalgic manifestations are side effects of the teleology of progress. Progress was not only a narrative of temporal progression but also of spatial expansion."<sup>12</sup> Although it should be clear at this point that Boym is leaning on the work of Koselleck, it is worth pointing out his assertion regarding the relation between the conception of history and the everyday experiences of subjects inhabiting a changing world:

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<sup>11</sup> Boym, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

In fact, the [French] Revolution liberated a new future, whether sensed as progressive or as catastrophic, and in the same fashion a new past; the increasingly alien quality of the latter rendered it a special object of historical critical science. Progress and historicism, apparently mutually contradictory, offer the face of Janus—the face of the nineteenth century. [...] progress was not simply an ideological mode of viewing the future; it corresponded, rather, to a new everyday experience which was fed continually from a number of sources: technical development, the increase of population, the social unfolding of human rights, and the corresponding shifts in political systems.<sup>13</sup>

It is notable here that the Janus-faced head of progress and historicism that Koselleck sees as the *primus motor* of the political upheaval of nineteenth century Europe is the same metaphor that Arendt uses in her search for the ideological source of authority.<sup>14</sup> Although I have previously expressed my concern with using the idea of a Roman deity in direct correlation with concepts and tropes occurring almost two millennia later, it serves as a useful tool to imagine the unstable relation between the temporal and spatial planes through which his vision directs us. The question now becomes, what happens inside the head of this metaphorical Janus, when he looks towards past and future?

### **Carlos: Back to the Future**

Continuing the topic of ancient Rome, I interviewed a man named Carlos during my field trip to Miami. Carlos was certain that Fidel Castro himself had copied the tradition of giving specific names to years; in the case of Rome, “*ab urbe condita*”, and in the case of Cuba in the early years using the template “*el año de*”, adding the specific goal of that year, being “the year of education”, “the year of the ten million

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<sup>13</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 60.

<sup>14</sup> Arendt, “What is Authority?”, 121.

tonnes sugar harvest”, etc, while in the later years moving to the more simple “el año X de la Revolución”. Although I in the interview simply asked whether he remembered the name of the year in which he was born, which he could not, the answer did come with a rather interesting observation:

C: ...estoy casi seguro que Fidel lo, lo copió también un poquito de los romanos. [...] Ya, aparentemente, después del 2007, era simplemente “El Año 49 de la Revolución”, “Año 50”, dadadada...

S: ¿Se pusieron vagos?

C: Sí, ya no había tantas metas. [laughs]

Although Carlos’ idea that the naming of the years turning less imaginative over the years due to lack of political goals definitely was a joke, it does open the door to an interesting discussion. From 1959 to 1972, the names of the years solely referred to particular political goals for the future. From 1973 and onward the names celebrated anniversaries of the revolution (either particular events or more commonly as a whole) or congresses of the Communist Party (PCC). The only examples of forward-looking naming after 1972 are 1977 (“El Año de la Institucionalización”), 1978 (“Año del XI Festival”), 2001 (“Año de la Revolución Victoriosa en el Nuevo Milenio”), 2002 (“Año de los Héroes Prisioneros del Imperio”), 2005 (“Año de la Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas”) and 2006 (“Año de la Revolución Energética en Cuba”). A first important note on the latter series of names is that 2002 and 2005 seem to be directed at foreign policy issues, 2001 a vague statement about the new millennium, leaving 1978 and 2006 as odd ones out with references to specific domestic issues. Secondly, it is worth noticing that, in the depths of the Special Period, there is a two-year interim in 1995 and 1996 celebrating heroes from the

second war for Cuban independence from Spain, highlighting the idea that the worst crises and the fastest accelerations of change in society require the most solid anchoring in the past.<sup>15</sup> A final thought in this analysis with this limited data sample would frame the naming of the years as an overarching prescriptive template for interpretation of the past in Cuba: from 1959 to 1972 looking forward towards political goals of the new government, and subsequently looking back in time for deep roots to establish stability and validity, paving the way for the provocative statement that the progressive revolution in Cuba ended in the 70s.

Poorly founded as the example above might be, the story of the emplotment of Carlos' historical consciousness into a narrative that first got him to leave Cuba and later to yearn to return there seems to follow the structure that it presents. When he talked about his childhood, he described in fairly playful terms how he got into mischief with the other children from his neighbourhood of Marianao in Havana:

C: Yo, en la escuela, siempre estaba en problemas. Yo era muy malo.  
[laughs] Siempre estaba metido en problemas. Pero tuve una infancia alegre. [...]

S: ¿Jugaba pelota?

C: Sí, jugábamos pelota, jugábamos pistolero, jugábamos por todo el barrio de Marianao. Todo eso. Caminamos. Nos metíamos por las tuberías de las aguas albañales, y salíamos por aquí en otra cuadra por allá. Como niños marginales. [laughs]

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<sup>15</sup> Kayser Nielsen offers a review of this idea with an extensive bibliography in: Kayser Nielsen, *Historiens Forvandlinger*, 37-45.



His parents divorced when he was fairly young, so during this time of his life, Carlos lived with his grandparents until he turned 12 and was *becado* – sent to study secondary school in the schools in the countryside, where students worked the land part-time. To ascertain what kind of political education he received during his childhood, I asked some questions regarding his father:

S: ¿A qué se dedicaba?

C: Chico, mi papá, mi papá era miembro de lo que en Cuba se llama, todavía, que todavía se llama El Ministerio de Interior. [...] Llegó a ser, ehm, mayor, sí. En aquella época.

S: ¿Se hablaba de eso en su casa?

C: Sí, claro.

S: ¿Cómo era, entonces? ¿De qué se hablaba?

C: Bueno, no mi papá en realidad, mis papas se separaron cuando yo era muy chico. Pero, por supuesto, mi papá era activo en el gobierno.

S: ¿Cómo llegó a ser eso?

C: Al principio de la Revolución, hacía falta, en Cuba se empezó a desarrollar la fuerza de inteligencia, contrainteligencia. Mi papá había ido a la universidad. No había muchos universitarios en aquella época. Entonces, por supuesto, tenía una ventaja.

Expecting the home of an active officer of the Ministry of the Interior to be one where current events were discussed in a light positive to government standpoints, if not for ideological reasons then in order to secure the career of his father, it surprised me that Carlos maintained that it was not:

S: [...] ¿se daban cuenta de lo que estaba pasando con Cuba en aquel tiempo? ¿Como niños?

C: No.

S: ¿No?

C: No. Como niño no me daba mucha cuenta. No. En realidad, no. Fuimos a la escuela, primero por el comunismo, seremos como El Che. En mi casa tampoco era una casa muy política. [...] Mi papá nunca era una persona que hablaba mucho de, bueno, tenía su opinión, por supuesto. Él era “integrado” como decían en Cuba. Pero no, no era una persona, incluso, sí, la mamá de mi mamá, mi abuela, la familia de ellos, todos los hombres, todos los varones, todos los hermanos de mi abuela, todos, menos el más chiquitito, eran del ejército, y el esposo de mi abuela, mi abuelo; Mi abuelo era policía. Del otro gobierno. Y los hermanos de mi abuela, todos eran soldados.

Following these comments, Carlos continued to talk about how Fidel Castro himself had made sure that the soldiers and police officers of the Batista government were retired on a life-long pension after 1959, and that his uncles mainly sat around their houses during his upbringing, giving the idea that politics were simply not talked about in order to keep some sort of domestic peace. Whether or not this was the

case is hard to know, but what seemed certain was that Carlos did not care about political issues until he was 16, and the Mariel Crisis hit Cuba.

C: En aquel tiempo lo más traumático fue el Mariel. El éxodo de Mariel de 1980. ¿Te acuerdas? [...] Bueno, en el 1980 se fueron, ah, dos cosas importantes: Regresaron los cubanos que se habían ido. Por primera vez. Porque en aquella época, si tú te ibas de Cuba, no podías regresar. Después de 1978 hubo un acuerdo, donde se permitió a los cubanos que regresaran a visitar a su familia. Y en 1978 regresaron muchos cubanos que vivían aquí en Miami. Eso fue un momento importante, porque en realidad en este momento la propaganda del gobierno prácticamente hacía parecer que los cubanos que se habían ido estaban pasando trabajo, etcétera. Cuando los cubanos regresaron, después de poco tiempo, en el '78, resulta que los cubanos llegaron y tenían objetos. Tenían objetos. No vivían tan mal. No vivían tan mal. Entonces eso yo creo que eso causó en Cuba. Fue la primera, yo creo que eso afectó un poco. [...] en Cuba en aquella época no había mucho. En aquella época, el sistema de distribución era muy estricto. Y a todo el mundo le daban, yo no sé cómo era la cosa exactamente, pero te daban como una camisa al mes, un pantalón al mes, un par de zapatos al año, una cosa así. No había nada por la libre. Entonces todo el mundo se vestía, pero no había variedad. Entonces, claro, la gente añoraba la ropa moderna. Añoraban. Cuando llegaba esa gente, los cubanos aquellos, eso causó un poco de, cómo lo voy a decir, un debilitamiento ideológico [laughs] de la gente, porque entonces vieron que lo que se habían dicho no era enteramente cierto. Y después, eso causó un descontento. En Cuba hubo un descontento tan grande que en el 1980 causa todo aquello de Mariel y la embajada de Perú, y todo el éxodo. Que los americanos, que Carter dijo: "Bueno, que vengan todos" y en dos meses

vinieron 128,000 cubanos pa' acá. Entonces, esos fueron las dos cosas traumáticas de ese tiempo que yo estuve allí.

This analysis of the Mariel Crisis by Carlos leaves a lot of issues to unpack, such as the importance of material goods, the distribution of clothing and the way the situation of Cuban Americans was mediated in Cuba in the late 70s. However, ultimately, the most interesting point made here is the causal relationship between the visiting Cuban Americans and the desire to leave Cuba by would-be Mariel migrants. The decision to allow this break in US-Cuba relations was indeed reached in diplomatic talks between Cuba and the United States in 1978, although the first visits were only allowed in January of 1979. Furthermore, in their work on the diplomatic ties between Washington and Havana, William LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh agree with Carlos:

By bringing goods that were hard or impossible to come by in Cuba, the returning exiles were making an implicit statement that their decision to emigrate had been the right one. They had prospered, while those who stayed behind languished. The contrast between the prosperity of those who had left and the austerity endured by those who stayed was palpable.<sup>16</sup>

Although the question remains whether Carlos was retrospectively projecting this analysis onto his experience at the time, the importance of Mariel in his narrative should not be understated. From telling a story of an apolitical youth playing with his mates in the streets of Marianao, Carlos shifts into a political narrative in which he mentions that he himself wanted to leave in the boatlift:

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<sup>16</sup> LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 194-197, 214-221.

S: ¿Cómo se sentía? [at the time of Mariel] Dame un sentimiento. ¿Tenía miedo, alegría?

C: No. No: frustrado, porque yo quería ir.

[...]

S: ¿Por qué se quería ir?

C: Bueno quería ir porque quería estar con mi familia. Con mi abuelita, quería estar con mi abuela, me sentía sofocado por la situación allí también un poquito. Me molestaban todas las consignas aquellas.

S: ¿Cuales consignas?

C: Las consignas revolucionarias, que las consideraba absurdas.

S: Dame un ejemplo.

C: Que los americanos iban a invadir. Pensaba yo que no los americanos tenían la culpa de todo. No veía allí [in Cuba] un futuro para mí.

S: ¿Por qué se sentía sofocado? ¿Qué le sofocó?

C: Bueno, por ejemplo, el hecho de que en Cuba no se podía viajar. En Cuba había mucha represión en aquel momento.

It has to be noted that Carlos in the moments before the quote begins spoke about his grandmother in Miami, which could explain why he mentions her first when asked about why he wanted to leave Cuba. It is however remarkable how the mention of material goods from the United States, the sneakers and the jeans from the previous quote, leads into the mention of not having a future in Cuba. I have previously highlighted how the modernist conception of history is one of increasing progress and development over time. The quote from LeoGrande and Kornbluh above mentions the perceived distinction between Cuban America and Cuba as one of prosperity and languish. This means that having smarter sneakers in one place in space is conflated with having smarter sneakers in one place in time. At this point it is hard not to think of Michael J. Fox's Nikes from the movie *Back to the Future II*, in which the futuristic aspect of the place where the main character finds himself in his time-travels, although being the same place in space, is highlighted by giving him shoes that have automated laces, making it a different place in time.<sup>17</sup> Like Fox's character's wish to get back into the DeLorean time machine, you could almost say that Carlos wanted to go Back to the Future by wanting to board a boat to Miami.

The argument above is obviously not complete at this point. The idea of not having cool shoes is not enough to consolidate an idea of being frozen in time. This is where the importance of Mariel comes in. While Carlos was inhibited from traveling, 125,000 Cubans – the number according to Carlos – travelled to a place where they could not be reached through space, which accentuates the feeling of them traveling in both space and time. Interestingly, only one minute further into the interview, Carlos adds into the conversation the issue of being a captive in Cuba into the conversation:

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<sup>17</sup> Zemeckis, "Back to the Future 2".

C: En Cuba había mucha represión en aquel momento.

S: ¿Cómo se sintió repres... repri...? [struggling with the word]

C: ¿Reprimido?

S: Sí, reprimido.

C: Porque no, porque tú sabías, que el sistema de represión estaba presente. Estaba omnipresente. Y uno siempre tenía el temor de que alguien lo fuera a delatar, solamente por decir cualquier cosa, tú podías decir cualquier tontería, nada importante.

The emphasis that Carlos lays on the state repression suggests that the Mariel Boatlift was not just a moment of danger, as Benjamin would put it, but that it was an important factor in the imagination of a future place with fewer revolutionary slogans and more tunes from Saturday Night Fever:

[...] se oía la emisora americana. Estamos muy cerca. No más que se ponía las emisoras americanas. Se oye normal. En aquella época se oía mucho. Y oía las emisoras de aquí, de Miami. En inglés. Esa música oía, la música americana na' más. Pero aún así, como un, ¿Era quizás, quizás era un modo de rebeldía, ¿no? La afición por la música americana. Na' más oía música americana. [...] en aquella época estaba la Saturday Night Fever. [...] estaba Donna Summer, estaba [laughs] Boney M, que era un grupo de allá, de Alemania, eran negros, pero creo que eran de Alemania, eh, estaba, imagínate estaba también el Elton John, estaba cantidades. Estaba Hall

and Oates. Había mucho, eh, Electric Light Orchestra, estaba muchísimo. Muchísimo.

These additional ingredients are crucial to finishing the unfinished argument from above: Because of the perception of US cultural products, in this example shoes and music, of being more interesting and, more importantly, being modern, than the ones produced under the perceived repression in Cuba, Carlos' future was at this point not a chronological issue, but a spatial one.

Carlos left Cuba in August 1986, by way of Venezuela, where his grandmother had arranged an apartment for him in the same building as acquaintances from Havana. After working in Caracas for ten months, Carlos bought a false passport to make the trip to Miami. The passport was however so badly forged that he was immediately identified as an illegal immigrant on his arrival in the United States. To his luck, however, the Haitian inmates at the detention centre had rioted and started a fire there the day before, and he was instead sent to a hotel with a security guard. The following day he was sent to a migration court where he was given the right to work and was released into what Carlos playfully called seven years of "migratory limbo" with no real rights, starting to work the following day in the car mechanic workshop belonging to an uncle. From this point, Carlos worked his way from staying with his grandmother through an education as schoolteacher to running a private tutoring company and living in an apartment overseeing the yachts on the Miami River and most of Little Havana. However, if you walked from this lavish building on the edge of Little Havana towards the hip neighbourhood of Wynwood, you would have to cross the poor neighbourhood of Overtown, as well as walk under the highway overpasses under which the Tent City was built to house the Mariel migrants in 1980, and where homeless people seek shelter today. This stark social division was not lost on Carlos, who at various points in the interview voiced contempt for the



double standards of those who criticised the Cuban state of affairs while remaining silent on issues in the United States. One of those moments was when he described the reactions in the Cuban American community to the death of Fidel Castro:

S: Y, ¿cómo es? Usted ha dicho que allí en ese momento se podía ver la esencia de la comunidad cubana.

C: No. No de la comunidad, la esencia de la parte más, y te dije, te la voy a decir de modo eufemísticamente, más confundida. Pa' no decirlo, anticubana. Pero, eso fue lo que dije. No la esencia más cubana.

S: ¿Entonces qué es la esencia de la comunidad cubana-americana, acá?

C: La esencia se divide en dos. Depende de cuando viniste, depende de dónde naciste. La gente que nacieron aquí, de mi edad, esa gente tiene muy poca información de lo que pasa en Cuba. Esa gente, la mayoría de la gente lo han recibido de sus papás o del televisor, que es propaganda y propaganda y propaganda y propaganda y propaganda. Pero, esa gente no sabe lo que está pasando en Cuba. Esa gente no concibe que hay gente en Cuba que vive mejor que aquí. Y los hay. En Cuba hay gente que vive mejor que aquí. Cosas tan sencillas como, ya como dicen que en Cuba nada sirve. Nada. Todo es una mierda. Si es que todo en Cuba es una mierda, ¿cómo es que en Cuba la esperanza de vida es más alta que en los Estados Unidos? ¿Cómo es que en Cuba hay más médicos por cada mil habitantes que en ningún otro país del mundo? Incluyendo que creo que Luxemburgo. ¿Si todo está mal en Cuba, por qué tiene la mortalidad infantil más baja de este hemisferio? ¿Si todo es tan mal en Cuba, por qué tiene una de las

poblaciones con mayor índice de educación universitaria que hay? ¿Si todo es tan mal en Cuba, por qué la gente no sale por la calle?

This quote illustrates what is interesting with Carlos: He does not fit the overarching stereotype of right-leaning Cuban American migrants who support any policy as long as it is perceived as going against the interests of the Cuban government. If we, however, analyse his narrative using the same template as the quote from Fernando Martínez Heredia, further above on p. 143, there are a number of interesting similarities. Before reaching any decision on which political currents to follow, both narratives begin with a general perception of directionality and speed of historical time. In the case of Martínez Heredia, historical time is long and moving slowly under the oppression of all pre-1959 political establishments. Emplotted with political events from his historical consciousness, such as the insurrection of the 1950s, a trope arises in which historical time moves towards a sudden revolutionary acceleration. Carlos' example highlights the importance of this first level of analysis: in his narrative, he was captive in a place where time moved slower than in others, and action had to be undertaken in order for him to achieve a pace he agreed with. As he could not act to speed up time under the perceived repression of Cuba in the 1980s, he had to move in space in order to be able to move towards the future. What followed was, however, not a wholehearted acceptance of the emplotment of the Cuban American narrative as he saw it exemplified the day Fidel Castro passed away. It was rather a questioning of this narrative with a background in a historical consciousness including the memories of the inequalities he encountered in his days as a schoolteacher and tutor – working to give school children the opportunity to go to their universities of choice – compared with his memories of the Cuban school system, which after all gave him the opportunity to study as an adult student.

### **Emilio: Back to the Past**

The contact to Emilio was one provided to me by one of the formerly mentioned interviewees. As a lawyer with his own firm, he invited me to interview him at his office, where he sat behind a large desk with the one of the walls decorated with diplomas, newspaper articles and memorabilia of his life in Cuba. As in the case of Carlos, I began my interview with Emilio by asking what happened in the year of his birth. Because of my very loosely defined script for the interviews, I did not ask the name of the year in the terminology defined by the government, but rather plainly what had happened – a question to which he could obviously not have an answer of his own, given that he as a new-born would not have much of a recollection of his own from the events. Luckily, Emilio did have an answer to the question anyway:

Ese año en Cuba yo no recuerdo, porque era muy chiquito, pero lo que pasó, fundamentalmente fue, un mes después de mi nacimiento fue la confrontación de Playa Girón ante de un grupo de cubanos libres, organizados, promovieron una invasión armada a Cuba, que lamentablemente fue rodada en 72 horas por falta de cooperación y participación prometida por parte del gobierno de los Estados Unidos y eso fomentó y ayudó a la consolidación de la dictadura de Castro en Cuba.

With this answer, there was really no question as to what Emilio thought of the Cuban government policies at the moment of the interview. Contrary to Carlos, Emilio emphasised in the interview that he came from a family that valued Catholicism and even sent him to the church to be taught the catechism during his early years in the 60s. Furthermore, the role of his mother and maternal grandparents seems to play a part in the formation of Emilio's outlook on the world: His mother worked as a telephone operator in Placetas but had gone to school in

the American Dominicans academy in Cienfuegos, where she learned to speak English. The American Dominican academies in Cuba play an important role in the memories of many early Cuban migrants, as many of these schools were closed in the run-up to the Pedro Pan-exodus, where around 14,000 children were sent out of the country because their parents wanted to avoid them being enrolled in the revolutionary school system.<sup>18</sup> Emilio's maternal grandfather owned a shoe factory named River Shoes in Placetas, which he claims was appropriated by the state in 1964.<sup>19</sup>

E: [...] mi abuelo materno era dueño de una fábrica de zapatos que se llamaba River Shoes. Que se hacía zapatos de mujer. Él era un hombre de clase media, propietario de una empresa que después del año 1964 fue intervenida por el gobierno actual de Cuba. Y le prometieron el pago 32.000 dólares que nunca le dieron. Solo hicieron el pago inicial de 1.032 dólares es lo que tengo entendido. O el equivalente a dólares, que eran pesos cubanos.

S: Pero [enunciates] ¿River Shoe? ¿Es palabra inglesa?

E: Sí. Porque él hablaba muy bien inglés. Y como... Mi abuelo era canario español. Él fue a Cuba cuando tenía aproximadamente 14 años y uno de los primeros trabajos que hizo fue cortar caña en el campo, que era el único trabajo disponible en aquella época en que él llegó. Y ese trabajo lo hicieron casi siempre los inmigrantes. Específicamente los de más pobre origen,

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<sup>18</sup> Conde, *Operation Pedro Pan*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> On the history and legal grounds for state expropriation, see: de Goytisolo, "On the Continued Good Standing of Pre-Castro Legal Entities", 505.

¿que eran? o jamaquinos o bahamenses? o haitianos, y él trabajó con muchos inmigrantes jamaquinos y le enseñaron el idioma inglés.

S: ¿Ah, pero entonces hablaba con un toque criollo?

E: No, no tenía, no hablaba... Él hablaba bien inglés. Prácticamente sin acento. Porque él después lo estudió y lo practicaba a diario.

The story that Emilio tells here, gives the idea of an ideological formation in almost diametrical opposition to the one that Carlos gave in his interview: not only does Emilio emplot his narrative using a clear trope of decline, but he also gives a clear indication of which direction he would have preferred history to go: from Caribbean to Anglo-Saxon, and from poor to rich through hard and dignified work; the American Dream. It was also his affinity for US culture that later barred him from being considered for membership of the Union of Young Communists (UJC), as he consumed music from US radio stations with his grandfather, read US literature in *Reader's Digest*, as well as watched US films.

E: [la UJC] decía que yo era inmaduro, decían ellos, y además padecía de diversionismo ideológico. ¿Por qué? Porque me gustaba oír música americana, me gustaba rock'n'roll, me gustaba la cultura americana, las películas americanas. No sé, me gustaba la "pop culture", que es lo que le dicen generalmente. Y eso me hacía un individuo... además leía mucho. Yo era un ávido lector, y en mi casa tenía la oportunidad de leer una revista que me influenció mucho, que se llamaba Readers Digest. La leía en español las selecciones que había en mi casa, y leía muchas revistas viejas, y ahí aprendí muchas cosas del comunismo.

In the case of Carlos above, we saw that the 1980 Mariel Crisis was a clear moment of danger, in which he, in the face of the sudden crisis, let his historical consciousness be influenced by the perceived modernity of the United States. What seems to occur with Emilio is that a picture arises of him having had a historical consciousness that was imbued more profoundly with content shaping a trope of decline that followed his family's decline from owning property and having free access to US culture to him not being excluded from the UJC for these very issues. In spite of having these issues with the UJC, Emilio managed to graduate from university with a law degree, where after he continued teaching law while also working as a defence lawyer in a *bufete colectivo*, which in Cuba is a local law office for public defenders. During his career as a lawyer in Cuba, Emilio managed to take up cases like one where a client was faced with charges of having embezzled money.

E: [...] y cuando yo me meto en las cuentas a buscarle, con la ayuda de mi hermana que es contadora, y sabe mucho más de economía que yo, lo determinaba que la persona que se había llevado el dinero no era mi cliente, sino el hijo de un coronel que no querían incriminar. Y entonces yo lo que hice fue elaborar un reporte en defensa, poniendo los puntos en el que me estaba basando, con los propios documentos que yo había obtenido en el proceso penal para determinar que mi cliente no era culpable, el culpable era otra persona. No me interesaba que le hicieran algo al otro. Que le pasara a la otra persona alguna cosa, pero obviamente el mío no lo era. Y después de algunos meses de estar en prisión preventiva lo sueltan, y finalmente después procesan al individuo correcto. Y a la policía, de alguna forma lo amonestaron por haber tratado de salvarle el pellejo al otro que estaba tratando de proteger. Todas esas cosas se veían allá. Y es común

también en cualquier país latinoamericano, ponte claro de eso. Y aquí también en los Estados Unidos. Mírala a Hillary Clinton y el FBI.

Besides the comment referring to one of the many conspiracy theories that swirl around former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in right-wing circles in the United States, it was stories like these in which Emilio expressed his frustration with his inability to promote change to what he saw as a deeply unjust system. This sense of repeatedly seeing Sisyphus' rock tumble down the mountain, coupled with various opportunities denied continuing his legal studies in Europe, were the ones that ultimately convinced him that he could not further influence the course of future development in Cuba that led him in the mid 90's to begin looking for ways to Miami, which in the depths of the Special Period meant a raft across the Florida Straits.

In rather matter-of-fact terms Emilio described how he arranged his journey across the sea, but when it came to the arrival of the raft in Key West, Emilio broke down in tears behind his desk, just after telling a funny anecdote from his first encounter with the US Coast Guard:

E: La guardacosta fue muy simpática, porque cuando viene la guardacosta, la historia incluso es rara y la gente se da mucha risa por la forma en que lo cuento, pero fue todo cierto. Pero lo simpático es que cuando ya viene la guardacosta hacia nosotros, el único que hablaba dos palabras en inglés era yo en el grupo. Y me paro como para representar todos nosotros en la embarcación, me agarro del mástil que habíamos enderezados de una caña brava tipo darle fuego y ponerlo de lo más recto posible, y le pregunto en un inglés precario a los que venían en esa lancha rápida: "Are you American

Coast Guard?" Y uno me responde perfecto en español: "Claro que sí comemierda. ¿Quién va a venir a recogerte aquí en esta hora?" [...]

S: Cuéntame la experiencia de esos primeros días.

E: De esos yo escribí una vez un artículo y me publicaron. [Pauses for a moment. Cries.] No. Fue una experiencia...chocante porque finalmente me sentí libre. Una vez en mi vida. Me dio por gritar. Reirme como un loco. Y no sé, nos abrazamos en el barco a pesar de que no nos permitían pararnos ni mucho menos. Y es una sensación tremenda, porque tú sabes que finalmente llegas a un sitio limpio, que fue lo primero que me impresionó, después de tanta suciedad que hay en la Habana y tanta asquerosidad que debe estar peor hoy en día, y llegar a una marina tan limpia allí en Cayo Hueso, con muchos barcos. Sí, con mucha gente en barcos que sabían que los que venían en ese barco grande de la marina, del guardacosta americano eran balseros, y nos decían bienvenido, han llegado a tierra de libertad y todo, eran... [pauses] Fue tremendo. Eso no se me olvida nunca. Ver las aguas limpias y la gente gritándote y aplaudiendo y saludándote de otras pequeñas embarcaciones que había allí. [sighs] Eso fue un día.

At this moment in the interview, I was a little shocked myself. Other interviewees had most certainly broken into tears on previous occasions, but Emilio had seemed so robust during the interview, sitting behind a desk with diplomas and decorations adorning the walls of his office, dressed in a solid suit and with his stories that had portrayed him as a stable hero of those less fortunate in the face of oppression. After regaining his composure, he continued on a reflection on why he had become emotional at the mention of his arrival at Key West:



E: Cada vez me emociona, pero eso es que quisiera yo vivir sin tener que haberme ido de mi pueblo, de mi país, mis abuelos nunca lo hicieron. Mi abuelo nunca quiso irse de Cuba a pesar de haber sido inmigrante una vez porque no quiso serlo dos veces. Porque él logró lo que él había querido tener en su vida. Hizo su propia empresa, trataba sus empleados con el máximo respeto y consideración, tenía 45 empleados a los que trataba como seres humanos. Les pagaba vacaciones en Cuba en el año '48. Tener una empresa como esa pa' mi no me parecía que será posible hasta que no supe que era verdad que todas esas cosas se podía hacer. A pesar de que en Cuba se decía que todo eso era imposible, que no era, que era mentira, que la gente vivía como esclavos. Yo sabía que no era así. Yo nunca quise dejar mi país, pero yo querría que pudiera construir un país como que tuvieron mis padres mis abuelos, en el que todo el mundo viviera de su trabajo de manera honesta, unos mejores unos peores como es en todos los lugares del mundo. Y no pudo ser, y no lo pude lograr hasta que llegué aquí. Ya siendo un hombre adulto con 33 años. Y claro, esa noche no lo voy a olvidar jamás. Y lo peor del caso es que no lo guardo en mi memoria qué día exacto fue. Si fue el día 15 de agosto, el 16 de agosto. No lo puedo recordar.

This statement leads into a very different narrative structure than the one exhibited by Carlos above. Instead of a dormant historical consciousness awakened in a moment of danger, Emilio presented a historical trope of decline from a golden age installed in an active historical consciousness from a very early age. Since this golden age is so closely linked to expressions of US culture, through the language, the music and the idea of available justice, coupled with his frustrated attempts at returning to this time within the space of Cuba, he ultimately came to the same

conclusion as Carlos: That he had to travel in space in order to travel in time. Whereas Carlos wanted to travel towards the future, Emilio to the past.

### **Reflecting on the Space-Time Continuum**

Although the directionality of the interviewees' wishes to travel in time is different, they do share two common denominators. Firstly, they share the idea that this time travel is one in a direction of progress. Secondly, what is remarkable is that the moment in time through which they wish to travel is Benjamin's moment of danger in which historical consciousness is activated. These moments of danger seem to play a crucial role for changes in perception of time. The addition of Hannah Arendt to this equation suggests that it is neither, as her conception of the two-faced Janus emphasises the authority of the past. The Angel of History does not forget, and perceptions of time remain. That means that the perceptions of time in the Cuba they left remain the perceptions of time that they operate with when thinking of Cuba, unless they visit Cuba to see how the country does in fact change. Giving the Angel of History the faces of Janus allows the island to repeat itself in the imaginaries of Carlos and Emilio in the form of hope and despair, respectively, for the island's future.

In a sense, the cases discussed above highlight a very interesting phenomenon: In matters of Cuban identity, the Caribbean is a place where time and space are conflated and the concept of Cuban nationality is one that is not limited to the territorial space of the Cuban archipelago but spans across the Florida Straits, across the US East Coast to New York, New Jersey and beyond. This cultural concept of nationality should be seen not only in terms of the contemporary Cuban diaspora but also the foundation of the nation in a historic sense as mirrored across waters from the nineteenth century diaspora through the movements for

independence from the Spanish colonial powers. In the light of this large construct, the issue of the legal definition of being Cuban is a tricky one: Cuban Americans, while holding US citizenship, cannot enter Cuban territory using a US passport, but have to re-apply for a Cuban passport, submit to a process of re-nationalisation and pay large fees for this process. This issue was one that Emilio mentioned as he pointed to his Cuban passport that he had nailed to the wall of his office in a statement of never wanting to use it. The interesting thing, when put in relation with theories of space, is that Cuba is an island, and space as an analytical category alone therefore does not answer questions regarding Cuban identity outside the island.

A solution to this issue is proposed by Antonio Benítez Rojo with the thesis of “the island that repeats itself”, an idea carrying at its core the pre-state formation of national identity in the Caribbean, based on the industrialised colonial machinery of dominance and the production of power through the production spaces of the white gold: sugar plantations.<sup>20</sup> A reminder is in place here, as Miami was founded with the initial goal of attracting entrepreneurial Cuban tobacco producers. Tiles were imported from old houses in Havana to give Cubans a sense of home, and factory workers came from both Cuba and Tampa. There is little doubt that Miami belongs in the modern history of the Caribbean, and even less that it belongs to the history of Cuba – as thesis and antithesis.

If ideological formation rests upon emplotment of historical consciousness in tropes, which again rests upon the imagination of speed and direction of historical time, then time comes before emplotment comes before ideology. The arguments from the interviews analysed above highlight, however, the importance of space in the faculty of the imagination that emplots, as pointed out by Olsson. The driving force

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<sup>20</sup> Benítez Rojo, *La Isla que se Repite*, 120.

of imagination in the cases in this chapter could be construed as wishes to travel across the time-space-continuum. It is this hope inherent in promises of progress across space that named the lines between the points, that made Emilio cry when reaching Key West, as it is the hope inherent in promises of progress across time that drives his nostalgic wish for Cuba to travel back across 1959. In his ninth thesis on history, Benjamin describes the angel of history:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.<sup>21</sup>

In this chapter, hope, as the lines of power across time and space in the narratives of my interviewees, was metonymically related to progress. In extension, hope is, in these cases, the storm that blows away from paradise. While Bernardo did make it to Miami, the land of opportunity and progress of his youthful hopes, his realisation that also Miami has its own inherent flaws propels his hope in new directions. These re-significations of hope highlight the transformative capacities of the Bar-In-Between and the cartographical reasoning that happens there. A question that comes up in the light of this understanding is when and – in the context of Olsson – where these actions take place. Olson's answer would be that they take place in the Bar-In-Between. As we understand that the world is cartographically reasoned in

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<sup>21</sup> Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 257-258.

metonymical relations not in the input or outcome of signification, but rather in the core of signification itself, then this is where memory happens. That is to say, memory is here not the object, the book, the film, the statue or the family album that results from and originates signification, but the subjective semiotic actions bridging the known and unknown.

## **CHAPTER 7: FILLING THE HOLES IN THE FRAMEWORKS OF MEMORY**

### **– IN CASE OF DOUBT, IMAGINE**

One of the issues that have most often surfaced when I discussed my research in memory studies with political historians, engaged in efforts of discerning the truth about the past, is that my approach, especially the part in which I include oral history interviews, does not serve to establish these truths. This schism is natural, since my concern is not what the actual *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, but rather the establishment of subjective narratives about the past. However, as mentioned before, it is immensely difficult to see the emptiness between the points on Olsson's map, and the lines of power that are drawn between them. So far, the focus has been on the points themselves, in order to establish the directionality that they propel the lines into, bending them into historical tropes. Following the establishment of these points, we came close to the lines drawn by nostalgia in the previous chapter, seeing how hope for progress projected tropes of history across the imaginary map of my interviewees.

As I have also asserted before, it is our human faculty of bringing the absent into the present, our imagination, that fills the emptiness between the points. In the analysis of the following interviews, I will therefor direct my focus to the manner in which the interviewees dealt with uncertainty in order to, so to say, fill the holes in the narrative, and how the historical tropes played into that practice.

#### **María: Certainty and Doubt in Proximity and Distance**

I have previously discussed my interview with Oscar, the kind barber who helped me order my coffee correctly, when I was walking down Calle Ocho. After the interview with him, I asked whether he would know anyone fitting the parameters of my scope,

who would be interested in being interviewed by me. He called me a few days later to tell me that an employee of his would be interested, so I returned to the barber shop to meet María.

At the beginning of the interview, María seemed a little reserved, answering my questions with short sentences and avoiding the long explanations that had characterised many of my other interviewees. Since she seemed reserved to talk about political issues, repeating often that she was not interested or did not know about such things, I tried to engage her by avoiding those, and rather including more personal topics and other seemingly small issues that came up and served not only to put her at ease in a conversation about pleasant things but also to allow her a wide frame in which she could freely tell her story. In the final part of the interview, Oscar, her boss, entered the salon from the back office to go out and get us all coffee. At this moment, María had become more relaxed in our conversation and turned to Oscar to say:

M: Me voy a quedar conversando con este niño, porque me encanta.

[laughs]

O [off-mic]: Yo te lo dije.

M: No querría. [...] ¿Te dijeron que no querría?

O: No querría hacer la entrevista.

S: ¿La verdad?

M: Sí.

S: ¿Y por qué no?

M: No sé.

Although I did not ask further into her hesitation about speaking to me, my conclusion from this interaction was that she had been nervous about not having enough to tell me. My interest in her experiences and the opportunity to be able to relate them to an outsider put her at ease and, to my experience, provided her with a certain form of catharsis. As with all interviews, I build up the conversation following the four-step model that I have described previously, including in each step a question about the situation of Cuba at that moment in time. This latter line of questioning was rather interesting in María's case, as she answered along the same lines each time, I tried to go down that path. When I asked her, what happened in the country in the year of her birth, she answered:

M: Se cayó todo, bueno, todo lo que había anteriormente, porque llegó la Revolución y empezó a quitarle todo a todo el mundo. A mi papá lo dejó sin trabajo.

[...] ... yo no me recuerdo de ese tiempo, yo nací en el '59 en ese mismo año triunfó la Revolución. Yo te estoy contando lo que me contaba mi padre y mi madre.

S: ¿Y cómo hablaban de esa época?

M: Siempre. Mi mamá catastrófica, porque ellos estaban... Se habían casado y vivían bien mi papá trabajaba en lo militar, no trabajaba directamente afuera, trabajaba en las oficinas, y ganaba bien. Y estaban



bien. Ellos pensaron no, vamos a vivir desahogados, pero ya, llegó aquello y se acabó.

The emplotment of her narrative into one of decline after '59 is obvious, the trope is prevalent throughout the entire conversation. When she told me that she had just received permission to leave Cuba for the United States through the lottery system otherwise known as *El Bombo*, after which she had to wait 9 months in order to get all the necessary paperwork, I asked again:

S: OK. En aquel momento, esos 9 meses, ¿cuál era la situación del país?

M: La misma. Eso no cambia, eso empeora. Allí no cambia nada. No mejora nada. Todo va pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás. De cuando yo me fuí, a como está ahora, hay un cambio grande, pero no para mejor sino para peor.

Two years after leaving for the United States, María returned to Cuba for a week with her father, who had not been in Cuba for 11 years.

S: ¿Cómo era esa semana?

M: Bueno. A los tres días, mi papá se quería ir.

S: ¿Y eso por qué?

M: Porque, lo deprimía. Estar en Cuba. Ver las necesidades de todas tus amistades, de toda tú familia, de poder ayudar un poquito de esa necesidad, porque no lo puedes hacer todo. No puedes ayudar a todo el mundo en todo lo que les hace falta porque no puedes, no tienes. Ver a tus amigos

destruidos. De que.. De cuando tú los dejaste a cuando viniste a ver cómo estás tú, y como están ellos. Es increíble. El deterioro. El deterioro de las casas, de la calle, de los.. Llegar a la bodega y ver que en la bodega están vacía así todos los estantes. Que no hay nada. Tú dices: "Bueno, y ¿qué pasó?"

Again we see here a trope of decline, which could be explained by contextualisation: her parents left shortly after the Mariel Crisis, putting this visit in the early 90s and in the depths of the Special Period, in which the entire country was going through severe shortages of most basic goods. We also need to remember that, at the moment of visiting, they had been cut off from many of the direct news reports that go beyond the brief phone calls that María and her family made every once in a while. One could argue that any change would have been perceived as huge given those circumstances. These considerations do, however, not change the fact that the issue of decline has a huge impact on María's historical consciousness, bending it downwards in this trope of decline. This interpretation is however not particularly interesting in and of itself: it is shared by several of my interviewees. What is interesting is its provenance, which became obvious when we were talking about her move from primary school to secondary school:

S: OK. Pues, ¿en esa época cómo era el ambiente en el país? ¿Se acuerda de eso? ¿Cómo...? ¿Se daba cuenta de lo que estaba pasando?

M: Bueno, me daba cuenta de que te quieren obligar a tú hacer algo que en aquellos momentos yo decía: "Mi familia no es revolucionaria." En la escuela te obligan a ser pionero, a ponerte la pañoleta de... La pañoleta era como un símbolo de que tú eres un niño revolucionario, y entonces, por una parte, tenía mis padres que no lo eran, y por otra parte estaba la escuela donde te

obligaba a cantar el himno nacional, a ser pionero, a decir pioneros por el comunismo, seremos como el Che, y todo eso.

In this quote, María paints a picture of her being caught between her family and the post-'59 government, in this case, represented by its educational policies. This state of captivity between parental and societal expectation is, of course, one that is experienced by most children and teenagers, but in the case of María, these poles seem to have been drawn up markedly. When I, earlier in the interview, asked her why she remembered her early school years with joy, she answered:

M: No sé, pues salté de la casa también.

S: OK. ¿No le dejaron salir de la casa sus papás?

M: No.

S: ¿Y por qué no?

M: Porque mi papá era muy estricto.

S: Uf. ¿Religioso también él?

M: No, mi papá no era religioso, pero era muy estricto. Los hijos tienen que estar en la casa, menos que cuando vayas a la escuela o que salgas con tus padres. Pero no te querría dejar solo. Nos dejó solo salir a la calle cuando ya estábamos grandecitos, pero mientras tanto teníamos salir con ellos o a la escuela.

A similarly close net seems to have been cast around her activities when she talked about her experiences in the pre-university school:

S: ¿Y dónde está? ¿En el mismo Santiago de las Vegas?

M: Sí. No nos iban a dejar coger guagua. [laughs]

The close family structure furthermore plays a role in the way María frames her understanding of the trope of decline as imposed by the post-'59 government. When she talked about how her under-age brother had left during the Mariel Crisis, she came to the conclusion that:

M: En Cuba hay muchas historias y hay muchas historias difíciles también. Se separan las familias... Se separan, dentro la misma Cuba se separan unas familias por ideales. Los revolucionarios no querían juntarse con la otra familia. Eran familia, pero no querían juntarse con la otra porque le afectaba tener una familia que no... que no fuera revolucionaria.

This dynamic becomes furthermore evident when she mentions her half-brother, who fell on the other side of this divide:

S: ¿Usted tenía familia comunista?

M: Sí.

S: ¿Cuál familia? ¿Sus tíos? ¿Sus...?

M: Mi medio-hermano. Hijo de mi papá con una señora anterior a mi mamá.

S: OK.

M: Lo crió mi mamá. Pero le gustaba lo militar, revolucionario. Y cuando se hizo mayorcito, se fue con la revolución, y se olvidó de sus padres y sus hermanos.

S: ¿Le ha vuelto a ver?

M: No.

S: ¿Nunca? ¿Después de eso?

M: Sí, después de eso sí. Cuando yo estaba en Cuba lo vi.

S: ¿Y cómo fueron esas reuniones?

M: ¿Reuniones? No, yo no me reuní con él.

S: ¿No? ¿Cómo era entonces?

M: No...

S: ¿Así por la calle, o...?

M: Sí, lo veías por la calle. No lo veíamos casi nunca, porque él se fue de Santiago de las Vegas, estaba con los militares por allí en otro... en otras provincias.

S: ¿Se saludaron allí, cuando se vieron por la calle?

M: Sí.

S: ¿Hablaron?

M: Como... Como si fueras otra persona... Como si no fuera tu familia. Te dice: "Hola." Porque prefieren la revolución a la familia.

The divide that María here asserts between family and what she terms revolution, which should be understood as the post-'59 government as well as the wider ramifications of its policies, reflects the basic elements of her understanding of the society in which she lived following the lines of the combination of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser that was proposed in Chapter 1, section From Theory to Methodology. If we understand the divide between family and government, as put forward by María, through the lens of Gramsci's division of the state into political society and civil society, then her family becomes an entity of civil society that clashes with political society in an attempt by the state to achieve, in Gramsci's words, "hegemony protected by the armour of coercion."<sup>1</sup> This notion should be coupled with Althusser's inclusion of the family as one of his eight ideological state apparatuses, due to the reproduction of state ideology that he sees happening there.<sup>2</sup> Alone, Althusser's thesis does not stand, since the family does not necessarily reproduce state ideology, as is so clearly evident in the case of María. By adding Gramsci's subdivision of the state into civil society and political society, we can however appreciate that her family falls into a category that we might call an ideological civil society apparatus or a repressive civil society apparatus, depending

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<sup>1</sup> Gramsci, "The Art of Science and Politics", 235.

<sup>2</sup> Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 75-77.

on which instance of ideology that we focus on, although definitely in opposition to political society.

What this rudimentary combination of Gramsci and Althusser has provided us with here is however just the frameworks of society in which ideology takes place and not with an explanation of what drives it. That question leads us, yet again, back to the trope of decline and María's understanding of a political society that governs her country, as she says: "pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás." However rudimentary, it is this narrative tool that frames her conceptualisation of which direction her perceived homeland and imagined community can go. If we now apply the concept of imagination as her ability to bring the absent into the present, such as suggested by Olsson's interpretation of Kant,<sup>3</sup> and fill the holes in her emplotted narrative – that is, the things that she has not experienced, but which she needs to bring into the present to give her narration a coherent structure – then the question of ideology is transformed into a question of imagination: which frames is she imagining in and what is the provenance of those imaginaries? In order for her to maintain a trope of decline, her perception of Cuba before '59 needs to be one that was better than Cuba after '59. Here María's age becomes significant. Whereas Oscar displayed nostalgia towards his early youth before '59, where his memories circled around the cradle of his grandmother's home, cosmopolitan liberties as well as material and cultural richness, María's nostalgia is directed towards a time which she never experienced in Cuba: it is inherited.

In her work on the memories of the Holocaust experienced by second generation survivors, that is, children and grandchildren of those who survived persecution,

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<sup>3</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 120.

forced removal and internment under Nazi rule, Hirsch has developed the concept of postmemory.

Postmemorial work, [...] strives to reactivate and re-embody more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression.

[...]

Throughout this book, however, I argue that postmemory is not an identity position but a generational structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation. Family life, even in its most intimate moments, is entrenched in a collective imaginary shaped by public, generational structures of fantasy and projection and by a shared archive of stories and images that inflect the broader transfer and availability of individual and familial remembrance.<sup>4</sup>

What specifically concerns Hirsch is how memories and mnemonic practices are kept alive in spite of attempts to silence them:

The structure of postmemory clarifies how the multiple ruptures and radical breaks introduced by trauma and catastrophe inflect intra-, inter-, and transgenerational inheritance. It breaks through and complicates the line the Assmanns draw connecting individual to family, to social group, to institutionalized historical archive. That archive, in the case of traumatic interruption, exile, and diaspora, has lost its direct link to the past, has forfeited the embodied connections that forge community and society.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 33, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 33.



Before we go on and apply Hirsch' analysis of literature, visual art and photography to the interview in which María relays her life story, there is a list of caveats that need to be considered. Generally, there is not really any ground for comparison between the Holocaust and the policies promoted by the post-'59 Cuban government. More specifically, the subjects that Hirsch discussed were completely removed, across time and space, from the context which the memories refer back to. One example of how the memories of María's family bridge the holes in her narrative, completing the structuring of the trope of decline, is this exchange, where she had just explained that she felt caught between a rock and a hard place when she had to choose between being a member of the youth organization *Los Pioneros* and her parents:

M: Mis padres decían que no eran revolucionarios.

S: ¿Ellos mismo?

M: Sí sí sí. Ellos no querían revolución. Mi papá no estaba de acuerdo con el sistema.

S: ¿Por qué no?

M: Bueno porque, empezando que, desde que llegó, lo sacó del trabajo.

S: Ya, claro.

M: Aparte, le quitaba las cosas a los campesinos, los... Quitaban los negocios. Tu te... Vamos a suponer: Mi tío tenía tres carnicerías.

S: Sí.

M: Cuando llegó la revolución, le dijo: intervención por tus tres carnicerías.

Te quedas con una y trabajas en esa. Y las otras son del gobierno.

S: ¿Cuándo fue eso?

M: Cuando triunfó la revolución.

S: ¿Ahí mismo, en el '59?

M: Yo no estoy segura si fue en el mismo '59 o fue un poquito más allá. No te puedo decir un rango determinado. Pero, sí. Empezó a quitarle todo.

Note here that she is not certain of the specific time or circumstances under which her uncle's businesses were nationalised, but how it, in her narrative, plays the part of the turning point in which Cuban society begins the decline "pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás, pa'trás." This means that more than serving as mnemonic vehicles for memories about her family members from the generations before her, as is the case of Hirsch' analysis, the story about the lost butcher shops, which she never saw, serves as a metonymy for Cuba's broader historical processes. This becomes particularly evident through the exchange that followed immediately after the quote above:

S: Hmm... ¿Qué quiere decir "revolución"?

M: Cambio.

S: A veces el cambio es bueno.

M: Bueno, pero en este caso no era muy bueno. Hay cambios para bien, cambios para mal. A mí me parece que ese cambio no fue muy bueno. Era todo para ellos y nada para ti. Aparentemente decían que era para el pueblo. Pero no era para el pueblo. Era para su conveniencia.

The use of pronouns is interesting in the quote above, as they reveal a division into us and them that runs along the lines of the framework established in the combination of Gramsci and Althusser above: it is the family against the revolution, the apparatuses of civil society against those of political society. This framework conditions María's outlook to one that sees the local space as one where family resides. One of the criteria that she mentions when telling me that her half-brother chose the revolution over the family is that he left Santiago de las Vegas in order to join the military in another province. The spatial issue is particularly important since another brother – one which she held dearly, close in age – was killed in a training accident during his time away from the village in conscript military service. Given the heavy topic, I carefully curated my questions into the matter and as is evident from the exchange below, it unearthed some details of why the death was even more disturbing to María.

S: ¿Se acuerda cuando llegó la noticia?

M: Hmm hmm. [affirmative]

S: ¿Quién lo dio?

M: ¿Quién trajo la noticia? Un militar.

S: ¿Un compañero de su hermano?

M: Un jefe militar. Dijo, que mi hermano... había habido un accidente, y que se había ido un tiro y mi hermano... listo.

S: Lo siento montones. Muy, muy fuerte.

M: Entonces te queda la duda.

S: ¿Cuál duda?

M: De qué pasó. Porque tú no estabas presente.

S: Claro.

M: Y mi hermano estaba en Camagüey y nosotros estábamos en la Habana.

S: ¿Pero la duda de qué?

M: De cómo fue.

S: ¿Cómo era la historia oficial?

M: Hmm hmm. ¿Cómo era? ¿Cómo sucedió?

S: Pero ¿qué dijeron que sucedió?

M: Eso. Estaba en unas prácticas, tirando, y un tiro mal se fue y lo cogió él.

S: ¿Y cuándo entró la duda?

M: En cuanto llegó la noticia, porque tú te quedas así, bueno, y ¿qué pasó?  
¿cómo fue eso?

S: ¿Y no hubo más información?

M: No, no hay más información.

S: Entonces, ¿cuál podía haber sido la.. lo que sucedió si no era eso?

M: Puede haber sido muchas cosas, tú no lo sabes.

S: Pero ¿qué era la sospecha?

M: Bueno, sospechamos, porque mi hermano era religioso. Estaba fuera de lugar. Todos los demás tenían que coger armas y él no las cogía. Era como... Como estás en un lugar que no perteneces. Y... No sé como explicarte eso.

The implication that she here makes after me pressing the uncomfortable issue is that her brother could have been intentionally killed because of his religious convictions. Whether or not that is the case is hard to prove and not a question that I am speaking to in the thesis – but it is noteworthy that she never directly makes the accusation and that I had to press the issue to a certain length for her to even elaborate. Another element to this part of our conversation is how she articulates the provenance of doubt and truth. The military official who brought the news was obviously not trustworthy in her eyes and the fact that her brother died in

Camagüey, far away from Santiago de las Vegas, also plays a role. This suggests that the truth in María's world either comes from family or at least from her near vicinity. The importance of place in María's understanding of truth in her world in Cuba, placed at the heart of her family with doubt arising on the horizon, suggests that the family is not the only medium through which memories are transferred, using this central concept in Hirsch's methodological framework, which she has borrowed from Paul Connerton,<sup>6</sup> and leads us to a consideration of her places of memory and the spaces through which they are transferred.

A passage, further above, addresses the scepticism regarding Hirsch' focus on the family and Nora's juxtaposition of memory and history. It deserves to be repeated that this critique should not be interpreted as a rejection of their importance. The family indeed plays an important role for María's mnemonic framework and she also seems to impose a hierarchy on her sources of knowledge about the past that rejects narratives certified by the post-'59 Cuban government and values geographical and social proximity in the construction of her narrative. On one hand, this means that we have to accept that memory in the social realm is multidirectional, meaning that it is subject to ongoing negotiation in the interplay of different carriers of memory, or, as Michael Rothberg coined the term in his *Multidirectional Memory*:

...as Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche write, "Memory [is] a symbolic representation of the past embedded in social action"; it is "a set of practices and interventions." Multidirectional Memory considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post–World War II present.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>7</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 4.

On the other hand, however, we have to accept that memory in the social realm is also multi-original. Although the family indeed plays a central role in María's cultural memory, it simply cannot be the only source of provenance. This has been a problem in the study of memory, as the nature of memory studies as an emerging field attracting scholars from a large variety of disciplines naturally means that these scholars carry with them the focuses and methodologies that condition their work in certain directions. As scholars of memorials, art and literature, respectively, Hirsch and Nora dwell on memories expressed in the sources of their particular research focuses, ascribing them an importance over other sources. This is not a flaw of theirs, but the publishing of their thorough, well-written and convincing arguments promotes subsequent strains of research that take their point of departure in the concepts developed there, leading the research of the larger processes askew.

The thesis proposes that a solution to these issues is to accept the multiplicity of provenances and directions that memories have without focussing solely on their symbolic representation embedded in social action. Instead, the thesis attempts to formulate a conceptualisation of them from their core: the human faculty to make the absent present – the imagination. In every instance of mnemonic action, no matter the epithet we apply, the action that occurs is one of mentally bringing something absent into the present, using available structures – these 'available structures' being the ones described by the epithets: the social structure, the mechanisms of transgenerational transfer, etc.

This explains how María can use distance to explain her doubt about something that has occurred in another province of Cuba while she is in Santiago de las Vegas, as in the case with the death of her brother, while displaying certainty about the future of Cuba while being in Miami. We could call this a spatial mnemonic dynamic, stop there and submit a contribution to the war of epithets, but let us dwell on this idea of

distance and proximity for a moment to see if we can get closer to the driving forces behind mnemonic dynamics in order to find the place where memories from the multiple sources of provenance congregate before they shoot off in their multiple directions. After I had asked María what her outlook for the future of Cuba was, she answered that a change towards a democratic society could come within the next five years, but only if there was a “change of generations”. I then proceeded to probe where she had this knowledge from:

S: [...] usted dijo, perdóneme, que el cambio para mejor, como lo llamó usted, puede venir cuando hay un cambio de generación. Pero de padre a hijo hay un cambio de generación. Pero usted también dijo que cuando el padre y el hijo no estén en poder, va a haber un cambio. ¿Entiende la pregunta?

M: ¿Hasta dónde llega la generación? ¿Es lo que me estás preguntando? Yo creo que la generación de los Castro es el padre, el hermano, y los hijos. Entran los hijos. Porque los hijos han visto que el padre y el hermano han tenido la finca por cincuenta y no sé cuantos años.

S: ¿Y usted cómo sabe todo eso?

M: ¿De qué?

S: De la finca, de los hijos, del padre... Todo lo...

M: Todo el mundo lo sabe.

S: ¿De dónde?



M: De lo que viviste. Él es el dueño de esa finca, de Cuba entera. Él lo dirigía todo, lo manipulaba todo. Allí no había ningún extranjero que viniera y hiciera algo sin consentimiento de ellos. Y ningún cubano que pudiera ser algo extra sin consentimiento. Entonces te digo que llega hasta los hijos, porque si los hijos ven que los padres y el tío han mantenido eso allí, por cincuenta y pico de años, quiere decir que eso da fruto. ¿Entonces tú crees que ellos van a hacer un cambio radical? No. Van a seguir. Pueda ser que hay un cambio leve, pero van a seguir con lo del padre, porque eso es lo que mantuvo ese lugar así tanto tiempo. Tantos años. ¿No lo crees?

Although María by no means exhibits an absolute certainty in the quote above, there is a notable difference between the certainty here and the explicit doubt that she mentioned in the case of her brother's death. One hypothesis that could explain this difference of doubt could be that, in Little Havana, Cuba is imagined continuously through the available structures that present themselves as being Cuban, as María presents them in the quote below:

S: ¿Se siente parte, usted, de la comunidad cubana acá?

M: Sí, claro.

S: ¿Qué es lo que le hace sentir parte de la comunidad? ¿Por qué usted es parte de la comunidad?

M: [silence]

S: Es una pregunta.

M: Sí. [chuckles] Es una pregunta, yo sé. Bueno, pues, somos iguales.

S: ¿Qué tiene de igual?

M: Todo, la misma cultura, lo mismo que pasamos, lo mismo que hemos vivido anteriormente, la misma música.

It is not only through her perception of likeness that María creates the limits for her subject position, which in this case is a limit that allows for an inclusion of both Cuba and Cuban America, but it is by applying her likes (real or imagined) in a conversation about the past and the future – remembering that utterings of hopes and promises come closest to the bar between Saussure’s signifier and signified<sup>8</sup> – that she can bridge the distance of the Florida Straits. This mechanism similarly applies to the situation in which she could only express doubt, that is, the death of her brother: In that situation, she could not find a likeness in the military officer who brought the news, nor in the political society on which he based the premise of his message.

If it is the dichotomy between those like María and those not like her that rules her imagination, it is also this dichotomy that rules her perception of distance and proximity. If we accept Gunnar Olsson’s argument that “...the limit of an object (regardless of whether that object is material or conceptual) is intrinsic to its being” and if we consider María’s Cubanness as such a conceptual object, then the distance between María and her surrounding world is determined by her perception of where her Cubanness ends. In his chapter of the recent collection dedicated to Alistair Hennessy, Kapcia traces the discourse on the limits of the term Cuban as a

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<sup>8</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 239-243.

means of group identification, arguing that the term *comunidad* that I employed in my line of questioning stems from the discursive regrouping that happened during the rapprochement between the United States and Cuba in 1978. In this chapter, Kapcia works backwards through time, using the changing constitutions as a means to glance into the complexities that is Cuban national identity – a concept that needs to address issues of place of birth, cultural (tangible and intangible) and biological heritage as well as questions of morals in the form of whether or not subjects would have been willing to engage in the struggle of national fulfilment.<sup>9</sup> María is an interesting case, in that her identity formation happened in opposition to the national identity promoted by the post-'59 governing norms. During her life in Santiago de las Vegas, her basic pattern of identity formation was made up of the dyad revolution vs. not-revolution, which means that anything outside of her entrenchment of this dichotomy is outside the limits, far away. When María, however, later in her life finds herself in Little Havana, the limits to her Cubanness have changed to be determined by “la misma cultura, lo mismo que pasamos, lo mismo que hemos vivido anteriormente, la misma música,” this subject position comes to include her likes in Little Havana as well as in Cuba, meaning that a geographically larger distance can be perceived as less far in terms of identification and, by extent, constructions of doubt and certainty.

### **Xiomara: Content with Stories**

Most people that I interviewed during my stay in Miami were fairly easy to place on the political spectrum and although their autobiographical stories revealed how they came to find themselves on that particular place on the simplistic line through a life of development, they almost all tried to convey that they had always been of those convictions. Xiomara, however, did not. On one side, she relayed memories of bad

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<sup>9</sup> Kapcia, “What’s in a Name?”; Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 11-14, 255-261.

things that happened to her family, such as how her family had lost property in the early years after '59:

X: ...mi abuelo tenía un negocio. Y mi papá trabajaba en el negocio de mi abuelo. Cuando triunfó la revolución, a pocos años el negocio quebró y mi papá empezó a trabajar en un laboratorio.

Just a little later in the interview, she relayed an even worse incident:

X: Los mataron. En el año '65. Ellos [her uncles] trataron de, de de... Ellos... Mi familia tenía la posición económica de... Era buena. Y ellos estudiaron en escuelas católicas y tenían un grupo de amigos que pertenecían a un club social, y cuando triunfó la revolución empezaron a decir que... Ellos no sabían tampoco, no sabían nada. Mis abuelos tampoco sabían de comunismo. No sabían nada. Y los dijeron que los iban a llevar para el servicio. Y ellos decidieron irse de Cuba en una lancha. Y los mataron. A nueve muchachos jovencitos. Los mataron y nunca mi familia supo dónde estaban ni nada, nada. Los mataron. [...] y nosotros en casa no podíamos hablar cero cero de la revolución. Mi abuela odia a Fidel. Lo odia. [...] Mi abuelo se enfermó. Mi abuelito. Se enfermó y murió. Se enfermó. Se enfermó. Se tiró en una cama a llorar y llorar, sufriendo porque no supo.

The impact of post-'59 politics on her immediate family is tangible in the room even as I interviewed her in February 2018. As she was born in 1964, she could not have been more than one year old at the time of the incident, which means that for her to be able to tell the story in detail, it must have been related to her time and again. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that, while other interviewees with similar

experiences developed innate hate for anything remotely connected to the post-'59 government, we find the image below in the 20 February 1976 edition of the weekly magazine *Bohemia*. To the left, Fidel Castro casts his vote for the constitution at the first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). To the right, a 12-year-old Xiomara.<sup>10</sup>

X: Cuando yo tenía 12 años, que estaba en la primaria. Ahora me acuerdo. Fue el primer congreso del Partido en Cuba. [...] Sabes que escogieron diez niños en Cuba, para que fueron en el Carlos Marx, y escogieron diez niños para que fueron a las urnas donde iban a votar. Y escogieron... Me escogieron. Yo era jefa de escuela.

S: ¿Jefa de escuela?

X: Jefa de escuela. Yo era jefa de escuela, que en el matutino, cuando los niños se forman, yo era la que hablaba y esas cosas. Era la jefa de escuela. Chiquitica. Y escogieron la escuela donde yo estaba. Y salí en la revista *Bohemia*. [...] Éramos diez niñitos nada más. Me recogieron a las seis de la mañana, me van a buscar en mi casa, con uniforme de gala. Me recogieron y me llevaron casi a las doce de la noche a la casa. [...] Allí había Fidel, había Brezhnev, bueno votaron, pero los vi comiendo y yo.. con nosotros, nos tenían con los otros niñitos cuidándonos. Eramos chiquitos. Teníamos... Yo tenía... doce años. Once o doce años. Tenía en esa época. Y entonces, bueno, nos dieron un diploma después que salimos y salimos en *Bohemia* cuando él votó en la urna. Búscala. Búscala a esa *Bohemia*. Salí en todo. En el periódico y todo.

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<sup>10</sup> Revista *Bohemia*, ¡*Tenemos Constitución Socialista!*.



*Momento histórico de la Patria: Fidel Castro  
Ruz asaltante del Moncada, el jefe que conti-  
núa la epopeya de Céspedes y Martí... vota  
la Constitución socialista.*

Given the stories that other interviewees had told me about the provenance of their discontent with anything related to the post-'59 Cuban government, Xiomara's story almost seems paradoxical. When I probed her about her family's reaction to her appearance this close to Fidel Castro, the man who they blamed for the murder of her uncles, this was her response:

S: ¿Estaba orgullosa?

X: Bueno, imagínate, en aquella edad era una niña, para mí era una cosa, tú sabes, era diferente, que a mí me habían escogido, era una cosa. Después me reía cuando grande porque, imagínate, pero cuando estaba chiquita estaba orgullosa. Yo no sabía nada tampoco a doce años. Después empezó la...

S: ¿Pero sus papás también orgullosos, felices que tú...?

X: No, mira, claro. Mi papá y mi abuela no.

S: ¿No? ¿Y por qué no?

X: Bueno, mi abuela no, en mi casa, mis abuelos...Mi abuela contenta igual como todo el mundo que yo había ido, que me habían escogido. Independientemente de todo, que no estuvieron, no fueron afectos de la revolución. No quería decir que cualquier logro que uno hiciera como... Ellos lo.. Ellos se ponían contentos con cualquier cosa que yo hacía.

I have previously mentioned Hirsch and her framing of the concept postmemory based on the passing down of repressed narratives within structures of family through multiple forms of mediation. Although she in the introduction to *The Generation of Postmemory* asks herself the question whether the concept of postmemory should encompass social structures outside the family, it does not come back in the rest of the book.<sup>11</sup> In the case of Xiomara, however, the influence of her wider social circle seems to be an important piece of the frame that shapes her cultural memory. She was born and grew up in Miramar, Havana, where her father managed to move from losing the family business to working a respectable job with the Japanese agricultural equipment company Komatsu. Xiomara furthermore tells the story of a close group of friends in this economically well-off and socially well-connected part of the capital:

S: ¿Quiénes eran?

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<sup>11</sup> Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 6, 33, 35.

X: Grupos de niños. Todos hacíamos cosas. Teníamos juegos, muchos juegos infantiles. Compartíamos mucho. Es decir, tú vas a la escuela y tenías amigos. [...] Del barrio, que estaban siempre en la escuela, porque pertenecían a la escuela. Entonces jugaban, iban a los cumpleaños, iban a tu casa, comían en tu casa, tú comías en la casa de los vecinos. Los vecinos te cuidaban. Era diferente totalmente. Entonces yo, la adolescencia mía fue, la niñez, bella. Todavía tengo amigos. Todavía tengo amigos de cuando yo tenía... Desde que yo nací. Yo tengo amigas de... Nos criamos juntas.

S: ¿Y dónde están ahora?

X: Están aquí.

Growing up in this very friendly neighbourhood atmosphere, we could argue that Xiomara's familial boundaries are extended from the core family unit that Hirsch relies on, but however interesting that line of argument could be, there is another element that needs to be highlighted, which is the fabric that tied together her group of friends. When talking about starting secondary school, Xiomara mentions the importance of music:

X: Allí empecé [unintelligible] y empezamos casi todos los niños de esa edad, la generación de nosotros era de música americana. [...] el gobierno no lo permitía, ni cierta música en español tampoco, romántica. No se podía. Era prohibido, porque decían que era mensajes anticomunistas y cosas así. Era diversionismo ideológico. Era la palabra. Que, entonces, y te... En la escuela no podías llevar nada que no fuera de Cuba, porque si llevabas algo extranjero, llevaban a los padres por diversionismo ideológico.



[...]

S: ¿Eran como discos o casetes?

X: No, era long play. Long play. Entonces, en las fiestas los oíamos. En las fiestas. Hacían fiestas, se usaba en ese tiempo. Todos los sábados era fiesta. La gente hacía fiesta en la casa y con música americana.

S: ¿Pero qué gente?

X: Los amigos. O un amigo te decía que íbamos a ver otro amigo que tenía una fiesta.

Throughout the interview, it becomes quite clear that Xiomara likes to enjoy herself. She talked broadly about house parties all over Havana during her time in secondary school as well as her time as disco-aficionada frequenting nightclubs during her time in university. This aspect of her life is one in which she starts to notice certain idiosyncrasies in Cuban society. She chooses to call them *doble moral*:

X: Pero seguimos todos juntos y no... Era como familia.

S: Dijo usted que en aquella escuela había hijos del gobierno.

X: Sí sí, muchísimos. Muchísimos. En la escuela estaban muchísimos.

S: Ya. ¿También entre sus amigos? Me atrevo preguntar...[...]

X: Estaba, te voy a decir, estaba el hijo de un hombre que era, en ese tiempo, era embajador en Angola. Que era los [unintelligible] Están... [mumbles] Muchos, deja ver. Son amigos míos. Muchos todavía, tú sabes, los... No. No.

S: Pero estaban en ese grupito.

X: Sí.

S: Y fueran a las fiestas.

X: Sí sí.

S: Hijos del gobierno...

X: Fuimos a fiestas a su casa. Y en esa casa, sí, sí, sí.

S: ¿Escuchando a Led Zepelin?

X: Sí, sí. Claro, doble moral, aha.

S: Aha. ¿Qué es la doble moral?

X: Oyendo... Doble moral que... Ellos te lo prohibían, pero en la casa es donde más... Donde más posibilidades tenían.

S: Claro.

X: Eran los que más posibilidades... Se oía y no pasaba nada. Eran fiestas y se iban... Ellos se iban, los padres se iban y se quedaron los hijos solos. Ahí te dabas cuenta de la diferencia. Te dabas cuenta porque era totalmente una cosa distinta como a... Tú sabes, una cosa diferente. Ellos tenían hasta choferes, y yo conozco que tenían criadas. Y guardaespaldas en la puerta de la casa. Pero, realmente uno se... Después se habla, pero ahí en el momento se iba a divertirse.

The term *doble moral* has been approached from various academic vantage points,<sup>12</sup> but what is interesting here is that Xiomara's definition of the *doble moral* is doing one thing in private while keeping up appearances from a different ideological standpoint in public. Just as this mechanism explains the fact that members of governing bodies, on one hand, can maintain a discourse of ideological diversionism, while on the other allowing their children to enjoy the music of Led Zeppelin, it also explains the issue of her participation in the election process of the 1976 constitution while simultaneously maintaining a loyal relationship to the memory of her family's loss after 1959. In the first realm of lies, that of secret parties with musica non grata and later disco-dancing, Xiomara does not reveal any particular discomfort to me but explains it as a mere fact of life. When I, however, later in the interview ask her what she perceived as the most important historical event during her time as a university student, she mentions the execution of Arnaldo Ochoa.

Ochoa was a general who had participated in the early internationalist brigades with missions to Venezuela, among others, in the late 1960s and who was put in charge of the Cuban intervention in the Angolan civil war in the mid-1980s. In June 1989,

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<sup>12</sup> Ogden, "Lonely Planet"; Wirtz, "Santería in Cuban National Consciousness".

Ochoa and twelve other high-ranking officers were arrested and charged with corruption and drug smuggling. Four of the arrested, including Ochoa and high-ranking officer in the Ministry of the Interior, Tony de la Guardia, were ultimately executed. Many theories remain as to the reasons behind this sentence. One is that Ochoa would have been a challenger to Fidel and Raúl Castro with ideological leanings sympathetic to the development in the USSR under Perestroika and Glasnost.<sup>13</sup> It has to be mentioned that the US government at this point saw the problem of narco-trafficking as a serious foreign policy issue, which in December 1989 led to the invasion of Panama due to the support that general Noriega had given to members of the Colombian Medellín Cartel. The Ochoa affair can be seen as a measure taken by the Cuban government to distance themselves and thereby avoid a similar fate.<sup>14</sup>

As Xiomara was the only one to bring up the Ochoa Affair, I asked why she thought this event was of such importance. At first, she answered:

X: Porque ellos siempre habían [unintelligible] que ese gobierno... Que era mentiras, se sabe que era mentiras. Allí no había errores. Allí nunca cometían errores. Allí nadie robaba, allí nadie mataba, allí todo el mundo era una cosa. Y destapar aquello, fue porque fue con una conexión, imagínate tú que realmente fue algo que se les fue de las manos a ellos. Todo el mundo sabía que era como un golpe de estado, y había droga, había de todo, pero él siempre... Él siempre manejó toda la información de Cuba. A él no se podía escapar nada. Entonces fue una cosa que ya fue, terrible, y entonces le llevan a juicio. Y fue una, fue como quitarse la carreta. ¿Sabes?

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<sup>13</sup> Gott, *Cuba: A New History*, 218, 279-286; Klepak, *Raúl Castro and Cuba*, 53-55; LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, 325-331.

<sup>14</sup> Kapcia, *Leadership in the Cuban Revolution*, 155-156.

La máscara. De algo que ellos habían pañado por tiempo, pero, salir así... Salir y hacerlo así público fue algo, totalmente horrible. [...] Fue horrible, porque fue... Ponerlo allí, y la gente, mucha gente sabía que estaba mintiendo. Que lo que estaba diciendo, Fidel lo estaba obligando. Mucho. A decir cosas que no eran ciertas. Entonces cambió la visión.

S: ¿Pero es que Ochoa y De la Guardia gustaban entre la gente... entre tus amigos? ¿Se hablaban de ellos de buena forma, o?

X: [whispers] ¿Tú estás grabando?

S: Estoy grabando.

X: Es que... Yo... Yo tengo mucho cariño, y somos amigos la esposa de él y yo... de... de un hijo de la Guardia.

S: Ok.

X: [Whispers. Unintelligible] Entonces, eh, los hijos... Los hijos no tienen culpa. ¿Tú sabes? De lo... Cosas de... De los padres. Y no solo eso, también porque, realmente lo que pasó allí, es que, él vio que esa gente se fue pa' arriba y que esa gente se fue a hacer un golpe de estado. Fue realmente eso. Y él allí inventó muchísimas cosas, y lo desmoralizó a ellos delante de todo el pueblo. Mucha gente sabiendo que era una mentira. Ya esa cosa fue así.

S: ¿Y en aquel entonces ya era amiga de... este el hijo de...?

X: Lo conocía, pero no era tan amiga. Ahora sí. Y entonces... no sé. Ya. En base de esa época, yo creo que eso fue una de lo más o menos, una de las cosas importantes.

Although the importance of the Ochoa Affair on the course of Cuban history might be debatable among historians, the importance of the event in Xiomara's narration is remarkable. From talking about her times as *jefa de escuela* to her dancing days, she manages to balance between the contradictions inherent in the *dobles moral*. After the unmasking that she mentions, the line, between public and private that separates the two moralities, is breached and she cannot find truth on either side of the divide. Immediately following the quote above, she moves on to mention the intervention in Angola and the people who either died there or came home sick with AIDS. Marvin Leiner and Emily Kirk have written about sexual politics in Cuba, the latter describing an aggressive prevention and treatment plan in the 1980s, the former stating that out of the 300,000 Cubans returning from Angola, only 82 tested positive with HIV.<sup>15</sup> Whether or not Xiomara was relaying a truth or not is however not the point here. What is interesting is how the narration of the Ochoa Affair created an imbalance in the *dobles moral* that pushed her out of the realm of truths in search for a fixture on which she could build her ideological standpoint. The further she comes in her narration, the more certain she becomes of the untruthfulness of the narrative that she built her life around in Cuba, and she does not shy away from placing the blame in a very particular place:

X: Hubo una época en Cuba en que no te dejaban tener el pelo largo.

S: ¿Y usted tenía el pelo largo?

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<sup>15</sup> Kirk, *The Normalization of Sexual Diversity in Revolutionary Cuba*, 113-114; Leiner, *Sexual Politics In Cuba*.

X: No tenía el pelo muy largo, lo tenía corto. [laughs] No, no, pero, lo tenía... Me gustaba corto. Sí, pero, no pero de una vez es decir que te estaban... Que te controlaban. Controlaban tu vida.

S: Pero ¿qué controlaban? ¿Quién...?

X: ¿Eh? Pero el gobierno... ¿Quién va a ser? Por las órdenes de Fidel. Que no es que todo el mundo dice, porque la gente por todo el mundo piensa... No, no. Dicen que Fidel hizo tantas cosas, son como... La gente... La imagen de Fidel fuera de Cuba es una imagen que la gente está equivocada. También fue lo que vendieron. Y es cierto que hizo cosas, porque nosotros no podemos quitarle el mérito que hizo cosas.

S: ¿Qué cosas?

X: Por ejemplo, él... En lugares escondidas, él alfabetizó. Fíjate, llevó la alfabetización. Él... Una de las cosas que ahora creo, es que él era un gran demagogo. Él hablaba tanto, tanto, y tenía el poder de la oratoria. Él convencía a la gente con sus discursos, que eran mentiras. Nos engañó, hasta la historia a nosotros lo cambió.

I have previously described how the emplotment of history has served the post-'59 Cuban government in all stages from conception through consolidation to be employed in the educational system in order to lay the ideological basis for Cuban citizens, encoded through the 1976 constitution and operationalised in media discourse when the Cuban government needed to endow its citizenship with agency in a particular direction. As the media coverage during the Mariel Crisis suggested, Xiomara came to stand outside of history by acknowledging the *doble moral* and

finally transcending the invisible line that kept it in balance. With even the most solid ground taken away from under her, the history that should be a scientific, empiricist endeavour, there was little left in Cuba than living the lie. She tells me that she decided to leave Cuba shortly after finishing university because:

X: Ya yo estaba ya en otro... Y era mayor, ya veía las cosas que estaban pasando y no me gustaban. No me gustaba vivir allá. Querría irme del país. Y me encontré con esa persona que querría irse del país. Él es hijo... Los padres de él vinieron con Fidel desde México. Y estuvieron en la Sierra, los padres de él eran del gobierno. Y entonces, nada, él se decidió irse y nosotros encontramos la... Él tenía una tía que vivía en Perú, y ella en el año '91... desde el '90 nos empezó a conseguirnos los papeles para salir para Perú. De visita. Y en el año '91, en enero, me fui de Cuba.

After arriving in Peru, Xiomara continued to Miami, where she moved in with family. Notably different from other interviewees, Xiomara does not share the initial exaltations over a better life in the United States, which became clear when I asked her about the atmosphere in the city when she arrived:

X: Era la época de la salsa.

S: Acá en Miami, ¿pero a usted no le gustaba?

X: No. Entonces, la ropa, me río, porque siempre sacó la cuenta, me río, porque era como si fuera de salsero, vestido. Y era diferente. Yo tengo completamente onda hippie, diferente completamente a la... Es decir, entonces, decíamos, llegamos a los EE. UU: “qué atraso”. [laughs]



S: [Laughs]

X: Qué atraso decíamos. No es nada. No puedo ir a la galería, no encuentro nada. La gente, la música era salsa. Era completamente, era como si hubiésemos llegado a un, a un campo.

In spite of her immediate distaste for the Cuban American community culture in Miami, Xiomara did set herself up there to stay close to family members who had already moved there, found a job, a new husband and bought a house. In '97, she returned to Cuba to visit her family and was faced with the scarcity of the Special Period. I asked her how she found the country after the six years of absence:

X: Destruído. Cuando yo llegué a Cuba... Imagínate, yo me fui y después que yo me fui empezó el periodo especial en Cuba. Que dicen que fue una cosa terrible. Yo no me enteré, pero parece que la situación... No había comida, era una situación malísima. Y cuando llegué a estar en el país, pero una situación malísima. Y tuve unos sentimientos cuando llegué a mi casa, no parecía mi casa. Yo estaba totalmente desorientada cuando fui a Cuba. No entendí de lo que me hablaban. No entendía. Estaba... Loca. Estaba loca. Estaba loca por irme.

The financial collapse of the Special Period and its wide-ranging socio-political ramifications had changed Cuba for her, which could explain why she, later in the interview, very clearly stated that she did not want to move back there, because she did not believe in short-term political change in Cuba. After talking about her visit, I asked her which important events had occurred in Cuba lately:

X: ¿En Cuba? Bueno, hasta hoy, la muerte de Fidel. Que nadie se va a alegrar de la muerte de nadie, pero aquí fue un acontecimiento. Yo salí pa' la calle. Fuimos al Versailles, Yovani, Alberto y yo. Nos fuimos, estábamos los tres en la casa juntos y cuando Yovani y yo, que... No lo podíamos creer, porque lo habían dicho tantas veces, y no es el hecho de ser la muerte de nadie, pero es que era una persona que, que, que por esa, que por una sola persona, esa sola persona ha hecho daño a tanta gente. Y la gente está tan herida, porque hay gente que perdió familia, gente que se han ido y que nunca se han vuelto a encontrar, familias que no se hablan. ¿Sabes? Entonces, fue como... Fue, para mí, que ha sido lo más grande que ha pasado.

Xiomara's participation in the celebrations in the place that is so closely associated with the older generation of anti-Fidel Cuban Americans identifying with the right-wing of US politics seems odd. She had told me how she did not identify with the Cuban American community and professed openly to dislike President Trump and adore Obama. Three phenomena had converged here. First, she was placed outside of the history of Cuba when she began to dissociate the objective and the subjective truth balanced in the *doble moral*, she was no longer the perfect citizen from the picture in *Bohemia* that her history curriculum was meant to form, and the agency prescribed in the newspapers no longer fit her ideological basis. Secondly, her displacement to Miami removed her from the development of Cuba throughout one of its harshest financial crises, meaning that thirdly, she had to content herself with a story that could support her identity by placing blame for her situation somewhere. In the frenzy of Miami, this became Fidel.

## Imagining across the Wall

In the context of the following interview, a pause has to be made to reconsider the notion of historiography. What is paramount to understand here is that truths about the past are not only present in books written by historians, but that claims about the past can gain the value of truth, if they are promoted through a system of knowledge production with sufficient power. This idea will be further developed by using the term canon, borrowed from Jan and Aleida Assmann. This broader understanding of vehicles of truth in the past within ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) is not only a theoretical exercise, as any society relies on certain infrastructures that frame the possibilities of imaginaries. I hope here to highlight the necessity of an understanding of the frameworks that condition perceptions of reality on both sides in any process of cultural development.

Given the lack of a physical wall separating Cuba and Cuban America, we have to think in abstracts before we apply this metaphor. The first thing that comes to mind is the conception of the Florida Straits as a liquid, deadly wall of waves, but if we for a moment think beyond the Trumpian world of walls (bear in mind that these words were written during the US government shutdown of December 2018-January 2019) and re-read Laclau's theory of subject position in an invisible network of discourses, it is the articulation of difference and equivalential logic that constitutes the space wherein agency occurs: Cuba and Cuban America become solid constructs that frame discursive walls (or barriers, steel slats, border security) fixing Cubans and Cuban-Americans as subjects in solidified identities.<sup>16</sup>

All identities, of objects and subjects, are relational and the product of articulatory practice. Articulatory practice 'fixes' the meanings of social

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<sup>16</sup> Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.

identities by linking a signifier, e.g. 'industrial worker', to another, e.g. 'revolutionary communist'. This linkage is not necessary; other substitutions (for 'industrial worker') are possible. Precisely because it is a signifier, 'worker' does not have an immanent meaning or identity but depends on an articulation of signifiers.<sup>17</sup>

Before getting too embroiled in discussions of hegemony and contention, discourse and reality, this argument will rather begin by repeating an idea that has had a great impact on its understanding of the practice of historiography – White's proposal that historiography is yet another form of literature, as any historiographic text, no matter how close it comes to describing the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, must make choices on the order in which events are represented.<sup>18</sup>

The thesis has argued that the historiography promoted by ISAs in Cuba over the last half-century promoted a narrative emplotment in which the Cuban nation was defined as the people on the island of Cuba who found themselves in a struggle against foreign colonial and imperial forces. If a person from the island of Cuba became (self-)identified as falling outside this definition, they would automatically fall outside the Cuban nation. A question that needs to be asked here is if perhaps the real colonisation of Cuba happened through the modernist practice of history-writing as necessarily the writing of the history of nation states. The dynamics arising from the semiotic exercise of collectivising a subject-position have been researched in depth by Michael Billig and Benedict Anderson, with the most prominent work of the latter announcing this mechanism in the title: *Imagined Communities*.<sup>19</sup> Within this framework, the writing of Cuban history as a linear narrative of a nation, a state and

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<sup>17</sup> Hudson, "The Concept of the Subject in Laclau", 301.

<sup>18</sup> White, *Meta-History*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

a nation state, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, ignores the trans-national and trans-cultural nature of the Cuban culture, nation and state laid out in Chapter 2. If this is so, then a question would be whether the model of nation-state history should not be applied to Cuba.

In order to open up for a discussion of the questions above, this chapter is going to look toward yet another interview from my trip to Miami in February 2018. Although I tried to keep my interviews somewhat similar in order to allow for comparability, this was already difficult to begin with, given their open structure. The interview with Yovani was the one where I failed most in this endeavour, which coincidentally made it one of the best interviews. The part of the interview which I left the most open was its setting. When arranging each meeting, I asked the interviewees to think of the place in the city which to them was the most Cuban. One interviewee chose a Cuban restaurant, one met me in a park, but most interviewees simply met me in their homes, saying that it was the place where they felt most Cuban, leaving me with the suspicion that the choice was merely made out of convenience. Yovani, on the other hand, had something more complex planned for me. He met me at the corner of Calle Ocho and SW 13th Avenue – the entrance to the Cuban Memorial Boulevard Park – whereafter we continued the interview in his car while driving through Miami to conduct the final part in the studio where he worked on his paintings and held art workshops. The itinerary that Yovani guided me through and the route that our interview took along these lines quite literally allowed us to travel from the memorialisation of Cuban American cultural memory via the concrete sediments of memory in the cityscape to the alternative narrative that Yovani emplotted in his workshop.

To understand the importance of this itinerary, the ideas on cultural memory of Jan Assmann should be revisited:

As cultural memory is not biologically transmitted, it has to be kept alive through the sequence of generations. This is a matter of cultural mnemotechnics, that is, the storage, retrieval, and communication of meaning. These mnemotechnics guarantee continuity and identity, the latter clearly being a product of memory. Just as an individual forms a personal identity through memory, maintaining this despite the passage of time, so a group identity is also dependent on the reproduction of shared memories. The difference is that the group memory has no neurological basis. This is replaced by culture: a complex of identity-shaping aspects of knowledge objectified in the symbolic forms of myth, song, dance, sayings, laws, sacred texts, pictures, ornaments, paintings, processional routes, or – as in the case of the Australians – even whole landscapes.<sup>20</sup>

It is here important to underline that the vehicles of memory mentioned in the quote above are only to be interpreted as such if they are interpreted as such. In the case of the example of Australia mentioned in the quote, the landscape of Australia would carry no signifiers connecting to the past of indigenous Australians if I were to walk through it, as I would be bird watching and remembering good times with the pet cockatoo of my youth in Denmark, whereas the indigenous Australian would experience time, place and memory on a different scale, evident here in the words of anthropologist Anne Marie Monchamp:

...in Alpururulam the loss of places and/or the degradation of places is also the loss of memory. Therefore, if people are 'made of memories' and memories are explicable based on being in a place, then in some important respects the degradation of places is an assault on personhood.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> Monchamp, *Autobiographical Memory in an Aboriginal Australian Community*, 134.

The remembering and forgetting observed by Monchamp in the quote above does not only occur when the vehicle of memory degrades but also when the mnemonic paradigm changes. This mechanism was actively weaponised by the Australian authorities in the intended cultural genocide against indigenous Australians. Doing research on the forcible removal of indigenous children for re-education in Australian and Canadian schools, Craig W. Blatz and Michael Ross remark that: “The goal of the schools was to ‘civilize’ the aboriginal children, who were strictly disciplined for speaking their native language and robbed of their cultural identity.”<sup>22</sup> With no one to teach them how to interpret the Australian landscape as a vehicle of memory, the children mentioned in the quote naturally became unable to participate in its cultural memory. This leads to the question of canon and interpretation. In his investigation into vehicles of memory in early civilisations, Jan Assmann asserts that:

...cultural memory organizes itself into canons of the first, second, and sometimes even third order, as primary and secondary literature, or texts and commentaries. The most important step toward canonization is the act of “closure.” This draws a definitive line between the canonical and the apocryphal, and between the primary and the secondary. Canonical texts cannot be changed – this marks the crucial difference between them and the stream of tradition.<sup>23</sup>

Note here the overlap between the terms canon and hegemony as defined in Chapter 1, section From Theory to Methodology. To recapitulate this relation, I will repeat that, in Gramsci’s understanding, the superstructure of society consists of an ideological framework, which during a revolution must be combated “...in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy

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<sup>22</sup> Blatz and Ross, “Historical Memories”, 227.

<sup>23</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 78.

one hegemony and create another, as a necessary moment in the revolutionizing of praxis.”<sup>24</sup> This dynamic is also noticed by Jan Assmann, who writes that:

The alliance between power and memory also has a ‘prospective’ side. Rulers usurp not only the past but also the future because they want to be remembered, and to commemorate their own deeds by monuments, ensuring that their glory will be narrated, sung, immortalized or, at the very least, recorded in archives. Power ‘legitimizes itself retrospectively and immortalizes itself prospectively.’<sup>25</sup>

The rise of a canon of cultural memory into a hegemonic ideological structure does not happen just with the existence of a vehicle of memory in a society. This requires two additional essential features: circulation and interpretation.

Meaning can only retain its life through circulation, and that is provided by the shared communication of rites. But texts in themselves do not automatically circulate – they must be circulated – and if this ceases to happen, they become a grave for, rather than the bearer of, meaning. Only an interpreter [...] can revive that meaning.<sup>26</sup>

The colloquial explanation of the role of this second point in the three-way relationship between text, interpreter, and listener, can be referred to as the high priest of memory, as the interpretation of scripture by a priest should be understood in realms of belief, while still carrying a certain degree of power of truth. This is however also true of the interpretation of a historian, an archaeologist or any figure

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<sup>24</sup> Alves, “O Conceito do Hegemonia”, 73; Gramsci, “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc”, 190-209.

<sup>25</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



occupying a position of power from which he or she can transmit the formal and authoritative interpretation of the canon. Nevertheless, the role of the authoritative interpreter, no matter which lab coat I chose to dress him or her up in, is a crucial element here. It was not enough for my understanding of Cuban America to just meet Yovani at the Cuban Memorial Boulevard. I also needed an explanation by an authoritative interpreter of the place in order to, as Jan Assmann writes, take its meaning to heart.

A canonical text, however, embodies the normative and formative values of a community. It is the absolute truth. These texts must be taken to heart, obeyed, and translated into real life. That is why they need interpretation rather than recitation. They appeal to the heart, not to the mouth or ear. But such texts do not speak directly to the heart. The route from the listening ear and the reading eye to the understanding heart is as long as that from the graphic or phonetic surface to the formative, normative meaning. And so the canonical text requires the presence of a third party – the interpreter – to mediate between the text and the reader/listener, and to clarify the meaning hidden within the words. That meaning can only emerge through the three-way relationship between text, interpreter, and listener.<sup>27</sup>

Before we move back to my interview with Yovani, a few words need to be said about this relation between the text, the interpreter and the listener, as one of the main premises of the thesis is that it is the relation between these three that determines the possible agency of the imaginaries driving cultural memory, ultimately conditioning ideology. In his introduction to his work on collective remembering in the former USSR, James Wertsch shares an anecdote in which this

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 79.

dynamic becomes very clear. A colleague enters his office and asks for help finding a suitable book on a certain topic. Although Wertsch does remember a specific book that might be suitable, remembers the author, the size and colour of the book, he does not remember the title. To solve this problem, he turns toward his computer and enlarges his mnemonic capacity by entering Amazon.com.

Viewed in terms of mediated action, the question that arises here is, “Who did the remembering?” On the one hand, I had to be involved as an active agent who had mastered the relevant cultural tool sufficiently well to conduct the appropriate search. On the other hand, this active agent, at least at that moment, was quite incapable of remembering the title of the book in question when operating in isolation – that is, without additional help from an external cultural tool. [...] But Amazon.com is not an agent in its own right – at least the same kind of active agent that I am (hopefully); it did not somehow speak up on its own to tell my colleague or me what we wanted to know.

From the perspective of mediated action there are good reasons for saying that neither I nor Amazon.com did the remembering in isolation. Instead, both of us were involved in a system of distributed memory and both were needed to get the job done. In short, an irreducible tension between active agent and cultural tool was involved. The nature of the cultural tool and the specific use made of it by the active agent may vary greatly, but both contribute to human action understood from this perspective.<sup>28</sup>

After introducing the term mediated action, Wertsch goes on to develop concepts such as the constraints and affordances of cultural tools, the mastery of them as well as their production and consumption.<sup>29</sup> To understand these terms, Wertsch

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<sup>28</sup> Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

moves to an understanding of text via the writings of semioticians such as Yuri Lotman and Mikhail Bakhtin as comprising a complex system of language. Appreciating the value of Wertsch' mediated action, as it is necessary to mention the fact that any assertion of memory, even from Assmann's interpreter, is the result of a dialogue between object and subject, the thesis will add this process to the frame of its methodology.

To finally come back to the value of the itinerary that Yovani had laid out for our interview, it allowed us to travel from the normatively assertive space of the memorial park, through the normatively formative space of the cityscape to the subjectively constitutive space of his workshop. In abstract terms, the interview could hardly have been better structured.

The following analysis will again take the methodological point of departure from Olsson's ever-returning paraphrase of Kant, that casts imagination as the human faculty used to make the absent present, as this becomes the main subject of the investigation.<sup>30</sup> In the interview it is therefore crucial to notice the way space and time are interpreted while also paying attention to the way Yovani frames the subject positions of his narrative – especially related to his conception of his Cubanness.

### **Yovani in Public: Fortifications of Memory**

Before I met Yovani, I had already walked the entirety of Calle Ocho from 49th to 5th Avenue. This second visit was however a lot more interesting. As I mentioned above, we met at the corner of Calle Ocho and 13th Avenue, the Cuban Memorial Boulevard. After establishing Yovani's name for the record, the first question I asked was where we were.

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<sup>30</sup> Olsson, *Abysmal*, 120.

Y: Estamos acá en el monumento que le hicieron a los combatientes de Bahía de Cochinos. Que hicieron una invasión a Cuba en 1961, y después, pues los dejaron solos. Los mismos americanos no siguieron por un pacto que, y por ciertas presiones que tenía Kennedy, y claro, al ser tan poco, pues Fidel Castro se lo [chuckles] se los echó a todos.

S: [overlapping] ¿Vamos a caminar para verlo?

Y: O sea, los, bueno, primero se murieron muchos y otros fueron presos, otros murieron en el traslado en un camión cerrado sin oxígeno, en fin, fue un, una época, fue una etapa medio horrorosa de la, de la, de lo que llaman la revolución cubana. Esto fue el 16 de abril 1961. Esto es una llama que nunca se apaga. Y es una homenaje a la comunidad de Miami a esas personas que, que murieron. O que participaron en la invasión a Cochinos.

The first thought that came to me at that moment was that Yovani had to be a conservative Republican. The Brigade 2506 monument is one of the places in Little Havana where Republican candidates come to associate themselves with the conservative elements of Cuban America.<sup>31</sup> In his investigation on Cuban American religious symbolism in Little Havana, Thomas A. Tweed writes that: "For anticommunist Cuban Americans, the Bay of Pigs memorial has the emotional power of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C."<sup>32</sup> The monument was the first to be erected in the park, inaugurated on 25 January 1973. Besides the large Ceiba tree behind the Brigade 2506 monument, the shrine to the Virgen de la Cobre and of course the statue of José Martí, most installations on the boulevard carry clear,

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<sup>31</sup> Grenier and Moebius, *A History of Little Havana*, 98-101, 153-155; Fodere, "Republican gubernatorial candidate Ron DeSantis explains why he decided to quit congress".

<sup>32</sup> Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile*, 88.

explicit political messages, especially since most of them were erected on commission from outspoken anti-Castro groups in Miami.<sup>33</sup> Yovani's interpretation of the monument did, however, not fall in these categories.

S: [...] Y como artista, ¿cómo ves a esa cosa que tenemos acá? ¿Este monumento?

Y: Mira, a mí ningún monumento no ha gustado nunca. Las banderas me parecen trapos horribles. Así, si me preguntas como artista, voy a decir cosas horribles, que pueden desagradecer a la gente. El concepto de patria me parece militarista. Los ejércitos los detesto. La policía la odio. [laughs] En fin, no me preguntes por un monumento que es militar, porque voy a decir lo peor del mundo.

S: Bueno...

Y: Aparte que es feo, ¿no?

After first having a little bit of a laugh with Yovani over his frank statement, I asked him to describe it for the voice recorder:

Y: Es, eh, más que feo es muy típico. Son unas grandes balas que funcionen como, como una cerca o como los estamentos de una cerca, con cadena negra. Después todo es un monolítico como un mármol, o marmolino negro. Un negro grisáceo casi verdoso y, bueno, supongo que sea un hexágono, no lo he detenido, debe ser un hexágono, como de ocho

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<sup>33</sup> Grenier and Moebius, 42-43 & 99-101.

pies, donde termina en una antorcha que siempre está encendida. En el hexágono en cada parte, en cada lado del hexágono hay una especie de escudo con descripciones primero de lo que sucedió y a los lados los nombres de las personas que murieron. No es de los peores que he visto. [...] Bueno yo he visto monumentos en todas partes, en Cuba sobre todo los monumentos que le hacían a Che Guevara y a toda esa gente eran cosas terribles y he visto como un Martí corriendo a veces en un monumento [laughs] que da deseos de llorar, pero bueno. No, no, no, este no es de los peores. Por lo menos es un poco sobrio. Es bastante pesado, ¿no? Pesado desde el punto de vista del peso, ¿no? De su peso visual. A pesar de que es una cosa alta, pero es pesado por los símbolos que tiene. La cosa balística, la misma llama, el mármol negro, eso me... demasiado solemne.

The very technical description that Yovani gave me of the Brigade 2506 monument gave me the impression that he merely disagreed with the monument due to aesthetic considerations. When he however continued with further descriptions of the memorial boulevard, there were other consideration that came to the fore:

Y: [...] estos árboles son antiguos. Yo creo que esta avenida lo escogieron por eso mismo. Por la forma que tenía, por el paseo en el medio. Para poder hacer todo eso... Este boulevard cada vez... Ha sido muy cubano, fíjate que está la patrona católica de Cuba, que es la virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. Es decir todo... Tiene mucho... Es una simbólica o una poética que tiene mucho que ver con la Cuba de la república. La Cuba republicana.

S: ¿Y cuáles símbolos son esos?

Y: La patria, libertad y familia. O sea también está... Y la presencia católica.

La presencia de la isla de Cuba dividida en las primeras seis... En las seis provincias republicanas que ahora son como no sé cuánto. Ahora están todos picados. La Ceiba, que es un árbol típico y sagrado.

The topic of diversity and liberty of opinion and expression came up in other parts of this first step of the interview, particularly when I asked why he had decided to meet me on the boulevard:

S: Y dime porque... ¿Por qué estamos acá?

Y: Ah, me dijiste que querías ir a un lugar que fuera algo como más típico, ¿no? Te traje a este lugar que es... Que tiene que ver mucho con el exilio cubano, desde el punto de vista político, por la antorcha, desde el punto de vista social y hasta humano, ¿no? La cosa histórica por Martí. Cuba tiene un pueblo católico en su mayoría en aquella época, en el '59. Y entonces aquí están como ciertas raíces que se mantuvieron durante toda la república hasta 1959. O sea que este parque es un poco abarcador de todo ese sentimiento y manera de ser del pueblo cubano. Por eso pensé que era un buen lugar, aparte de que hay mucho aire fresco.

In this analysis of the Memorial Boulevard as a space of inclusion, it is notable that the only representative of politics is the eternal flame of Brigade 2506. When I just minutes earlier in the interview had asked about the committee that had erected that monument, Yovani had described them as:

Y: Ellos son cubanos exiliados y representan, de alguna manera representaron a los cubanos exiliados, porque fueron los cubanos que fueron a luchar contra Castro. O sea, ellos sí, son una, no sé si son una

asociación o una organización, pro-Cuba, por la libertad de Cuba, muy respetado aquí, que ahora son unos viejitos, pero en aquel entonces tenían 20-30 años o algo cuando fueron a pelear. Eran jóvenes. O sea, han envejecido acá como ha envejecido el gobierno de Castro, ¿no? Porque todos ellos eran contemporáneos. Han envejecido juntos los de allá y los de aquí. Ahora tendrían la misma edad que podrá tener el gobernante Raúl Castro. Posiblemente.

When I later asked him if he would identify himself with the same category that he used to describe the committee that had erected the monument that he claimed not to like earlier, the answer surprised me:

S: ¿Usted es exiliado?

Y: Yo sí. Yo me considero exiliado sí. Claro. Sí. Si yo no...

S: ¿Y cómo se refleje su identidad como exiliado en ese lugar?

Y: Ah... Este es un lugar muy diverso...

S: Hay lo católico, lo santero...

Y: Bueno, está bien, aquí, esto precisamente, este es un lugar que representa una diversidad, que me permite a mí, yo que soy ateo, estar sentado allí leyendo un libro de Lezama Lima. Esto es un lugar muy abierto y liberal en su estructura y en su concepción. Y claro, pues me representa de alguna manera. Hay lugares de paz, de concilio, donde cada cual pueda



expresarse y así me veo yo representado, claro.

At this point, the narrative that Yovani was emplotting in the interview was that of Cuban American Miami as an inclusive space, in which he was free to be who he wanted to be. Although he is not nearly as plagued by nostalgia as some of my other interviewees, there seems to be a certain longing towards the pre-'59 republic, which Yovani interprets as rooted in the thinking of José Martí. The prominence of the Brigade 2506 monument does however mean that no matter how much he emplots his cultural memory as more inclusive and less monolithic than the group behind the monument, his story still has to begin there; it is simply too big to avoid. In this way, Brigade 2506 has become the usurper of past and future mentioned in the quote of Jan Assmann further above.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the Brigade 2506 monument, we find the ceiba, which plays a different role in Yovani's narration of the place, and, consequently, in his cultural memory:

Y: [continuing from the quote further above] La Ceiba, que es un árbol típico y sagrado.

S: Está grande.

Y: Es sagrado de la religión afrocubana. A este se le pide, se le ponen... se le hacen...

S: ¿A este? ¿A este de acá?

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<sup>34</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 54.

Y: Sí. Sí. Este mismo. Aquí, mira. Ahora está todo sembrado, todo está muy bonito, pero aquí viene la gente y hace sus, digamos sus ritos. La gente, los creyentes, ¿no? [...] Aquí por ejemplo tengo una amiga bailarina que hizo un performance aquí mismo, y las bailarinas todas se fueron, eh, se fueron... Rodearon el árbol y fueron como abrazándolo y como formando parte de él y fue una cosa muy interesante, ¿no? Fue como una simbiosis entre el ser humano vivo y el árbol que está rígido, y bueno, también se permite, claro. Claro. Tú puedes hacer un rito. Tú puedes rezarle y nadie te va a decir nada por eso.



The dance with the Ceiba is an interesting anecdote, as it is an example of an interaction on equal terms with the monument that is not possible with the monument to Brigade 2506. Whereas the latter is a monolith that requires submission through rituals such as the laying of wreaths, the former is an invitation to dialogue through the rituals described by Yovani. The latter ritual does, however, not carry nearly the same power as the former does. In the unveiling ceremony of the new, controversial, flag of Little Havana (see above), the pledge of allegiance to the US national flag was recited by spectators and top Miami officials, including mayor of Miami Dade County Carlos A. Gimenez, in front of three flags: The US national flag, the flag of the City of Miami Fire Rescue Department, whose representatives were officiating at the flag salute and finally the flag of Brigade 2506. In the same ceremony, Miami Commissioner Joe Carollo announced that the new

flag would fly alongside the flag of Brigade 2506 in Little Havana and after the revealing of the flag, the ceremony closed with officials holding up the 2506 flag next to the revealed flag of Little Havana while singing the Cuban national anthem.<sup>35</sup>

After having a quick lunch near the Memorial Boulevard, we got into Yovani's car to drive to his atelier in the neighbourhood of Allapattah, a ten or twenty-minute drive, depending on the traffic. As Yovani kept telling interesting stories in the car, I decided to continue the interview while driving, as our movement through the city allowed me to ask questions related to the infrastructure of possible imaginaries that make up the cultural memory of Cuban America. The infrastructure of the city similarly plays a role in the framing of cultural memory. In his investigation of the ancient Greek polis as a framework of Hellenistic cultural memory and collective identity, John Ma writes:

Social memory allowed the polis to present stories about itself, and thus make itself seen, and hence evident: it was constitutive of the collective subject. These constructions, without necessarily being lies, always entailed selectivity and forgetfulness—which imply a form of collective subjectivity.

[...]

In the polis, memory remained open to constant reworking: honorific statues could be moved or re-inscribed; complex rituals meant to enshrine collective visions of the past and to restate communal identity[...]<sup>36</sup>

Subscribing to Ma's assertion of the city as another frame in the social structure of cultural memory, I tried to ask questions that would give Yovani the opportunity to talk about Miami across the spectrum of time and space. One of the elements that

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<sup>35</sup> Crespo, "Little Havana Flag Ceremony 11/30/18".

<sup>36</sup> Ma, "City as Memory", 252.

came up in this part of the interview was the creation myth of Miami as a city that owed its success to the influx of Cuban migrants after 1959.

S: ¿Y qué historia tiene la ciudad?

Y: La ciudad... Es muy corta... Apenas tiene 100 años y un poco más. Su mayor crecimiento ha sido desde los 60 hacia acá, que ha tenido la expansión económica. Antiguamente era Miami Beach y la playa y la ciudad de Miami, que era muy pequeñita y estrecha, pegada al mar. Entre el Río Miami y el mar. Con el avenimiento de toda la migración cubana primero y latinoamericano después, pues ya la ciudad ha crecido.

Although there definitely is a truth to Yovani's assertion that Miami grew, in size and importance, with the steady arrivals of Cubans after 1959, the Cuban influence on the city was already present from its very conception. As mentioned previously, the initial plans for the city included a PR strategy focused on the development of cigar factories. Streets were given names after Cuban people and places, buildings designed to look particularly Spanish and even building materials were stripped from houses in Havana to be sent to the new city.<sup>37</sup> The notion that the success of Miami hinges on the post-1959 migration of Cubans is not without its ideological implications; it is a statement that often comes up when political agendas of Cuban Americans are promoted and more often than not in relation to conservative policies. The flag-revealing ceremony mentioned earlier included several examples of this dynamic.<sup>38</sup> Although Yovani had expressed a clear discontent towards the ideological implications of the Brigade 2506 monument just moments earlier, it seems that he was not unaffected by this discourse, particularly through its

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<sup>37</sup> Sicius, "The Miami-Havana Connection", 5-7; Pérez, *Cuba*, 432-433.

<sup>38</sup> Crespo.

comparison between Miami and Havana as twin cities separated by development and under-development:

Y: [waiting for the drawbridge at the Miami River] ...como es una ciudad que se construyó sobre arena no es una ciudad que tiene un subway, un metro, un subterráneo. No se puede hacer, creo. Porque no hay fondo para eso. Entonces el transporte casi todo es privado. Es en auto. Todo el mundo tiene coche.

S: Y por eso estamos parados acá.

Y: No, ahora estamos detenidos porque está saliendo un bote. Un yate que es más alto que el puente y hay mucho comercio. Yo cuando me molesto que estoy, así como ahora, esperando, pienso, pues menos mal que la ciudad tiene una movida económica extraordinaria. Porque pudiera no estar pasando eso y no estar pasando nada. Yo que viví en Cuba que no pasaba nada y no había ni carros, casi, pues resiento la tranquilidad, esa pulcrus, la cubana. Porque no hay movimiento económico. Aquí veo pasar los aviones continuamente, veo salir los barcos, que sé que traen mercancía, van y vienen, y digo: 'Bueno, estamos en una ciudad viva, ¿Y qué más da que yo me detenga?'

It is noteworthy that Yovani here had a perfect opportunity to complain, but that he, in spite of my loaded comment, chose to take Miami's side over Havana's. The comparison between Havana and Miami reminds us again of Gilloch's readings of Benjamin's essays on Naples, Moscow and Paris as architectural products of

different stages of modernity as well as temporal discourses.<sup>39</sup> In Benjamin's reading of Naples, he lays a connection between the city's porous architecture and the life led there:

Porosity results not only from the indolence of the Southern artisan, but also, above all, from the passion for improvisation, which demands that space and opportunity be at any price preserved.

[...] Similarly dispersed, porous, and commingled is private life. What distinguishes Naples from other large cities is something it has in common with the African kraal; each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. To exist, for the Northern European the most private of affairs, is here, -as in the kraal, a collective matter.<sup>40</sup>

Yovani's reading of the difference in architecture is similar, but instead of relating porosity to privacy, he reads the perceived standstill in Cuban urban life, compared to the bustling Miami in a direct comment on the flow of time in the two city-spaces. This comparison became even clearer when I asked where the relation between Miami and Cuba came from:

S: ¿Y qué tiene que ver la ciudad con Cuba?

Y: No, yo. Yo soy él que tengo que ver. La ciudad no sé. Yo tengo que ver porque a todo lo comparo porque vengo de allá.

Although Yovani here did not answer my question the way I intended him to, he made it clear here that he assumed an active subject position as a floating atom

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<sup>39</sup> Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis*, 13, 21-24, 26.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin and Lacis, "Naples", 166-167, 171.

between the two places, giving himself the liberty to compare and analyse them.

When I insisted that he talk about the Cubaness of the city, his answer was:

Y: En términos ya general, ¿tú dices? ¿Qué tiene que ver esta ciudad con Cuba? Bueno, la población... la migración mayor que hay acá, el asentamiento mayor es cubano. Es decir, esta es la segunda ciudad más grande de Cuba. De más cubanos. La Habana tiene unos casi dos millones y esta tiene ya casi un millón de cubanos. No llega, pero está allí. No hay ninguna ciudad en Cuba que habita más cubanos que Miami, salvo a la Habana. O sea, una ciudad que a veces te.. Cuando oyes la música y ves a las personas bailar, te dices: "Eh, pero ¿de dónde son?" Estos son cubanos realmente. O sea que es una ciudad muy penetrada por el sabor caribeño y específicamente cubano. La hemos superpoblado, creo.

After recounting the basic demographics of the neighbourhood of Allapattah where we were headed – a former working-class neighbourhood that was now going through a process of gentrification with the installation of artist studios alongside the car mechanic workshops, populated by migrants from the wider Caribbean and Central America – we got to my questions related to his self-identification within the city.

S: ¿Y en qué lugar de la ciudad usted se siente lo más cubano?

Y: Ehmm... Esa pregunta no me...

S: Bueno, reformulamos: ¿Qué le hace sentir cubano aquí en Miami?

Y: No, eh... El clima, que es casi idéntico a lo de Cuba. Que haya tantos coterráneos. Gente viviendo que lo oigo como suenan, como hablan, la familiaridad, la familia cerca. La radio, cuando hablan, la televisión cuando televisa... Tiene mucho de las cosas de Cuba.

S: ¿Qué canales de radio?

Y: Bueno, mira. Lo que pasa es eso que... Por ejemplo, yo... Es que no tengo. Yo no soy el típico. Yo no oigo en español. Pero si yo voy a la casa de mi cuñada, están viendo la novela. Están viendo. entonces allí me entero los programas cubanos cómicos. Allí es donde me entero. Cuando visito personas. Es decir, yo no estoy tratando de sentirme cubano.

S: Pero sin embargo no se puede.

Y: Pero no me puedo sustraer de una realidad que es muy fuerte. Una realidad muy fuerte.

Although Yovani here tried to avoid giving me a straight answer, a couple of interesting issues came forward. Besides the mention of music, language and family as portals to a Cuban reality in Miami that have already been mentioned in the analysis of previous interviews, the most important issue that needs to be discussed has to be Yovani's mention of his inability to extract himself from this reality. This means that he is reminded of his Cubanness, although he does not actively seek it out. As a consequence, although he might try to live a life as a floating atom, he is continuously caught in a web that keeps defining his Cubanness and his degree of freedom – concepts that he subsequently has to negotiate with the memorialisation culture, that he introduced me to in Little Havana, that seeks hegemony by



incorporating these floating signifiers into its power structures. Before we however lose ourselves in discussions on discourse, hegemony and ideology, it is important to pay attention to the reality that Yovani mentioned. Luckily, I picked up on his use of this term during the interview:

S: [Direct continuation from the quote above] Háblame de esa realidad.

Y: Una realidad que, por ejemplo, el nombre de las tiendas no solo es español, sino son tiendas que había en Cuba. De todas. La de la ferretería, no sé como lo llaman ustedes, bueno ferretería lo llamamos nosotros, donde venden cosas, tienen nombres como los que había en Cuba, la familia entera, mueblerías, están trasladados acá. Tienen los nombres que tenían allá. Entonces a veces voy caminando y veo cosas como de mi pueblo. Soy de Matanzas, y veo nombres de Matanzas. Y entonces pregunto si ese señor vino en el 60 y como que él tenía una peletería y vendía zapatos se llamaba tal, aquí zapico, aquí lo puso igual. Cuando la pudo abrir, lo puso lo mismo. Entonces estamos rodeados.

[...] Te voy a hacer una anécdota. [...] A mi me gustaba más francés, pero algo sabía de inglés. Entonces llego un día y voy a escribirles a mi familia que todavía estaba en Cuba, y tengo mi carta y voy caminando al correo, al post office, ¿tú sabes? Y voy ensayando, estaba recién llegado: "I need an estamp. [pronounces the 'e' in 'estamp'] I need an estamp to Cuba. I need two estamps" Para decirlo bien, y cuando llego y empiezo a decirlo dice me la señora: "Niño, ¿No me lo puedes decir en español?" [both laugh] Y eso me. Me sentí cómodo, pero me sentí frustrado [laughs] porque digo, creo que no voy a aprender mejor inglés más nunca en mi vida. Porque si cada

vez que voy a hacer un esfuerzo me dicen eso, pues, me voy con la más suave.

Although Yovani's answer here might come over as circumstantial, a look at a Miami business directory would immediately corroborate the anecdote: Robert M. Levine and Moisés Asís noted that in 1999, Miami's Bell South Yellow Pages had 279 entries listed with names that included "Cuba" or "Cuban", 120 that included Havana or Habana, and 31 that included Varadero. Besides these three top scores, many other businesses included the names of other Cuban cities in their names and others reflected Cuba's indigenous heritage with names such as *Bohío*, *Cacique*, *Taino*, etc.<sup>41</sup> This material Cubanness of reality in Miami – the physical shops, the actual streets named after something Cuban, the resounding Cuban twang to the Spanish spoken everywhere – provides Yovani with what Wertsch further above named external cultural tools. Subsequently, the directionality of the remembering that happens is provided through the mediation of action by the power holders over Miami's memorials, such as those possessing the authority over the Brigade 2506 memorial mentioned further above.

The assertion that Cuban American cultural memory in Miami poses as a frame of reality from which Yovani cannot escape is however not an attempt to finally claim that the chicken came before the egg. I mention this not only because that would deny Yovani any agency, but also because he had showed me a genuine desire to escape this framing of reality through the critique against the Brigade 2506 memorial. This is where we notice the agency inherent in his imagination across time and space. The question now is where the provenance of his remembering lies,

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<sup>41</sup> Levine and Asís, *Cuban Miami*, 143-144.

and what this free atom contributes to the Hadron Collider of Miami's Cuban American cultural memory.

### **Yovani in Private: The Imaginary where Birds Fly**

While Yovani was walking me through the Cuba Memorial Park, it seemed that he showed a certain form of nostalgia for the pre-'59 republican times in Cuba, not expressively due to the processes that framed the nostalgia of other interviewees, but rather framed by concepts such as freedom of expression and belief. When we arrived at his studio and continued the interview there, I tried to dig a little further into this part of his life.

S: Cuéntame, ¿Usted nació en cuál año?

Y: Bueno, yo nací, a ver, yo tengo muchos problemas con la edad, porque mi familia y todo el mundo apuntó la edad siempre. Mi mamá tuvo 36 años hasta que cumplió 74 de pronto. Porque el gobierno cubano le obligó a llevar una identificación que decía la edad, y para mí fue un gran choque ver que mi mamá tenía 74 años. Para mí, desde niño ella había tenido 36. Yo no sabía que la edad cambiaba. [chuckles] Entonces, bueno, era algo así, pero yo nací sobre el año '51. [laughs] Muy al principio de '51. Toda mi niñez la pasé en la república, ¿no? [...] Mira, éramos una familia pobre. Mi papá trabajaba en una fábrica. Hacía cubos. ¿Cubos sabes lo que es? Cubos. Mi mamá no trabajaba. Estaba criándome a mí y a mi hermano en la casa. Teníamos. Mi papá ganaba apenas 100 pesos mensuales, pero mi papá tenía hermanos de mejor posición económica, un poco mejor, y su mamá, mi abuela. Y entonces, gracias a eso yo fui a una escuela privada, porque mi tía, que vivía acá, en los Estados Unidos, pagaba la escuela mía privada.

S: Me ha dicho que su papá era de acá.

Y: Bueno, era hijo de americanos. Claro. Sí, mi papá era. Mi abuelo era. Es decir, americano por razones igual que las mías, que ahora lo soy. Mi bisabuelo era tabaquero español y en Cuba durante la. El estanco de tabaco de 1870... o '50 y pico tuvieron que salir de allá, porque las cortes habían puesto. las cortes españolas habían cerrado mucho el comercio para debilitar el poder criollo, y mi bisabuelo español venía para los Estados Unidos. Aquí había dos ciudades en que se fomentaba el tabaco, que eran Ibor City en Tampa, y Cayo Hueso, Key West. Mi familia vino para acá. Aquí nació mi abuelo y todas mis tías abuelas. Eran como cuatro. Pero mi abuelo y sus primos se casaron entre si, o sea que aquí también nacieron la familia de mi abuela. Aquí. Pero inmediatamente, a los 10 y pico años ya Cuba había cambiado, y ya era siglo XX. Ya Cuba era independiente, y ellos volvieron para Cuba todos.

The memories that Yovani was relating here are much less nostalgic than the stories told by other interviewees who insisted on the romanticism of a perceived pre-'59 Cuban cosmopolitanism. However, there is a trope that repeats from a previous interview:

Y [...] mi abuelo, como era americano, trabajaba con una compañía americana manejando trenes. Ferroviario. Y eso fue lo que hizo toda su vida. De allí se retiró en una, no sé si has estado en Cuba, en Casablanca, frente a la Habana, al otro lado de la bahía. Hay un polítono que se llama Casablanca y allí sale el tren de Hersey. Era la compañía americana y mi abuelo manejaba ese tren, que iba desde Casablanca al central Hersey, donde se hacía chocolate y maravillas en el medio de las dos provincias, y

de allí hasta Matanzas. De Matanzas a Hersey, de Hersey a la Habana. Eso era a diario un montón de viajes. Eso hizo mi abuelo, y mi abuela no...

S: ¿Y si manejaba así entre la Habana y...?

Y: Matanzas.

S: ...y Matanzas, ¿por qué no se compró una casa en la Habana?

Y: Primero se establecieron en un pueblito de la Habana. Pero no le gustó y se mudaron para Matanzas. No... Nunca pregunté por qué. Tenían unas primas allá, creo. Unos primos. Creo. Porque... Tenía muchos primos en Matanzas, mi abuelo. ¿Cómo llegaron allí? No sé. Entonces la otra parte se quedó aquí en Key West. En aquella época yo era niño, se iba y venía de Matanzas a Key West en el barco, en el ferry, y entonces yo...

S: ¿Cuánto tiempo tarda? ¿En este Ferry?

Y: Me imagino que ocho horas en el ferry. En avión eran 30 o 35 minutos. Entonces mis primos o los primos de mi papá no eran míos, estaban continuamente en Matanzas, y creo que vivieron acá. Yo tenía ni idea. Yo era niño, pero sé que ellos se vestían con muchos colores y nosotros no, y mi mamá decía que los americanos eran picudos. [laughs] Mi mamá decía: "Mira..." La mirada así... Mi mamá andaba vestido como para salir y las primas de mi papá, que tienen la misma edad de mi mamá, me acuerdo de que iban con una cinta en la cabeza y muchos colores. Sí. Muchos colores. No les importaba nada. Y bueno, en fin. Pero entonces, eso fue mi infancia. De allí, la Revolución, o sea, Fidel Castro toma el poder en el enero '59.

The significance of '59 here is one not only of a turning point in Yovani's life, as a divide between what he calls his *infancia* and his *adolescencia*, but also as a geographical divide between the colourful family in Key West and the family on the island. As Yovani goes on to recount what happened in the subsequent time of his life, the thoughts about what could have happened if this divide had not cut the connection between these Cuba's of varying colours permeate the conversation. When he told me the story of his years living in Havana while studying at the National School of Art, this geographical divide between Cuba and the world is emphasized by a Cuba that Yovani describes as grey and uninspiring, especially compared to the inspiring and colourful world in the art school.

Y: Allí hice toda la carrera becado en la Habana, en la Escuela Nacional de Arte. Y de allí me gradué. Allí conocí a los grandes artistas cubanos, vaya, mi vida cambió. De pronto la vida tenía sentido, a pesar de lo que estaba pasando fuera. Que afuera había, la decadencia aquella de Maoísmo de aquello. No había ropa, los jóvenes no tenían donde ir, pero yo estaba en otro mundo. En el del arte. Era un mundo... Es real, quizás, o virtual, porque, la república, o sea Cuba, la isla está pasando por un momento terrible de escaseces, de movilizaciones militares porque venía el imperialismo, y corre pa' acá todo el mundo, y corre pa' allá marchando, vestido de gris, como los chinos, pero allá afuera. Nosotros allí adentro vestido de grises, pero felices, mirando pa' Europa, viendo las películas de Wajda. [...] Vivíamos en una nube dentro de esa escuela que era maravillosa de la construcción. No sé si lo has visto, tienes que verlo cuando vaya. Hecha por Porro, un arquitecto italiano, y tal y tal. Es la única construcción bajo el comunismo que ha... que guste a la gente. Y bueno, de allí me gradué.

In Yovani's narration of his time in the colourful bubble of art school in the greyness that surrounded it, there seems to be a disillusion with the present and its outlook on the immediate future. This leads to the idea that a brighter outlook could be available only if the future is yesterday. This is obviously not possible, unless you find yourself in a discursive framework where time and space are imagined sufficiently close in meaning, as they are in the narration of Yovani. The grey clothes that Yovani mentions become the embodiment of cultural dynamics, or the lack thereof, of this time and place, in which the narration of his reality and the expectations for the future that it presents him pushes the hopes for better times from the temporal dimension to a spatial one.

S: ¿Y fuera de esa burbuja [the School of Art] qué estaba pasando?

Y: Seguía el Maoísmo, estaba afuera, y Fidel Castro había fracasado con la zafra de los '70. Teníamos que ir a cortar caña para hacer 10 millones, que no se hicieron, el proyecto económico cada vez más fracasado, las escaseces mayores, y mayores, cada vez más carestía, menos ilusiones. Y el famoso decenio gris, donde se hace el congreso de cultura y prohibió casi todo.

After finishing his degree at the National School of Art, Yovani moved on to study another degree, beginning with history of art, but with a sudden turn towards the subject of law.

Y: Empecé a estudiar la historia del arte. Cuando fui a estudiar historia del arte, la universidad era muy sonsa para mí, porque en la Escuela de Arte yo había aprendido mucho de la historia del arte. Mucho. Y bien. Los maestros me decían que no hablara en clase, porque los ponía en tela de juicio. Me

pedía “Usted cállese, que le vamos a decir.” Entonces, yo le dije que yo no voy a seguir viniendo a callarme pa' que me dan un 100, y me pasé para derecho.

S: ¿Derecho? ¿De arte a...?

Y: Derecho

S: ¿Leyes?

Y: Y me gradué.

S: ¿Por qué te pasaste a...?

Y: Bueno, por muchas razones, en ese tiempo salía con una chica que quería estudiar derecho. Mi mamá quiso ser abogada, pero nunca pudo porque mi abuelo era muy pobre. Yo no sé. Entre mi mamá y mi novia, me apuntaron. Yo empecé en la escuela de derecho a acompañar a Rita. Porque ella no quería ir sola.

Through a professor that became impressed with Yovani's academic abilities, he graduated to get a job at the ministry of justice, where he worked on the analysis of law proposals. Working within the ministry, he witnessed a system that he perceived as repressive, contradictory as well as directly counter-productive. This was expressed most clearly when I asked him about his experiences during the '80s, a decade which all my interviewees introduced by talking about the same event:



Y: La migración de Mariel, que se fueron 100,000 cubanos en menos de tres meses. Tú sabes eso, ¿no? Por la embajada de Perú y después todo que quiso por el puerto de Mariel.

S: Yo me lo sé todo, pero la grabadora no lo sabe.

Y: Ah, para la grabadora, pues, en ese momento... Tengo un dato interesante, yo trabajaba en el ministerio de justicia. Vaciamos las prisiones. Fidel Castro manda a vaciar las prisiones y mandarla pa' acá a todos los convictos. Y estuvimos tres meses con las cárceles vacías. A los tres meses se volvieron a llenar. Por una razón muy sencilla: En Cuba, todo es delito. Cualquiera... Si tú comes carne, es que la conseguiste por algún lado que está prohibido. 20 años a muerte. O sea, hay montones... Todo es delito. Todo está prohibitivo. Y es una sociedad en que, si tú no delinques, no comes, no vives. Las cárceles se volvieron a llenar a los tres meses, porque la sociedad esa crea delito. Lo crea. Y yo se lo estaba diciendo, pero... Bueno, en fin. Era... Cuando yo trabajé tuve muchos problemas. Me dijeron que yo era gusano. Cuando Fidel Castro quiere hacer la.. O da la idea, o no sé, de como hacer la ley de la juventud. Una ley para que los jóvenes, el comportamiento de la juventud y la infancia. Y cuando se termina la ley, que yo la estoy viendo, porque yo era del equipo que trabajaba en eso, yo digo "esta es la quinta rueda del coche". "¡Eres un gusano! ¡Estás en contra del comandante!" [imitates high-pitched voice], y yo digo "No, no, no. No se trata de eso. La quinta rueda. Esto no tiene reglamento. Esto no hay... Esto no tiene como hacerse. Es letra muerta." Y así se quedó. Y así. Una vez les dije: "¿Por qué no le metes la ley en el código de sucesiones?" La herencia, ¿no? Succeder en latín es estar. "No, no, porque eso es capitalismo. Y además tenemos muchos cubanos fuera." Y yo: "Precisamente.", porque me

parecía elemental, dígole: “Si ellos nos heredan herencia, y la de nosotros va para ellos, ¿quién gana?” A mí me parecía tan elemental. Me dijeron que yo era otro gusano.

In his work for the Ministry of Justice, Yovani had gone from his celebrated bubble of colours to move into a grey and stagnated world outside it, where his interpretation of Cuban history in a standstill changed to a trope of regression:

Y: [In continuation from the quote above] Pero bueno, eran cosas que no había manera... aquello estaba oxidado. Los '80 estaban oxidados. Ya se había copiado todo el sistema soviético. Habíamos hecho toda la estructura de la administración central del estado por la línea soviética, la sovietaización de la sociedad. [...] Vivíamos de ellos, no se producía. Fidel Castro todos los días tenía una idea nueva. Que si las vacas las metemos en aire condicionado van a echar más leche. Y aquello... La caña se acabó, y vivíamos de la caña. Los terrenos los cultivamos los muchachos. Se jodió. O sea, el país iba cada vez pa' atrás. Yo no sé hasta cuando se puede ir pa' atrás, porque todavía está yendo pa' atrás. [laughs] Yo espero un día llegar y ver la comunidad primitiva de la gente, si sigue así. Pero bueno. Entonces, yo me voy a pintar. Yo me desentiendo de eso. Digo bueno, cuando me dejaron de molestar...

After having returned to his metier as an artist in a small studio in Matanzas, a group of Spanish senators from the socialist party, bored of the beaches of Varadero, passed by a gallery opening there by chance and fell in love with his artwork to such a degree that they invited him to exhibit in Spain. This leads to a series of coincidences in which the stars of geopolitics aligned with friendly bureaucrats in Cuba in a story that merits the following long quote:

Y: [The Spanish senators tell Yovani and his three colleagues] “Queremos exponerlo en España. Pero tenemos na' más que dinero para mantenerle a uno allá en España invitado. Digan ustedes quién es.” Y se van. Los otros tres habían sido alumnos míos de la Escuela de Arte de cuando yo era joven. [...] Hacemos una reunión, a que yo nunca llego, y en la reunión los tres deciden que él que debe ir soy yo. Yo no salía de Cuba ni a la esquina porque había tenido todos esos problemas y eso... [...] Pero el gobierno de Felipe González manda a decir que fulano de tal está invitado a España, pasaje pagado, y la embajada en la Habana se hace cargo de los trámites. Yo voy a la embajada de España, me recibieron bien, me hacen los trámites, y entonces me voy a la dirección de culturas de artes plásticas, y digo que estoy invitado. Entonces me dice la asesora que me atendía a mi: “Yo voy a proponerlo al consejo, tu salida pa' que te den permiso. La reunión es el lunes a las tres de la tarde.” Dígole: “Giselda, yo me voy a las 9 de la mañana el lunes. ¿Qué hago?” Y ella regresa, “Vete. Vete y yo voy a la reunión pa' que te den permiso. Si no te dan el permiso, regresa, porque yo voy a estar presa.” Si no dan el permiso, yo no voy a salir. Y ella me da permiso, y yo estaba volando. Pero ya tenía el permiso de la seguridad del estado, porque el gobierno de Felipe González tenía mucho acercamiento con Fidel Castro en ese momento.

[...] El 12 de octubre de 1992. En sentido contrario a Colón, porque voy de la Habana a Santo Domingo, cuando me bajo pa' coger el otro avión, está el Papa dando el tedeum, pa' los 500 años, [...] Yo dije: “Que raro está todo esto. Estoy al revés que Colón.”

[...] Entonces me dijeron, entonces me mandan, aquí me llega una invitación, de Harvard University para... Me llega a La Habana, a Cuba una

invitación para dar una conferencia sobre arte cubano, porque una de mis alumnas trabaja acá, y me manda a pedir. Mi mamá, cuando ve la invitación, dice: “Esto ¿qué es?” y me lo manda pa' España, y yo con esa invitación voy a ver al ministro del interior de Felipe, que ya yo tenía acceso. Dije: “Tengo esta invitación”, dice: “Lo mejor que haces es irte de España, porque nosotros vamos a perder las elecciones y te vamos a tener que mandar pa' Cuba, porque el PP nos va a decir que como nosotros...” – querían entrar en la Unión Europea en ese momento – “..y que hacemos nosotros con africanos y con cubanos aquí. No no, hay que limpiar la frontera para la Comunidad Europea.” Todo eso me dicen ellos. Y entonces esperamos, Clinton gana, ya había ganado las elecciones, y me dice: “Cuando llega el embajador de Clinton, yo le voy a escribir.” Y así hizo, y así vine yo pa' acá.

The story of Yovani's migration is here narrated as a series of coincidental events that gave him the opportunity to travel to Miami. Compared to other interviewees who travelled by boat during the Mariel Crisis or later in the Balsero Crisis, there is little drama in Yovani's journey by airplane. The drama of the narration lies in the experience of time and the interpretation of historical tropes. Less than a couple of hours before Yovani told me the story of his migration, he had criticised the monuments of the Cuban Memorial Boulevard for their militaristic nationalism and thereby dissented from the ideology promoted by them. It is however nonetheless true that he shares their fundamental trope of history.

### **The Beginning of History and the End of Imagination**

The discussion in the section *Imagining Across the Wall*, further above, questioned whether the modernist paradigm of nation-state historiography was appropriate for the Cuban case. The concept of a free or sovereign Cuba is one that is closely related to the modernist paradigm of nation-state historiography, that Pérez has

investigated in depth, and has been discussed in previous chapters. In *The Structure of Cuban History*, Pérez writes that during the nineteenth century wars of independence “[t]he premise of national sovereignty contained within its configuration the promise of national fulfilment...” and goes on to assert that the historiography of Cuban national liberation wars came to figure as a central aspect of Cuban culture due to the perceived elusion of independence.<sup>42</sup> The divide between the historiography in Cuba and Cuban America is really a divide that centres on where this independence is, as the difference across the wall of ‘59 is fundamentally one that relies on the direction in which the collective subject is imagined: revolutionary Cuba towards a utopian future and democratic Cuba towards a nostalgic past. These tropes are clearly emplotted in structures of canon within the historiographical landscapes, both abstract and real, in a battle for ideological hegemony in which the free atoms such as Yovani are left to await the alignment of the stars to be able to imagine freely.

Yovani’s conception of Cuba after ‘59 as a grey society in standstill and even regression is conflated with the conception of Cuba before and after ‘59 as well as with the conception of space for creative and progressive practices of either profession that Yovani engaged in. This is again directly related with the spatial perception of Cuba’s close connection to Florida before ‘59, where the Hersey Train could take you to Cojimar, the ferry to Key West, and the Flagler Train further up the East Coast. In this same conception of history, ‘59 is imagined as a dividing wall between Cuba and Cuban America, particularly evident in the trope of Miami’s history resting solely on the advent of post-‘59 Cubans. These tropes are firmly cemented into cultural memory by high priests of memory on both sides of the wall,

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<sup>42</sup> Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History*, 11-14 & 255-261.

promoting claims to assert real Cubanness that serve as points on Olsson's map;  
one "revolutionary", the other "democratic", both "free".

## CONCLUSION

The thesis set out to investigate memory. Not any particular memory. Not the memory of any particular people. Not even any particular approach to memory as it is practised in a particular research paradigm, but rather memory as an essential aspect of knowledge production, a key faculty in the design of socio-cultural structures and a foundational element of the agency that emanates from subjective imaginaries. Answering Jelin's call in her keynote at the "Democracy and Memory in Latin America" conference at Harvard in the fall of 2013, (see p. 22) the goal was to highlight the dynamic nature of mnemonic structures and to investigate its articulations on key stages of its process in an attempt to journey to its core. In the application of Cuba and the Cuban diaspora in Miami as a case study to this very rigid search, a playground opened up in which theories converging in the field of memory studies could be put to the test and further developed.

Chapter 1 opened the floor for a study of the theoretical framework behind memory studies, what it is capable of and where it could be headed. Given the multiple origins of the discipline, arising in various parts of the world, in many cases as a reaction to societal transitions from regimes that violated human rights, this chapter took its point of departure in the epistemological paradigm where the idea for the thesis originated, in the Scandinavian, particularly Danish, research on how history is used in the present (see Chapter 1, section A Danish Point of Departure: Uses of History). The problem with this Scandinavian approach for the argument in the thesis was that it is too narrowly focused on the analysis of expressions of uses of history while underestimating its production and reception. The practice of establishing types of uses of history is suitable for the sharpening of historical debate and the identification of how history is used to frame arguments in particular moments but is not fully applicable for further questioning of how these dynamics

work. A crucial step on the way towards the argument of the thesis was provided by one of its earliest guides, the late Kayser Nielsen, who, besides welcoming the earliest versions of the argument with warm, valuable discussions, elaborated White's structural tropes of history to a point where they became operable in investigations of the diachronic structure of historical narratives.

By expanding the rigid search into the dynamics of the interplay between what over the course of the writing of the thesis came to be conceptualised as the space of experience and horizon of expectation, from my initiation into the Scandinavian paradigm of research into uses of history to the rising international field of memory studies, a series of clarifications had to be made in the section Broadening the Field. This became especially important given the framing of this argument within Latin American studies, where the concept of memory in the social realm is often applied in studies of transitions from regimes of human rights abuses to more democratic societies, in a way that, in most cases, reduces the concept to simply mean "truth about a traumatic past". It cannot be emphasized enough that the thesis is no critique of research that brings traumatic truths into the light, but rather a lamentation for approaches to memory that fail to see its full potential. The argument in the thesis owes a great debt to the work by Jan and Aleida Assmann, who assert that forgetting is an inherent aspect of cultural memory. (See p. 34) This means that the repression of a traumatic truth by an oppressive institution is not antithetical to cultural memory, but rather a core function of the cultural memory that this institution promotes. The critique developed in the thesis goes against deterministic ideas that fail to explain the relation between memory in the social realm and democracy and that, more importantly, fail to see the relation between cultural memory and anti-democratic movements.



By allowing Assmann and Assmann to play a fundamental role in the approach that the thesis takes towards memory, it framed the wider system of memory in the social realm as cultural memory. This means that it is the relation between the subject's neurological capacity, the immediate social context of the subject as well as the broad variety of phenomena in society that the subject relies on to carry memory, that make up this category. The next step is the exploration of what happens in this system and this is where terms such as communicative memory, mediatized memory, trans-generational memory and multi-directional memory become applicable to the dynamics within the system of cultural memory. The inclusion of spatial phenomena as carriers of memory is therefore by no means an innovation that breaks with the work of Assmann and Assmann, but rather an addition of a phenomenon that plays a part in the system. This conceptualisation stands in contrast to the work of Nora where the focus on spatial phenomena becomes a critique of modern institutions of knowledge production rather than a proposal for methodological innovation (see p. 41).

It is in the proposal of spatiality as yet another theatre in which memory happens that the wild thoughts of Gunnar Olsson become key in the argument proposed in the thesis. By asserting that place-bound metaphors function as genesis and subsequent catalysts that bring collective memories into metonymic semiosis, he addresses the dynamic between the subject and its surrounding cultural memory. By framing the experience of space as closely related to the experience of time, through Kant's conceptualisation of the imagination, memory is in Olsson's thinking not confined to merely reassembling, or re-membering, the past, but becomes the faculty through which the subject brings distant pasts, futures as well as places into its present: the full potential of memory. It is to make sense of this multidimensional process of memory, that Olsson's interpretation of the map comes into play. The three elements of the map – the projection scheme, the points and the lines

emanating from them – became key elements in the nascent methodological approach to memory proposed by the thesis, as it named the projection scheme cultural memory, and sees the points as iterations of memory within the system. Memory is, in other words, the ability to cartographically reason between past, present and future.

Still, the driving force of this cartographical reasoning, the projector of the lines of power, is perhaps Olsson's most important contribution, as it is his ruminations on the Saussurean sign (see p. 49) where we not only find a source for philosophical realisation, but also a starting point from where theory in its most abstract form can move towards methodology (see Chapter 1, section From Theory to Methodology). In his search for the core of the human experience, what he calls: "the stable centre of the Territory of the Humans", the first assertion is that any sign is a map, a simultaneous affirmation of the place and relation between object and subject within the imagined world and the possible directions that these can take. By dissecting the Saussurean sign into its constitutive parts, first the signifier (S) and then the signified (s), Olsson finds its third component, the bar between them. By awarding this bar a capital letter and using the word play that this manoeuvre initiates, Olsson opens the doors to the Bar-In-Between and shows how the establishment functions as a transformative space where meaning happens. Besides the poetic metaphors of intoxicated night-time revelry in smoky establishments where the last round is never called and bohemians meet misfits, which this conception of the sign allows for, it moves the focus of semiosis from the transformation of one sign into another to a focus on the transformative capacities of the sign itself and thereby the projection of the bar as a line through points on the map.

The focus on the sign as a driver of cartographical reasoning gave way to an important interlude in the chapter, as the structural linguistics and discourse analysis

behind investigations into the realm of ideology lead Feindt et al. to ambitiously develop their idea of the mnemonic signifier (see p. 61). By applying Olsson's thoughts to their work, this idea was expanded both to refer to the past and also to suggest that the mnemonic signifier is cartographically reasoned when passing through the Bar-in-Between, producing what Kayser Nielsen would call a historical trope, guided in temporal and spatial directions by imagination. In the moment of writing, allowing me to experience a U-trope, taking me from Kayser Nielsen's office, or rather, outside it, standing under the oak trees of Aarhus University's park campus while he smokes those cigarettes and listens thoughtfully to how I interpret his work, down through the challenging times that this PhD has given me, and back upwards towards the point where it sees its completion coming closer.

The very rigid search of a holistic, methodological approach to memory in the social realm, that the thesis embarked on, had at this point found its key elements. It is crucial to identify the elements in a given context, that wield the power over A. Assmann's canon and archive. The inclusion of Althusser's thoughts on ISAs, RSAs in combination with Gramsci's thoughts on civil and political society were helpful in determining where these powers lie. Subsequently, Benjamin's thesis that: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger,"<sup>1</sup> gave a suggestion as to where and when to look for the use of the canonised narratives in action, in order to assess what they are capable of. Finally, the receiving subjects of the mediation of these memories must be investigated. The thesis resorted to the use of oral history interviews, as they offered the subjects the possibility to construct in-depth narratives that both conveyed the meta-narratives they subscribed to as well as the context in which they were exposed to them. This

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 255.

three-step method has guided the thesis to the empirical material that it analysed, but the method does not stop there. The notion of The-Bar-In-Between as a place where the subject converts signifier into signified was key in the subsequent steps of analysis. Once it was understood as a dynamic concept designating the metaphorical place in the subject's imagination where relations in time and space are played out in the very instant in which signification is situated and the world cartographically reasoned, the notion became compatible with other tools of analysis. Coupled with Kayser Nielsen's historical tropes, the bar became a line, moving from the past through the present and into the future, while Olsson's paraphrase of Kant gave the tropes a spatial dimension, directing them from there through here and into elsewhere.

With the epistemological context and the foundation of the theory and methodology addressed in the thesis laid out in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 laid out the historical context for its case study and demonstrates the opportunities it presents for a study of mnemonic dynamics on a transnational level. The thesis subscribes to the idea that Cuban concepts of nationalism arose simultaneous with the idea of a Cuban sovereign national state, but that these two ideas were not strictly co-dependent. The paradox at hand here is that the Cuban nation was diasporic before it was fully conceptualised as a nation. Inter-Caribbean and inter-American commercial activity, especially directed towards the United States, along with displacement during the rebellions for independence and neo-colonial dominance by the United States were among the main factors that spread people from Cuba across the eastern US, with particularly concentrated centres in Florida and New York (see p. 73). When state borders became more fixed and the political interests of the United States and Cuba came into conflict on a state level, the trans-national nationalism survived, albeit side-by-side with nationalism that limited identity with state borders. In my

interviews, remnants of this nationalism can be found explicitly expressed in the interview with Rafael, as he says: “Nací en Cuba, en el Vedado, en una geografía. Pero incluso yo tengo una teoría de que todos los cubanos somos cubanoamericanos.”

This almost paradoxical dynamic between the rise of various interpretations of Cuban nationality and the cementation of state borders in structures of neo-colonialism is the background for ruminations such as those of Pérez-Firmat, inspired by Ortiz, attempting to define these nationalisms. As mentioned in the section Cuban Nationality in the Making, the definition of Cuban nationality that Pérez-Firmat proposes to make sense of the experience of nationalism in the diaspora, *cubanía*, has a fundamental flaw in its neglect of issues of slavery and subsequent racism, that excluded former slaves from acquiring full Cuban national identity. Based on the arguments made in the thesis, a hypothetical adjustment to Pérez-Firmat’s definition of *cubanía* as a “willingness at heart”, the will to be Cuban, could be that it is not only a will to be Cuban in the future, but rather a complete memory of being Cuban. That is to say, a conception of the self having a Cuban past, present and future both in its here and elsewhere. This definition has its own internal conflicts. What comes to mind here is the phrase that Swedish diplomat Harald Edelstam used, when he tricked his way into the Estadio Nacional in Santiago de Chile, in order to inspect the conditions of political prisoners detained there in the aftermath of the coup in 1973: “Donde yo camino es territorio sueco.” The assertion obviously did not have any standing in any kind of law, and Edelstam was ultimately declared persona non grata by the military government, highlighting how, no matter how he tried to bend the space around him to his imagination of himself as a privileged international power broker, the lines of power drawn by militarised imaginaries proved to prevail over the transnational subject and one idea

of nationalism prevailed over the other.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the idea of Cuban nationalism as a transnational identity is continually informed by the idea of a nationalism defined by nation-state borders, meaning that Cuban Americans are compelled to oscillate between these two in order to maintain an ideology from which they can build a stable identity as Cubans in America.

The case study of Cuba and its diaspora in Miami, in which this methodology was simultaneously applied and further developed, gave a number of initial results. In Chapter 3, the focus was mainly on the establishment of cultural memory in Cuba after 1959 and the subsequent operationalisation of it by the Cuban state in the moment of danger of the Mariel Crisis. Building on the work of Pérez, Miller and Quinn, the chapter followed the interpretation of the past by Cuban historians before 1959, through the 1960s and the institutionalisation of the 1970s, as it settled in fixed historical tropes in educational material for students and instructional material for teachers. The framing of world history as a circular trope of imperialist interference in Cuban affairs, along with the framing of Cuban history as one where heroic figures repeatedly take action to break with this repetition until Fidel came along to realize the revolutionary trope, were harmonised – as the instructions to history teachers mandate, to instill a revolutionary personality and loyalty to the PCC in the students.

During the Mariel Crisis, this canonization of perceptions of time, space and history, and thereby the idea of the Cuban nation as promoted by the government, was directly drawn upon in order to banish diverging perceptions to a time and space outside of revolutionary Cuba. The mnemonic signifier of Girón as a moment in which the only real Cubans broke a trope of repetition into a trope of revolution

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<sup>2</sup> Bonnefoy, "Bending the Rules", 25-26.

came to encapsulate all Cuban pasts, presents and futures in their entirety. Those who did not subscribe to this conception of Cuban time and space, were simply framed as non-Cuban, non-human and, worse of all, ahistorical beings. Accordingly, the only space in which those of my interviewees who lived through the crisis could direct their agency, was outside of this Cuba, first in a metaphorical and later in a geographical understanding. This led to the rather simple conclusion that the goal of the Cuban government to use the teaching of history to form a “moral” and “revolutionary” personality in the students (see p. 102), did not turn out to be a success. The more complex result of this is what happened to the perception of time, space and history among those Cubans who travelled to Miami, as this experience gave way for new interpretations when horizons of experience and expectation were endowed with a high degree of spatiality and new powers converted tropes of history into lines of power.

Chapter 4 emphasised the need to move beyond the study of the origin of narratives that frame historical tropes, argued for the inclusion of oral history interviews in this study and, furthermore, the inclusion of a study of historical tropes articulated in the context of the Cuban diaspora in Miami. The use of the theatre performance *The Amparo Experience* served as an introduction to the mnemonic space of Cuban Miami and the capture of cultural memory in structures of power, both in terms of the articulation of memory in architecture, memorialisation culture and foundational myth, its interpretation by high priests of memory with power and political purpose, as well as its insistence on being Cuban outside of the Cuban state. The contrast between the U-trope of the interpretation of the past through this theatrical performance and the tropes promoted by the Cuban government presented a stalemate in terms of the imagination of a common future.

By applying the theoretical and methodological framework developed over the course of the thesis so far to this context, it was clear that narratives articulated in the diaspora became crucial not only in the understanding of Cuban nationalities and their basis in historical tropes. Furthermore, arguably more importantly, this exercise served to further the development of the theoretical and methodological approaches. Changing the perspective from the narratives coming from places of power, such as those apparent in the previous chapter on the educational material and the media coverage during the Mariel Crisis, to the narratives articulated by people who received their education through them, migrated away and now settled in a different space with a different cultural memory, served to open up the possibility of investigating memory as a series of articulations in a system of knowledge production. The chapter furthermore laid out the approach to interviewing applied in this project, using a snowball method of collecting participants within the age range set out to ensure that the interviewees were old enough to have experienced the promotion of historical tropes that were investigated in Chapter 3 and having migrated to Miami roughly between the Mariel Crisis in 1980 and the Balsero Crisis in the mid-1990s. The semi-structured nature of each interview followed a general line of a life-story interview, allowing the interviewees a high degree of freedom to articulate their own narratives. This included the setting of the interview, as I asked them to meet me in a place where they felt particularly Cuban.

The chapter subsequently asserts the importance of the interviews by positioning them in the theoretical framework. The main argument is stated in the title of the section *Before the Revolution: Ideology // Before Ideology: Time*. Before the revolutionary trope can be employed in a political sense, it needs an ideological frame from which it can emerge, built on a perception of time on a societal scale that gives the trope, interpreted as a line steeped in power, the points on the metaphorical map to emerge from. Through interviews, narratives emerge that



reveal interpretations of history, time and space and thereby the underlying historical tropes.

The first chapter to incorporate the interviews, Chapter 5, grouped together four accounts from Miami in February 2018, in which the participants in one way or another accentuated a view on time, space and history based on a particular trope of rupture or continuation. This is why the first section turned to a discussion of the interpretation of the trope of rupture, as it was conceptualised in a Cuban context, as that of revolution. It is important to note that, again, in a Cuban context, the term revolution has several meanings, ranging from the insurrection 1953-1959, the wider process of social change after 1959 and quite simply the political establishment after 1959. This section served to underline that the thesis does not seek to engage in debates on where, when or what the revolution was, is or should be, but rather distinguishes between revolution as a trope of history and the application of this trope in order to legitimize political action.

In the interviews with Oscar and Alejandro, each of the interviewees relayed a moment of danger, in which their interpretation of the direction of history changed in a trope of rupture. In the case of Oscar, this moment was very clearly centred on 1959, based on a transgenerational structure of memory that allowed the memories of his close family members to frame the time before as a lost utopia. In the case of Alejandro, the moment was framed by the Mariel Crisis in 1980, in a structure of cultural memory made up by the framework of the production of historical knowledge set up by the Cuban state in combination with the memories stored and transmitted by his close social contacts. The rupture perceived by these two interviewees was of an opposite nature to the one presented in the official material analysed in Chapter 3. In contrast to the future utopia, Oscar and Alejandro saw historical decline. Instead of a widening of Koselleck's horizon of expectation, they saw it shrink. This

dynamic ultimately contributed to the motivation behind their wish to migrate, as their conception of their own future Cubanness in Cuba exceeded the limits posed by the cultural memory promoted by the institutionalised narratives. In this sense, the imagined mnemonic border between Cuba and not-Cuba can be seen, as De los Angeles Torres suggested, a militarised zone (see p. 106).

The two following interviews in Chapter 5 served to highlight that Cuban American cultural memory in Miami is by no means a homogenous entity and should be interpreted by including subjective frameworks of memory. The stories told by Jesús exemplify how the trope of rupture in his cultural memory was placed not only in his interpretation of politics, time and space, but also in his generational interpretation of who belongs to the Cuban nation. In stark contrast to Jesús, Rafael related a long history in time and space based on a cultural memory interpreted primarily from architectural features and infrastructural networks that connected Florida, Cuba and the wider Caribbean. This trope of connection and continuity does have an element of juxtaposition of Havana and Miami, where Havana is placed in a timeframe that precedes Miami's frail modernity, as a solid, timeless place from which his identity emanates.

Whereas the thesis in Chapter 5 identified which historical tropes were apparent in the interviews addressed, Chapter 6 addressed the nature of these lines. In the first interview of the chapter, with Bernardo, it became almost immediately clear that the dominating historical trope was the so-called U-trope, encompassing a perceived bad present and a possible return to a past where things were better. The name that Bernardo himself gave to the power of this trope was that of nostalgia, which is why the chapter begins with a presentation of how this concept evolved from a medical diagnosis to a designation of socio-cultural phenomena that give a name to the power that makes certain variants of Olsson's lines tremble with power. The case of

Bernardo was interesting in this regard, as a similar dynamic was at play in his youthful hopes of going from Havana to Miami and his present nostalgia projected in the opposite direction. This dynamic was addressed in the section *Is Nostalgia Hope, Backwards?*, where it followed Olsson's expedition into the wilderness of the *Bar-In-Between*. After establishing the dividing fraction line of the sign as the cultural *primus motor* that turns signifier into signified in endless semiosis, Olsson asked if instances can occur in which the signifier is only slightly altered when turning into a signified, or even where the two are equal. The example that he brought up to explore this idea is that of the promise uttered by the bride and the groom, whereby they change the real state of affairs in the world. Applied to the case of Bernardo, the promise of a Miami where he could live more freely and later the promise of a Havana where he could be free from the materialist culture of Miami, the promised was however far removed in time and space from the promise, transforming it into hope. Since this hope could not be fulfilled, it widened the gap between horizon of experience and expectation, further transforming it into nostalgia.

The two following interviews in that chapter equally expressed mnemonic patterns that bridged the past, present and future in a similar way, relating how the subjects bridged gaps of times and spaces known and unknown through hopes forwards and nostalgia backwards. In the case of Carlos, there was the anecdote about how the perception of better shoes in Miami compared to Havana meant that Miami had to be a place in the future. In the case of Emilio, the wish to travel was closely related to a wish to return to a place and time where Cuban history moved in a modernist trope of progression. It was at this point in the thesis that its theory of what memory is, or rather, where it happens, further consolidated. Although the framework of cultural memory surrounding the subject is crucial for maintaining a continuous flow of input and outlet for vectors of memory through intergenerational, mediated or multidirectional memory, for example, it is in the semiotic actions in the *Bar-In-*

Between that memory happens. In reverse, it is the surrounding structure of cultural memory that frames the limits of agency of the mnemonic capacities of the subject.

The interviews in Chapter 7 helped to further explore the nature of this agency. In the former chapters, it was to a certain extent clear where my interviewees placed the points on their metaphorical map, from which the lines trembling with power would emanate. In the first two interviews of Chapter 7, however, a common issue was uncertainty. In the case of María, her cultural memory in Cuba was to a large degree structured by what Hirsch has called postmemory, meaning the memory carried by family narrative structures. However, the large degree of distrust towards narratives coming from outside these structures, left her with difficulties filling the gaps in this structure and leading to her relying heavily on the likeness to herself and her family when determining the limits of her identity. The case of Xiomara was similar in certain ways, as the limited trust she had in narratives promoted by the Cuban state eroded as she became aware of what she called *doble moral*, that is, in her understanding, the public promotion of state sanctioned narratives, while maintaining a diverging narrative in smaller networks of collective memory. In both cases, the moment of danger that set off the realisation of this disequilibrium seemed to be related to a traumatic event. In the case of María the death of her brother, in Xiomara's the Ochoa-affair. After this moment of danger, the narratives sanctioned by the state did not correlate with the framework of collective memory, which catalysed the distrust in the wider system of cultural memory.

The analysis of the final interview of Chapter 7, and thereby the thesis, took place over two sections. This division is due to the nature of the interview with Yovani as starting in the public space of the Cuban Memorial Boulevard Park, throughout the car ride to his atelier, where the final part of the interview took place. During the first part of the interview, the cityscape of Miami, from the memorials we walked among,

to the traffic infrastructure we drove through, played a role as a third participant in the conversation. This established how his juxtaposition between Miami's bustling movement and what he perceived as a stalemate of development in Havana influenced his perception of time in Miami as going faster, moving in a progressive direction. In spite of the difference between the two places in terms of the perceived velocity of history, Yovani did explain how the broader social architecture of Miami did give it a degree of Cubanness that he could not escape. The shops and small businesses that had moved to Miami with the owners, workers and even names of their counterparts in Cuba, the language spoken, music listened to and family relations, allowed him, or even forced him, to maintain an identity as Cuban after he had migrated. These phenomena of cultural memory, what A. Assmann would call passive remembering, are leveraged by powerful agents in Cuban American Miami through the assertion of the foundational myth of the city based on post-1959 Cuban migrants and subsequently given direction through memorialization practices such as those apparent in the Brigade 2506 monument. The lines of power that are projected from these points on the metaphorical map structure Yovani's perception of time, space and history in a framework that maintains a simultaneous border between Cuba and Miami as well as between a world before and after 1959.

The second part of the interview was much more like the other interviews in the thesis, in terms of its structuring of the narrative from youth, early adulthood, migration and settlement in Miami. The summarizing moment of the interview is when he tells me that "...el país iba cada vez pa' atrás. Yo no sé hasta cuando se puede ir pa' atrás, porque todavía está yendo pa' atrás. [laughs] Yo espero un día llegar y ver la comunidad primitiva de la gente, si sigue así" (see p. 298). From the story of his education in an art sector that he saw as stifling, his professional life as a legal assessor in the Ministry of Justice, his decision to move back to practise art and finally his decision to leave Cuba, what characterised his wider narrative of

Cuba is one of standstill. In contrast to this perception, the idea of Miami had been expressed earlier as one where possibilities are plenty and he could live his life as a free-floating atom without having to feel trapped in ideological structures. This could be interpreted as a form of nostalgia for the times where his family in Florida could freely visit Cuba and exchanges between the two places happened in what in his narration seemed like a mutually reinforcing sense of Cubanness.

The irony, however, is that by placing a border in history in 1959, Yovani came to subscribe to some of the underlying tropes of the powers that prevent him from being a free-floating atom. The framing of Miami as only becoming Cuban after 1959, of 1959 as a geographical divide between his family in Florida and Cuba, the placement of liberal attitudes toward cultural practices in Miami through the juxtaposition with the conservative Cuban policies, especially of the 1970s; all these interpretations contribute to his remembering within a historical trope of Cuba as one of decline after 1959, fixate his world in two Cubas, one on each side of an imagined wall in time and space.

In the interviews analysed in the thesis, the lines of power between the points on the metaphorical map were drawn by the human faculty to make the absent present. Since the efforts by the Cuban government of institutionalising the production of knowledge about the past, present and future did not provide sufficient points to substitute already existing structures of the cultural memory in which the interviewees lived, the reliance on memory conveyed by family, social relations, architecture, music, commercial goods, cityscapes, language, and many more elements, played a role in the formation of cultural memory that guided these lines into existence. Even the absence of points on the map, the uncertainty and doubt displayed by some of my interviewees, played its role in the cementation of knowledge that would ultimately form part of the creation of historical tropes that

did not match those that were prescribed through official channels. This exercise clarifies María de los Angeles Torres' statement, in which she frames "memory as a militarised zone" between Cuba and its diaspora (see p. 106). The multidimensional lines, drawn up by cultural memory, trace conflicts in space and time and thereby determine who belongs in the homeland and who falls outside of the nation.

Through the elaboration of its theoretical and methodological framework, the thesis has relied on the work on Cuban historiography by Pérez, along with that of Miller and Quinn, who have pointed out dynamics of power at play in Cuban practices of history. In addition, De los Angeles Torres' work offers insights into ideas of nationality in the Cuban diaspora. Putting these two arguments together underlines how one influences the other. The real contribution of the thesis lies in its theoretical and methodological development towards a holistic approach to structures of memory, its conception of memory as a phenomenon that includes both temporal and spatial aspects and its conception of the relation between the subjective imaginary and the metaphorical map as key elements to understanding it. The framing of cultural memory, based on the conceptualisation of J. Assmann, as the system of canonisation of truths about the past as well as their relation to the present and the future, relocates investigations of memory in the social realm to the semiotic understandings of Olsson. This relocation of focus suggests that holistic studies of memory should consist of three constitutive parts. First, there is a need focus on what it is that makes up the frameworks that make up Assmann and Assmann's canon and the archive. The combination of Althusser's notions of ISA and RSA with Gramsci's notions of state and civil society served in the thesis to locate the centres where power is swayed over memory and canon arises. Secondly, it is crucial to identify the vectors of memory, emanating in different directions across different dimensions from the Bar-In-Between, whether they be those of collective memory, historical memory, communicative memory, cultural

memory, mediatized memory, postmemory or multi-directional memory. Finally, and as the thesis argues, most importantly, it is crucial to ask which agency is assumed by the cartographical reasoning between past, present and future. Whereas many previous research projects in the social realm of memory have focused on the epithet that comes before, either to point out a specific instance of memory – traumatic, transnational, transgenerational – or in an attempt to give it a universal function – cultural, social, multi-directional – the application of Olsson's thoughts to the mnemonic process gives each a place and function on the imaginary map. As the self, conversing with its likes in the Bar-In-Between, is a self in the making and thereby a self looking for its limitations (see p. 49), it is the points of certainty, dotted across the imaginary map as prescribed by cultural memory, that each propel lines across times and spaces of uncertainty, guiding the self into past, present and future. These lines, bent into tropes in moments of danger, are studied by the application of the epithets: *collective* memory, *traumatic* memory, *postmemory*, *mediatized* memory, *multidirectional* memory. Through the analysis of the interviews in the thesis, the appropriate epithet in many cases was nostalgia, and it was by examining the semiotic relations between promise, hope, disillusion and nostalgia that an understanding of the agency of memory, socially assembled into the subjective, subjectively enacted into the social, arose.

It is with this relocation of the concept of memory that the thesis enters into debate with the studies of memory as they are practised in the context of societies with traumatic histories. Although the thesis in its interpretation of memory appreciates the important work of scholars bringing traumatic aspects of the past into the present, it challenges the reduction of the concept of memory to meaning only a correction to oppressive historiographies, the histories of human rights abuses, the incorporation of points of view of those oppressed, or the deterministic belief that



these acts of truth-seeking will automatically lead to more democratic societies, as is discussed in Chapter 1, section Broadening the Field.

The approach to memory that the thesis is promoting systemically incorporates the epistemologically compatible aspects of the theories and methodologies it discusses into an actionable methodology through Olsson's cartographic reasoning. It is crucial for an understanding of Cuban writing of history, official narratives in educational material and media to recognise the role that previous canons, the political and cultural implications that these canons have as well as the tropes that are actively promoted to support ideological change or stabilization. This allowed for an analysis of the historiographical developments in Cuba preceding 1959 and their institutionalisation in the 1970s in terms of A. Assmann's canon and archive. The emplotment of historical narratives, canonising tropes that supported the new government's ideology and condemning conflicting tropes to the passive remembering or even active forgetting, leads through the discussion of Althusser's conception of ideology promoted through ideological state apparatuses. This theory is, however, hard to sustain with empirical data, unless it is revised with Gramsci's ideas of subdivision of the state into civil society and political society as the analysis of the interview with María showed. With this manoeuvre, an idea of hegemony as the subjective framework of cultural memory becomes applicable to multiple layers of society and allows us to understand where my interviewees placed the provenance of the knowledge production they relied on.

The use of Kayser Nielsen's historical tropes, as articulations of Koselleck's notion of historical time, opened up the argument of what the instalment of the canon, institutionalised by the Cuban government in the 1970s, meant for the stability of its ideology. The tropes promoted by the government were explicitly devised to be action-inspiring, which means that they were composed to take the place of the mnemonic signifier (see p. 61), designed to take the Cuban population into a

direction determined by the government, through its mnemonic signifieds. The problem with historical representation is, however, that it can never be complete, and tropes therefore rely on imagination to fill the empty spaces between the points on the map. In other words, it is in these spaces between the points that the imaginary takes on an agency of its own, albeit limited to the cultural memory it imagines through. During the Mariel Crisis, the emplotment of history in *Granma* into the tropes of repetition of imperialist aggression and a revolutionary Cuban response through a repeating Girón, framed anyone falling outside of these lines of power as ahistorical, non-Cuban and non-human. Those of my interviewees who found themselves condemned to this category, did however have structures of cultural memory outside of those promoted by the government to rely on. In the case of Alejandro, it was the social group to which he belonged. By noticing a discrepancy in the tropes as presented by the official media and his immediate surroundings, he came to rely more on structures of memory outside of those promoted by the government. In the case of Bernardo and Carlos, it was hope for progress. Both were not able to see any advancement in Cuba which they related to historical progress, from official dogmatism towards a more liberal society and from limited consumer goods to a broader selection of footwear. The conflict between these tropes and those that framed them as non-Cubans further pushed their desire to move towards progress, not perceived as lying ahead in time, but rather across the sea in space, and projected their lines of power on the metaphorical map.

The image of Benjamin's Angel of History, hurled by disaster from a past paradise into an unknown future, through Koselleck's historical time, is helpful to keep in mind when thinking about the perception of time, space and history that is evident from the tropes that are expressed in these interviews. The disaster in Benjamin's parable can in the case of these interviews be thought of as family trauma, passed along to my interviewees, who then located the moment of danger at the point in

time and space of that traumatic event. In the interviews with Jesús, Emilio and María, it is very clear that 1959 is the moment where their historical tropes take a downward turn. In the case of Xiomara, however, 1959 is mentioned as a tragic turning point for her family, but her personal moment of danger takes place during the trials of Arnaldo Ochoa and Tony de la Guardia.

The erosion of credibility that she vested in the balance between public and private truths on either side of the *doble moral*, means that she lost the foundation on which coherent ideological frameworks could be built. It is noteworthy that the emphasis on the moment of danger here is deliberate, as it in Martínez Heredia's interpretation was a trope of revolution, a sudden change towards better times, that characterised 1959, and that this perception was based on a cultural memory deriving from readings of Cuban history in the light of the paradigm of 400 years of oppression (see p. 143). In the light of these conclusions, the subjective experience of revolution as well as its counterpart, the trope of decline, is based on the cultural memory that guides the perception of history of the subject, or rather, that baptizes the line of power projected from the Bar-In-Between. In the perception of the interviewees discussed here, the moments of revolution and decline are simply placed elsewhere through the conflation of the dimension of time and space.

The two interviews that most clearly illustrated the way time and space converge in memory are those with Rafael and Yovani. In the case of the former, it was clear how his perception of Cuban history traversed state boundaries and his concept of Cubanness originated in Havana and spread through the wider Caribbean. What comes to mind at this point is Olsson's argument that "the map of semiosis ties memory and mimesis together through activities which are essentially spatial" (see p. 49), as he saw the limits of his collective subject, as a Cuban, extended across the Caribbean through the cultural memory that he accessed through architectural

likeness in place-bound metaphors that in his interpretation initiated metonymic significations across time and space.

By ignoring the reductive focus on a single instance of memory, such as the memory of a particular moment of mass migration, a period of high degree of institutionalisation of representations of the past, a particular institution or representation of interpretations of the relation between time, space and history, the thesis has allowed itself to wander. By doing so, it has tested the epistemological compatibility of prevalent theoretical and methodological approaches to memory in order to build a framework that would be able to simultaneously encompass the core mechanisms of the mnemonic process as well as its wider ramifications in society. The story that the thesis tells, is on one level the story of a Cuba that stretched beyond the shores of its islands, of the militarization of the no-man's land of memory that came to divide the community that inhabited this expanded Cuba and finally the stories of migrants who crossed the violent waters of this divide to find themselves forever navigating them in time and space. On another, distant, yet hazily similar level, the thesis tells the story of how the analysis of interpretations and representations of history could travel away from assessments of fixed canons and petrified memorials. It follows the analytical model through murkier waters of their roles in society, to the Bar-In-Between in order to come out on the other side, transitioned, fluctuating and slippery.

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### **Music and Film**

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