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THE CUBAN POLITICAL CULTURE THROUGH MAGICAL REALISM IN CRISTINA GARCÍA'S *DREAMING IN CUBAN* ' AND *THE AGÜERO SISTERS*

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Dedication

To my dearest mother, father, husband and sisters, with love.

Abstract

The present work examines the thematic projections of the Cuban socio-political transformations that swept the island and divided the Cuban families during the years of Fidel Castro Revolution. In this study, we investigate the Cuban social outcomes of the revolution through a scrutiny of the female characters in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and *The Agüero Sisters* (1997) for an extra- and intra-textual understanding of the Cuban political culture. In the two novels, the estranged author tries to heal the wounds of her divided nation through women's dreams that could ultimately build bridges of communication between the different Cuban generations. Throughout a textual analysis that depended essentially on the psychological and sociological approaches, we conclude that García has envisioned the substantial effect of political visions through magical occurrences, combining realistic representation with magical elements to produce powerful images that determine reality and accentuate the inseparability of the personal from the political. Eventually, the imperative representation of a multi-generational view of the Cuban history in the two selected novels is an ostensible reincarnation that provides the reader with more variations of the Cuban types and their respective orientations of and responses to the revolutionary doctrine of Castro.

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Résumé

الملخص

General Introduction

Latin American literary writing has long been ignored, marginalized and opposed to entering the mainstream. Unlike the western canon, which has celebrated a long history of approval and validation, Latin American literature was essentially renovating itself through the creation of a distinct canon that sought consolidation and was appealing universality. Notwithstanding, Latino narrative fiction of the twentieth century, in general terms, was remarkably different from the previous literary writings that took shape in the past eras. This was in good part due to the rapid and deep scientific, philosophical, cultural, political, and social alterations that affected and influenced Latino literary creation in many ways.

At the turn of the same century, however, newfound independence in Latin American society urged for a creation of a sincerely truthful and unromantic literature that was absent from the Latin American literary scene, which was supposed to demonstrate the social reality that was the product of different political matters emerging from within and without the continent. Yet, during this epoch of *Vanguardia*, the literary production of the Hispanics[1] could not draw much interest and eventually received little credit in the English-speaking world (Coonrod Martínez 02).

It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that Latin American literature rose to significant prominence and arrived internationally with a newly created literary mode, Magical Realism. The coming of age innovative Latino writers who gave tribute to their predecessor vanguardists, could ultimately earn a worldwide recognition. This was largely ascribable to the newly created literary tool that was based primarily on the notion of difference, which uncovers the reality of the exotic other, in addition to the

[1]- Essentially, the term “Hispanic” is used to refer to people who have a Spanish-speaking background, and “Latino” is a term that is linked to the geography and heritage of Latin Americans in specific. Moreover, the use of the two terms in an interchangeable manner is correct too, since the majority of Latinos are at the same time Hispanics, and vice versa. Here, however, Hispanics refer to Spanish and Latin American writers.

historical, social, and the political traits that distinguished the European and American modern style from the revolutionary and nationalist based writings existing in Latin American. Accordingly, the revolutionary novelists sought an effective way for pronouncing the twentieth century reality that Spaniard writers[2] were concealing. With the use of testimonial discourse, *testimonio*, Latin America writers' started having a more decidedly political edge, focusing primary on the revolutionary developments of their nations during the mid and late twentieth century. These literary and artistic works marked a watershed in the history of Latin American literature.

The booming of Latin American new narrative, as claimed by Philip Swanson in his book *Landmarks in Modern Latin-American Fiction*, "can be seen as a reaction against and rejection of the assumptions and forms of traditional realism" (01). Indeed, the 'Big Four' of Latin American Boom who are namely Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa who wanted to demonstrate their cultural and political identities by accounting for a discarded reality with the use of fantasy and hyper reality for the sake of giving voice for cultural minorities. Actually, the works of the four magical realist literary figures succeeded in spreading the influence of magic realism that had firstly appeared in Germany before reaching the central and Latin America. With respect to Swanson's idea stated earlier, it is clear that realism in magical realism is kind of a rebellion to the mundane way of describing the truth that dwells Latin America, which is regarded as a Third World space.

Magical realism has quickly gained influence in Latin America. Cristina García, in the Cuban literary circle, was one of the prominent Cuban-American authors to be

[2]- The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, among other 20th century critics, feared uncovering the political and social reality, the fact that is blatantly apparent in the creation of the magic realist technique for demonstrating the rejection of their reality and the avoidance of reaching universality.

literally influenced by the 'Big Four' magical realist writers as narrating the story of Cuba. In contrast to what the earlier magical realist writers wanted to emphasize, García wanted to take it to a new level by tackling the Cuban American experience. Shifting perspectives from the general scope of studying Latin American status, to a scrutinized survey of a hybrid experience of two differing settings is what really makes García breaking into Latino magical realist literary world.

Cuban literature is one of the most imposing and compelling literary writings in the Americas to find its voice through its exploration of various aspects of change in Cuba's history, including politics and economics, culture, gender, race and ethnicity. The production of this body of literature was prior to the new novel's growth, which by means culminated the birth of the Boom in the 1960s, received a great deal of attention at the micro and macro scales. In fact, Many Cuban writers have successfully defined modern Cuban literature through a highly artistic interpretation of the upheavals that Cuba went through, setting the path for the contemporary Latin American writers to find their international venue.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959, as a case in point, was one of the major causes for the consolidation of the nation(s) and its people(s) at all levels. For the lasting impact of the revolution in Cuba, Eric Selbin affirms that, "The Cuban Revolution mattered, matters, and will continue to matter. [It] has proven to be exactly what most of us who study revolutions (and related processes) in the twenty-first century would suggest a revolution is: a process of deep change that has produced a compelling story, a powerful example for others to emulate." (21-22). Therefore, the political disturbances under authoritarian regime of the 1960s and 1970s did not take place merely in Cuba, but extended the whole Latin American continent, including Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Chile,

Argentina, Paraguay, among others. In the strict sense, the revolution in Cuba shaped a new history and gave hope not only for its people, but also for Latin Americans who were in need of a turning point in order to shift their existence. Subsequently, the revolution unified Latin American writers who were sharing the same fate, hoping for a new age of prosperity and stability to come. This revolutionary doctrine set the stage for contemporary Latin American and Cuban literary production to dominate the literary scene world widely.

Cristina García is among the writers whose output has been instrumental to the understanding of the intense experience of *la cubanidad.* Cristina García's first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), is the first step towards the exploration of an already existing colonial history from a new perspective and with several constant threads. Her narratives, as her estranged counterparts', are essentially history-based but not incidental as they entail the most critical historical events with the use of variety of parameters as diving into nature and culture, excavating social matters, criticizing the political thoughts, as well as treating the psychological matters like memory, amnesia, and inner exile. In an interview, García admits that,

> […] what I was trying to do, literarily, was to amplify an appreciation for the complex history that is Cuba. For me, growing up in an exile home with very anti-Communist parents meant that I had a very limited notion of what Cuba and Cuban history meant. Everything revolved around the revolution; it was the big B.C. and A.D. of our lives. Yet there were all these stories that I thought were equally important. I set out to explore Cuban history for myself in all its interesting permutations, in all its curious contributions from the far-flung corners of the world. (Irizarry 178)

In consonance with García's writing vision, we can say that the main concern of the Cuban narrative in general and García's in specific during the outburst of the Cuban revolution is historical par excellence. Besides, as an exiled author, García could connect to her homeland and give voice to the story of her nation and people through her projection of the revolution. By way of illustration, *Dreaming in Cuban* explores the lives of displaced identities that are torn between two different places, beliefs, and realities. As an attempt for reconciling the distracted innerness of the characters, García uses magical elements in a magical realist manner for uncovering the reality of truth.

Dreaming in Cuban paved the way for the writing of the second outstanding novel *The Agüero Sisters* (1997). Like its predecessor, *The Agüero Sisters* attempts to demonstrate the concern of its producer with the cracked social structure that took shape between Cuban immigrants and those who remained behind on the island trying to mend that crack through memory and amnesia. The novel portrays the social and political events that took place during Fidel Castro's years of political unrest with the deployment of magic realism that functions as tool for interpreting the social and political facts that kept families apart and distant, besides the evocations of homeland and exile.

In this research, I am interested in the socio-political experience of the Cubans in the island and the Cuban community in the U.S and their strive for the reconciliation of the national and personal histories through different strategies of dealing with memories that are represented most often by a marvellous reality. However, this reality is misleading, pervasive and inaccurate as it suggests various interpretations of a dense and weighty concrete with an absolute abstract. In other words, the concealed truth and disguised reality of the Cubans, whether it be historical, political, cultural, psychological or social cannot reveal the real generic state of Cubanness and cannot be reduced to a

mere conjectures and uncertainty. In order to dispel this obscurity, the selected novels in this study chronicle aspects of the Cuban-Americans during the revolutionary era from different generational feminist points of view that would eventually reveal the subtleties of magical reality, as García tends to delineate.

The present work aims at exploring magical realism that translates the status quo in an imaginary language as used by the Cuban-American writer Cristina García in her two novels *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters.* Essentially, exploring the way reality is described through magical realist elements would lead us to the examination of the political culture of the Cuban society prior, during and after the Cuban Revolution. In order to find out the aim of blending the mundane and supernatural that focuses primarily on themes of isolation, exile, imagination, dreaming and memory in García's works, in-depth thematic and literary analyses are fundamentally crucial for a close verification of the political reality and cultural tendencies pictured emblematically through magic. Moreover, describing Cuban political culture, which is the key theoretical construct of this research, is of paramount importance for a good comprehension of the metaphorical interpretation of the physical space that they belong to or exist in. In this respect, we are going to examine the political culture theory and the emergence of a new dualism between politics and culture leading to a creation of a new social reality that has played a vital role in shaping new individual and collective identities.

It is of a great importance to highlight the fact that magical realism is a sort of recreating reality. The misrepresentation of traditional realism of certain social and political traumatic experiences that people underwent opened doors to the literary consciousness for reconstructing new imagined details to the already existing reality. Typically, this would force the reader to reconcile the two coexisting facets of truism in

the literary text where they coincide. The reconstruction of reality is also interpreted as a felt reality, which is an artistic reality adopted by the eminent magical realist writers as an open window on a reconstructed history. The felt reality as explained by John Burt Foster, Jr. is the "eloquent gestures and images with which a character or lyric persona registers the direct pressure of events, whether enlarging and buoyant or limiting and harsh" (273). This is to say that the fictitious characters in a magical realist text share the felt reality, which would be manifested after the registration of specific traumatic experiences. The tragic events could not be well visualized, recorded, and interpreted as soon as they occur for the simple reason of the mental blockage that accompanies the harshness of the witnessed event. Yet, simulation would be the last stage for the recreation of the already witnessed reality (273-74).

With respect to the newness brought about by Cristina García, the two selected works for the current study are written in English and translated into Spanish. This linguistic change was in good part ascribable to extend the Cuban-American experience declaring a birth of a new phase of *Cubaness*. However, the emergence of a literature that is half Cuban and half American, created a dispute and discomfort to the entity that is torn between those two distinct cultures. Yet, this newly emerged identification of a literature, which revolves around the Cuban cultural and social experience that started dwelling a new set of thoughts in accordance with the American mainstream, is now able to overcome all the hardships to represent the Cuban American literary voice.

Through a careful selection of *Dreaming* and *The Agüero*, which offer a unique insight into the forces that threaten Cubans and Cuban Americans' lives, I intend to delineate the Cuban political culture as magical realism visualizes and chronicles it, in attempt to figure out the extent to which this literary mode could make account for the

factual knowledge. In this sense, many questions need answers and deserve a thorough scrutiny. As a case in point, the Cuban society underwent a long history of conquest, political dispute and authoritative repression. For this reason, the political culture and consciousness of today's Cuba is characterized with uncertainty. Hence, the currently adapted system is not clear if it is revolutionist, reformist, or a mere adoption of the past order. More importantly, we cannot have a clear visualization of the current status quo without the prior knowledge of the historical roots of the Cuban socio-politics that helped shape today's reality in many ways. To this end, a qualitative analytical study is required to investigate the political facts that helped construct Cuba's social verity, especially during the focal point in the nation's history that revolves around the years of *El líder*.

Reading a magical realist work that highlights political, social, or cultural data necessitates a prior knowledge of the real circumstances that the given country went through. This point should not be discarded, as the magical realist fold is said to be limited to specific thematic issues that are by the same token reflecting a specific extra-textual knowledge. Hence, the main questions that this study put forward are: does the literary mode of magical realism incarnate the real political, social and culture inner and outer status of the Cubans? Can political culture be imagined or represented in a marvellous manner since the latter requires an imaginary language that would eventually lead to various interpretations? In other words, would reality be conceived and perceived the same way it is constructed and portrayed in the real world? More importantly, to what extent were García's novels *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters* successful in corroborating magical real accounts of the thematic historical and socio-political evidence? In this regard, an analytical scrutiny for the ideas and notions that embody the Cuban political culture through magic in the two magical works of Cristina García would

be the focus of this research. Moreover, for comprehending the essence of magical realism applicability that has been adopted for the first time by García as a tool for explaining and pronouncing the political culture and the critical tendencies that are the main reason for framing the Cuban experience, a critical and theoretical framework is compulsory.

Undoubtedly, many books, scholarly articles, and papers have given considerable attention to the magical realist writings of Cristina García. Recently, a fundamental paradigm shift has occurred within academia in what concerns the way we should perceive and understand reality with the use of the magical realist narrative mode that is a pure fusion of the two codes of realism and magic. Further to this comment, I believe that the literary works of García are conspicuously focusing on the divided experiences of the Cubans and Cuban Americans that are predominantly described as divided entities and estranged identities.

In this regard, a number of analytical studies have been conducted on that precise notion. Ada Savin's *Between Island and Mainland: Shifting Perspectives in Cristina García's "The Agüero Sisters"* is a case in point. In her research article, Savin tries to depict the major manifested themes in the works of Garcia, whom she considers one of the most interesting Cuban American literary voices. For Savin, exile is an encompassing thematic conception that overwhelm both novels *Dreaming* and *Agüero* that are great examples of what being Cuban and Cuban American really means. From an extraterritorial standing point, the author is in a continuous attempt of showing the reality of divided Cuba; however, this study is focusing primarily on the consciousness of the Cuban diaspora that have lost its territorial sense of belonging, as well as the social and cultural longings, which are the only viable components of being or feeling "at-homeness" (61). Yet, the space that is occupied by characters, which is neither in exile

nor at homeland creates identity crisis. For Savin, however, the exile enclaves are much more of a relief for its supporters from the certainties of life, which by means would certainly lead to a restricted visions and chances (71).

Opposite to the above-suggested argument, Samantha L. McAuliffe put forward in her article *Authoethnography and García's "Dreaming in Cuban"* the claim that Cristina García's intention and main concern in writing *Dreaming* was to demonstrate the characters' self-discovery throughout the novel reaching the recovery stage of culture reconciliation. Prior to this idea, McAuliffe initiates her analysis of *Dreaming* with the theory of auto-ethnography that is developed by Mary Louise Pratt. In *Arts of the Contact Zone,* Pratt shows the main difference between the studies of ethnography in which the narrator should be both an insider and outsider to the explored culture, the position that Savin holds to.

On the other literary scene, there stands the literary auto-ethnography where the author is part of the society and all its specificities that are under scrutiny. In other words, auto-ethnography is a point of reconciliation, or as Pratt refers to as the "contact zone", and which defines it as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" (34). Hence, the author in an auto-ethnographical literary work could be only an insider, commenting over and correcting the falsified images drawn about them (McAuliffe 02). Ultimately, we can say that through studying auto-ethnography we can gain a good understanding of the social and political circumstances that created new realities about culture, which is the case for this research where is demonstrating a journey of exploring the problems of identity through the issues of cultural hybridity. In consonance with McAuliffe, García seeks the reconciliation of both

the culture of her adopted place with her culture of origin, which would ultimately drag the reader to a good understanding of the genuine Cubanness.

Alternatively, many researchers have focused on other eminently important issues that emphasize the depiction of the Cuban society and politics, especially during and after the years of the revolution, as García tends to present in her narratives. Some research papers prioritize the role of the Cuban woman as a focal figure during this critical period in Cuban history. In *Women and the Revolution in Cristina García's "Dreaming in Cuban"*, O'Reilly Herrera Andrea gives account to the first novel of García from a feminist standpoint for her interpretation of the rich and confusing history of Cuba through a visualization of three generations of Cuban women within a structured context. Similarly, the work of Julee Tate under the title *Matrilineal and Political Divisions in Cristina García's "Dreaming in Cuban" and "The Agüero Sisters"*, has nearly the same idea about how García is in a continuous attempt of relating the shattered dreams with the fragmented familial and national stories of the Cuban women during and after the Cuban Revolution (146). In this same vein, García maintains,

> "I wanted to examine how women have responded and adapted to what happened to their families after 1959. I also was very interested in examining the emotional and political alliances that form within families. There is a larger backdrop to it all, but in the writing itself I just stayed very close to the women." (Qtd. In O'Reilly Herrera "Women and the Revolution" 72)

It is important to highlight that this interest would ultimately lead the reader to appropriately locate the different historical realities existing in the novel from different female generational perspectives that lie at the centre of the Cuban women's collective identities. *Women on the Verge of a Revolution: Madness and Resistance in Cristina García's Dreaming in Cuban* by Kimberle S. López is yet another critical study that

brings two seemingly different concepts together, which are madness and revolution. In this work, madness is represented as it is present in *Dreaming*, as a way of escaping and/or facing the revolutionary doctrine of Fidel Castro. Moreover, through the use and interpretation of madness, the female characters in the novel are constantly madly accepting or rejecting the status quo that was due many parts to the traditional feminine role (33).

Back to the core of the present work that has no intentional feminist orientation in essence, the works of O'Reilly Herrera and López provide a significant knowledge to my research in what concerns the female perception of political issues as demonstrated in the novels of García, where the main characters are females. Yet I, hereby, try to account for the key role played by Cuban women in their response to the revolution as García comes to visualize and portray it through the literary mode of magic realism. However, based on this literary research that contributes valuable insights into our investigation, the present work tries to fill the gap of the untreated subject of politics and its subsequent results especially at the social and cultural levels that the uncertainty of magical events tend to portray. Subsequently, I mention those who focus their attention on the conception of reality and the narrative technique of magical reality and its interdisciplinary use. Wendy B. Faris is the best to manifest her place in this respect with her works, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995), *The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism* (2002), besides *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004). There are also other eminent pillars in that vein like Theo L. D'Haen with his book *Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers*, Anne Hegerfeldt's work *Lies that tell the truth: magic realism seen through contemporary* (2005), Stephen M. Hart, and Ouyang Wen-chin *A companion to*

magical realism (2005), as well as *Magically Strategized Belonging: Magical Realism as Cosmopolitan Mapping in Ben Okri, Cristina García, and Salman Rushdie* (2011) by Kim Sasser.

Considering that García's primary interest in writing about politics is to highlight the extent to which the Cubans accept or reject their political system dictations and react against or act accordingly, the matter that contributed in the emergence of new social phenomena that subsequently led to the formation of a new reality for the Cuban entities. On this point, political culture is a crucial concept that we should treat thoroughly. Essentially, the term political culture was first suggested by Gabriel A. Almond and fairly explained in *The Civic Culture Revisited* written by Almond and Sidney Verba (1989) where they try to deal with the dilemma of how people affect their politics and how could politics per se affect the people. William Luis' *Reading the Master Codes of Cuban Culture in Cristina García's "Dreaming in Cuban"* (1996), is also a good source support for this research, together with Rafael Hernandez and Haraldo Dilla's *Political Culture and Popular Participation in Cuba* (1991) and Lucian W. Pye's *Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture* (1972).

It is undeniable that each of the above-cited insightful woks provides a great significance to the field in general and to the present thesis in specific. The different issues being discussed from a variety of angles stimulate and enrich the study. Hence, this study necessitates dealing with the above mentioned themes from historical, sociological, and psychological perspectives, because the reading of Cristina García's novels in the present work are to be undertook from historical analysis, psycho- and socio-analytical points of view. The prevailing topic of Cuban political culture is approached through magic of magical realism in the novels of García through an analytical framework of the main

landmarks that shape the Cuban national collective and individual histories of Cubans. This urged for having a certain structure that would depend primarily on objectivity by means of referencing the major theories that the present research require. Therefore, five main chapters are going to contribute in the organization and comprehension of major ideas and the essence of the work's discussion.

The first chapter is devoted to the historical framework of the Cuban traditional society prior to Castro's revolution as it set the scope for the post-twentieth changes that played a vital role in the lives of the Cubans offering a broad field of research for generations to come. This initial part serves as a background for having a clear vision about the critical history of the Cubans that is in essence the main reason of the emergence of a new Cuban reality that we are going to deconstruct through dealing with the main components of the Cuban political culture throughout the years of the revolution.

Besides the historical breadth and theoretical understanding of political culture in Cuba, another thematic analysis is required on the intersection of what is real and what is imaginary. For that matter, chapter two is about the oxymoronic term, magical realism, and its possible alternatives in the strict literary scene. I attempt to give an overview on the mode's historical evolution and interpretation, with no discard of the fundamental concept of reality and its reciprocal effect when used with magical elements.

Chapter three, *The Cuban Socio-Political Experience through the Lens of Magic*, examines the epistemological meaning of realism as a theoretical context for political realism. For this purpose, it is important to test the veracity and accuracy of reality as represented in magical realist narratives in order to verify the extent to which magic is able of interpreting certain social, historical, or political reality intricacies. Deep reflections on reality, realism and political reality would pave the way for discerning the

essence of politics, which could be a reality or an imagined verity. This confusion is fundamentally provoked by the exquisite specificities of magical realism in literary texts.

Close textual analysis starts with last two chapters, which are devoted to the two selected novels by García to explore the Cuban experience through the nebulous yet out of the mundane literary technique of magical realism. Chapter four, in this respect, seeks to study the exilic experience that the Cubans underwent in response to their governmental alterations that swept the country with the initiation of the revolutionary doctrine of Fidel Castro. *Dreaming in Cuban* is the first novel to get an analytically thorough reading through which I intend to depict the main magical occurrences in the novel and try to decipher its political and social significances as presented by the author. All of the mentioned big ideas in the preceding chapters are of eminence importance for supporting the existing facts presented in *Dreaming*.

Through *The Agüero Sisters*' close reading, it is quite essential to analyse García's portrayal of the core political beliefs of the Cubans both in the island and the U.S through a generational account of two main oppositional realities that would ultimately lead to shattered selves. It is also important to discuss the newly constructed Cuban reality through different strategies of dealing with memories as interpreted through the main female characters' deconstruction of the Cuban history. In this matter, Garcia aims at proceeding the Cuban identity through what she calls an "excavation" of the Cuban origins that this chapter aims at discovering.

Chapter One

Political Culture and the Cuban Case

1.1 Introduction

The overarching theme of the revolution and the changes it introduced to the Cuban society lies at the very heart of Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters*. In fact, the individuals of the Cuban society underwent and endured a series of political alterations that brought disturbances to the lives and selves of the Cuban people under which they were obliged to take firm decisions in order to live a decent life and to feel free from the civil restraints by cutting themselves brand-new paths. Hence, for the depiction and representation of the Cubans in the fictitious novels of Garcia during the years of the Cuban Revolution, it would be misleading and unclear without some understanding of Cuba's history and politics, especially during the years of the revolution outburst, together with sociological status and Cuban political culture.

The present chapter aims at scrutinizing the historical background of the traditional Cuban society, especially during and after the revolution, as affected by the major modern era events. During the twentieth century, Cuban society offered a broad field of research since it went through remarkable changes caused by the political and social disturbances and disruptions, which played a vital role in the construction of a new Cuban reality. Indeed, a deep understanding of this period and the way Cubans acted and reacted against the revolutionary doctrine is vital for defining the Cuban political culture throughout the years of the Revolution. Furthermore, we need much more investigation into the ideological currents of Castro's Revolution and its influence upon the Cuban people in both the positive and negative terms.

Since the predominant gender in *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters* is noticeably female, it is therefore of pivotal importance to talk about the crucial role of the

Cuban woman during the revolution. Subsequently, I follow the description of the fervent Cuban national revolutionary process with the renaissance of the Cuban political cultural aspect. This is to narrow down the scope for our research in order to have a clear vision and a good understanding of the revolutionary ideological ideas that affected the Cuban families psychologically, besides testing the extent to which they interpreted and responded to their political status during the years of the Cuban Revolution. In order to measure political culture within the Cuban revolutionary society, it is eminently important to make a conceptualization of culture that would eventually add more value to socio-political analysis.

1.2 Theoretical Discussion of Political Culture

As this study tries to examine the different elements of the Cuban political culture during and after the Cuban revolution, it is of primary importance to discuss the theory of political culture in order to understand the social behaviours of the given state. This critical discussion would provide a clear idea about the construction of the real Cuban socio-political experience, as the one described by Cristina Garcia in *Dreaming in Cuban* as well as *The Agüero Sisters*. For that end, I will depend heavily on the most important critical comments previously done on political culture that are essentially fundamental principals in driving the civic engagement and performance, and hinging critically on the cultural and societal experiences.

Political culture, which is part of political science, has witnessed various political scientific critiques. Consequently, the concept faced many misconceptions but it gradually "becomes a popular and over-used buzz-word" (Baker 03). Likewise, Joel Silbey comments on the importance of this concept as dominating an eminent position in

the contemporary social theories. Silbey magnifies the political culture studies by refereeing to as becoming "a major enterprise" (08). He goes on by clarifying how important is to examine this notion carefully for it dominates an exploratory theme. On the other hand, he extends his perception of the word to being vague and wide.

Initially, the political scientist Gabriel Almond suggested the term political culture by the mid-twentieth century before its insertion to his work *The Civic Culture* in 1963. On the positive side, Almond assures that the idea of how the political system disturbs or stabilizes the social status is pertinent in underscoring the problems that take shape at the socio-cultural level. On the negative side, however, Almond admits that there is and there would be a problem of defining the term accurately. Similarly, historians give different connotation to this theoretical notion; yet, many others prefer to give no clear or fixed explanation[1] (Formisano 394). Regardless of the unachievable explanation for the political culture concept, political scientists tend continuously to revise and renovate the prevailing use of the contemporary political theory framework. Furthermore, the meaning of the term remains vague and tentative rather than exact and scientifically explored (Formisano 394).

Conversely, the theoretical grounding of political culture is well recognized and widely used not in the political or social contexts only, but in a wide variety of writings. W. Lucian Pye, for instance, is a well-known political specialist who noticed that "the mere term 'political culture' is capable of evoking quick intuitive understanding so that people often feel that without further and explicit definition they can figure out and

[1]- For Ronald P. Formisano, unlike the historians who tend to explain political culture, most of the political scientists see that it is needless to define the term explicitly. Formisano confirms that, "In many cases, this situation need elicit no concern, since what authors mean by "political culture" can be demonstrated by their usage and implicit explanatory frameworks" (394).

appreciate its meaning and could freely use it" (qtd. in Formisano 394). With this in mind, different scholars dealt with the political culture theme from various perspectives. Notwithstanding, we will try to relate the concept to its modern implications and refer to the transformations that it could bring to the social and cultural life.

The ambiguity of the term generates a variety of possible interpretations. As a case in point, in his article *Defining Political Culture*, Stephen Chilton believes that " 'Culture' is the wider concept" when attempting to follow previous theoretical orientations on the examination of the concept as being primarily concerned with the cultural sphere before the political one (419). Thereupon, he stresses the importance of the cultural conception over the political one in the political culture field of study. Subsequently, we can say that when dealing with political culture of any given country, we should have a preliminary cultural background in order to have a full understanding of the adopted political culture approach within the same society.

Correspondingly, culture should be qualified by nine basic criteria for getting an accurate definition and evaluation of political culture of any given nation. Thus, the cultural portion of the concept political culture, according to Chilton, is necessary for a reachable understanding of the umbrella term per se. The first criterion for that purpose is "super membership", which means that culture is more than the mere isolated attitudes of the same community's individuals. Therefore, the membership that is characterized as super is what brings the whole population of a given place under one union. "Sharedness", is yet another pivotal component of culture, since the essence of any culture is to have a common set of principles and directing rules shared by the same people of a given society. However, the common framework of a mutual cultural orientation should be based on "Inequality". In fact, political culture is definitely determined by different types of social

structure, as the latter is composed of different individuals with different political weights (422-423).

The fourth criterion is "Behavioural", which reflects the observable effects of culture as it must be seen in the public behaviour, "[B]ehavior itself gives obvious clues to the sorts of orientations with which [political culture] is associated" (Almond and Powell 51). Thus, we cannot be sure of a specific political culture without the seen or observed actions that are related to culture in the first place. Yet in some instances, culture could not be defined by the mere behavioural situations, but by "Post-Behavioral" factors. The geographical element, as a case in point, could be decisive in most cases. This is not to negate the importance of the previous criterion, but to give an accurate vision for the socio-political scene. An "Unrestricted Applicability" of culture to the social sciences is another point in political culture, so that the concept of culture would not be restricted to specific social organizations than others.

Besides giving a wider scope for culture, the latter should not be covered or presented partially; it should be "Non-Reductionist". This criterion would lead us to the next one, which is "Comparability", since we cannot compare two different cultures or two realities of the same culture without having a full account of the uniqueness of both cultures. The last point is "Objective Testability" which must be dealing with testing culture objectively, that would be possibly right by presenting suggested hypotheses (Chilton 423). Yet, Pye points out that testing political culture by applying objective testability is getting harder due to the lack of objective standards (73).

Following Chilton's argument, the nine criteria seem vital in analysing and examining the political and socio-cultural variables. Additionally, they function as a

framework for testing the extent to which the Cuban political culture fits into the already mentioned rules. In this respect, it is important to say that the initial aim of our political culture scrutiny is not to have an interpretive description, but rather to reach a reliable and credible explanation for the given behaviorialist political science[2] that has recently adopted the term of political culture. However, it is eminently important to mention that the cultural aspect was not given such value in analysing political system. According to Gabriel Almond, questioning and investigating culture prior to the modern era of Behaviourism had been almost neglected and disvalued. Henceforth, the behavioralist analysis of a specific political vision could not be complete without the cultural projection (03). Lucian Pye, again, clarifies most plainly that the arisen, "Concern with the phenomenon of political culture represents a significant development in contemporary political analysis for it signals an effort to return to the study of the total political system without losing the benefits of individual psychology" (09).

The individual psychology, as Pye pointed out, does really matter in a well-analysed political status as it plays a vital role in shaping the socio-political experience. Similar to culture, political culture cannot be a well-interpreted and an easily grasped anthropological science without the individualistic sentiments and feelings as citizenship, patriotism, loyalty, betrayal, and the sense of identity, which are related and tightly linked to the nation and its political system. The former, for instance, which represent the geographical attachment and belonging, generate deep emotional conceptions for both the space and the people. Ultimately, as Pye puts it, political culture gives colour to the

[2]- Behaviouralism in Politics, which is also known as political behaviour, is practically based on the observable behaviour of individuals in a society. It is defined as "a movement in political science which insists on analysing only observable behaviour of political actors" (Behaviouralism in Politics).

white and black predictions and anticipations of a given community members for the political truth (09).

In the twentieth century, as political science started to open up to different social sciences and humanities, the political scientists have noticeably shifted their focus to social behaviourism. This new context of psycho-politics became more conspicuous by the emergence of the revolutionary doctrine. As a result, community members who undergo radical political adjustments are preoccupied with political analysis that would ultimately lead individuals to be the decision makers whether at small or large scale.

Moving from the individualistic psychological to the communal societal interpretations requires an initiation of a new method that would give a primary importance to the collection and addition of the complex psychological experiences of individuals and their behaviours in a society, in attempt to project the whole community behaviour as a good reference of individual actions. With the incorporation of culture in explaining the political behaviours, the field of political culture took a new path of accuracy as culture could be a good source of relevant information, concrete facts, and is able of creating a connection between 'political reality and its explanation' (Bower 04). However, the inclusion of the cultural trend should not be over used or overwhelming the interpretation of the political practices.

According to Lucian Pye, culture that should be used in the political-cultural analysis is predominantly three-dimensional. At first, the exposure to the early settings of culture starts from early childhood. The enfant is born in a given society within a specific family cultural life. Consequently, the environment that the child is raised in would shape his character. When in the teenage years, he will utilise and employ the already acquired

cultural knowledge in the adolescence. In the adulthood, however, cultural knowledge together with political matters would ultimately alter the individual's personality. Moreover, the latter would hold firm to his cultural beliefs that can never get apart from the political factual data. Henceforth, the political socialization does evolve and develop throughout human existence moving from the explicit to the implicit political teachings and beliefs (10).

At the beginning of the 1970s, the perception of political culture took new critical diversions. Some historians called for a more flexible inquiry method for political culture that would give a more institutionalized vision. Others, however, have emerged for a more flexible cultural approach. They viewed the study of the political cultural, or the analysis of politics through the cultural paradigm, as central and vital to the discipline of politics. In other words, the use of culture in political culture is not compensatory, but compulsory, as it is the subject that should be explained before delving into the political issues within a given society.

Noticeably, the exploration and interpretation of the political data is more crucial in the examination of political culture than the cultural paradigm. In *The Civic culture revisited*, Sidney Verba, calls it 'political style', which predominantly refers to the way of believing and exercising a given policy or political thoughts. In this respect, Verba demonstrates the difference between two vital political styles that to a good extent seem similar, which are the ideological and the pragmatic styles. The ideological style "involves a deeply affective commitment to a comprehensive and explicit set of political values which covers not merely political affairs but all of life, a set of values which is hierarchical in form and often deduced from a more general set of 'first principles'". The pragmatic political style, however, "consists of an evaluation of problems in terms of their

individual merits rather than in terms of some pre-existing comprehensive view of reality" (Pye and Verba 545).

It is of a vital importance to state that reality and the way of projecting it is the pivotal point in this study. Moreover, the observation and examination of the existing social patterns of political participation of Cuban political culture participants as presented in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters* are to construct the basis for the whole work. With an accurate study of both the cultural dimension and the political upheavals that took place in Cuba during the Cuban revolution, the final analysis would go through a second analysis of cultural scrutiny of Cuba as described by the author with the use of magical realism. Hence, I will delineate an in-depth analysis for a full understanding of the individual psychology that is embodied in the major characters, as well as the community-wide behaviour and perception of the political status. By doing so, the research would have two different breadths, besides providing 'the connecting link between micro and macro-politics' (Almond and Verba 32).

The practical part of political culture theory in the present research is going to rely mostly on the already mentioned scholars namely Gabriel Almond, Sidney Verba, and Lucian W. Pye. Again, in their eminently useful textbook, Verba and Pye provide us with insightful thoughts as to examine the political culture of any given people. Likewise, at the end of their book *Political Culture and Political Development*, the two scholars give a synthesis of how does political culture theory look like in a contextual exemplification.

As seen throughout the previous passages, political culture was treated in a general perspective. This is to say that a few key figures in the field of political science talked about the political culture of Cuba in specific. For this reason, the scrutiny of the cultural

and socio-political patterns of the Cuban society especially after the revolution is to be examined and developed under the scope of the already mentioned works, which dealt with the political cultural project from a general standpoint. In this regard, Rafael Hernandez and Haroldo Dilla gave a well-detailed account for the Cubans as being active participants in the political power of their nation through the study of the socio-cultural arena. In their article titled *Political Culture and Popular Participation in Cuba,* Hernandez and Dilla illustrate the evolutionary development and evaluation of the Cuban political culture throughout its history.

The Cuban political history that was marked by various political generations was also the core investigation by Roland H. Ebel, Ray Taras, and James D. Cochrane in their book *Political Culture and Foreign Policy in Latin America*. This critical work would be of a high importance for the present research, especially in terms of exile politics adopted by the Cubans to the United States during Fidel Castro's era, as the main objective of the study is to demonstrate the crisis of exile politics that paralleled the anti-Castro policy. However, representing the social Cuban experience that is portrayed predominantly with the cultural critique of modern politics in an emblematic, figurative, or magical way has not been fairly treated so far. Yet, the reachable sources about both sides of the major work will construct the fundamental foundation for expounding an understandable argument.

1.3 Trajectory of the Cuban Revolution

The Cuban history witnessed a long tradition of anti-colonial fight prior to 1959. Hence, we cannot deal with any period or any situation in the rich Cuban history without taking into account the implications and ramifications of the revolution (Selbin 22). In

this vein, Aviva Chomsky believes that the Cuban Revolution is not only the event that took place on the 26th of July, 1953, as Fidel Castro[3] planned an attack on the Moncada Barracks[4] as the first remarkable action against the dictatorship of Fugencio Batista[5]. Chomsky adds that the establishment of a revolutionary government that took shape on 1st January 1959 did not mark the start of a revolution either. He is firmly convinced that the unique revolutionary experience of the Cubans goes back to the aborted recurrent rebellions to end the Spanish rule throughout the colonial period and after it, precisely in 1844, 1868, 1895, 1912, and 1933 (18).

The Cuban revolutionary history is not restricted to the colonial period only, but it extended it to the neo-colonial phase as well. This is why the revolution in Cuba is characterized by substantial stages that facilitate the understanding of the nationalist process in the revolution, which incorporates a Marxist doctrine, together with a socialist futuristic vision (On Celebrating the Cuban Revolution 05). Hence, the revolution that is under the scope is the one that transformed Cuba from within as well as without, the revolution that mobilized the Cubans for a better Cuba, and went further by demonstrating

[3] - Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz is a pertinent figure of the Cuban Revolution. He started being active in politics in 1947 when he joined the Caribbean Legion, a group whose goal was to rid the Caribbean of dictatorships. A year later, Castro travelled to Bogota, Columbia where he spontaneously gained first-hand experience with popular uprisings. After returning to Cuba, Castro became a prominent figure in protests against the government while continuing his university studies. In 1950, he graduated from Law school and began practicing law. Yet, his concern and interest in politics did not seize as he hoped for a better future for his people (History.com Staff).

[4]- The Moncada Barracks is the first attack that marked the beginning of the Cuban Revolution in 1953. However, the well-planned operation that targeted the federal garrison did not succeed. Yet, this attack was the first step towards the victorious revolution afterward. This attack is named after the hero General Guillermon Moncada in the War of Independence ("Cuban Revolution: Assault on the Moncada Barracks").

[5]-Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973) was a Cuban military officer who had been a president on two occasions, from 1940-1944 and 1952-1958 as he set a coup that removed President Carlos Pio. Eventually, Batista's corrupted government came to an end under the revolutionist Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution of 1953-1959 (Voss).

the necessity for a radical alteration in Cuba and Latin America in the name of social justice.

This iconic historical event, which was and still it is a crucial reality for the transformation of Cuba, starts with a first attack in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953 on the Moncada Barracks led by Fidel Castro. Therefore, this incident marked the announcement of a revolutionary armed struggle that was the only left refuge for toppling Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. Unluckily, this operation did not work and ended up with the imprisonment of Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl[6] together with a handful of rebels. Fortunately, they were pardoned and set free in 1955. Shortly after, they fled to Mexico and planned for a return to their homeland for setting up an overthrow of the repressive Cuban president Fulgencio Batista that has long been supported by the United States until 1958. Ultimately, Fidel Castro took over as Batista fled the country in 1959 (Cuban Revolution: Assault on the Moncada Barracks).

In addition to the Castro brothers, Ernesto "Che" Guevara[7] is another charismatic personality that owes much to the Cuban revolutionary cause. Ernesto Guevara led the fight in the mountain of Sierra Maestra[8], where he and the rural guerrilla fighters became the nucleus of a guerrilla army. Che was and still perceived as a key figure and played a key role in the success of the revolution to the present day. In 2000, *Time Magazine*

[6]- Raúl Castro is Fidel's younger brother, who was born in 1931. Raúl helped his brother and the revolution in many ways. After Fidel's gaining of power, Raul was appointed head of the armed forces. Thereafter, he held the position of Cuba's defence minister as well as deputy prime minister. (Voss)

[7]- Che Guevara, byname of Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, was born in Argentina but fought in Cuba. He was one of the well-known and the most admired revolutionary figure in Latin America. He was killed, yet alive in the hearts and souls of many leftists for generations to come (Chomsky 34-35).

[8]- The Sierra Maestra Mountain was the cradle of the Cuban successful guerrilla campaign. The mountain range is located on the south-eastern Cuba ("Sierra Maestra").

pointed out "his figure stares out at us from coffee mugs and posters, jingles at the end of the key rings and jewellery, pops up in rock songs and operas and art shows" (Chomsky 34). Again, the magazine credited Che Guevara as one of the most effective people in the twentieth century, although he was not Cuban but he fought for the Cuban revolutionary beliefs so fiercely with a socialist vision in hand. In 1967, this mythologized leader died, a martyr, after initiating revolutionary theories within different revolutionary movements in Latin America as well as Africa (Chomsky 34-35).

The legacy of both Che Guevara and Fidel Castro for Cuba was not concerned only with the armed struggle. Those revolutionists wanted to take the fight to another level by demonstrating their opposition to all kinds of imperialism and neo-colonialism[9], besides disseminating their socialist thoughts that unfold new ideas of liberation for the third world countries that has long suffered all kinds of oppression exercised over them by their political systems or by foreign policy. In this perspective, Fidel Castro was interviewed by *Times* reporter Herbert L. Matthew in a 1957 meeting, leaving a deep impression on Matthew about Castro's critical objectives. He describes the leader as having "… strong ideas of liberty, democracy, social justice, the need to restore the Constitution, to hold elections" (Chomsky 40).

As Castro, Guevara shares the same orientation as a leftist or a communist, contending that he is against being a dry economic communist, as the latter is generally related to economy. However, he is an advocator of social change by using the communist ideology, which Guevara is referring to as "a phenomenon of consciousness" that would

[9]- The US interest in Latin America has long been the central matter for its politics and economy, though those countries suffered a tough colonial period. According to Bulliet et al., "Although Latin America had achieved independence from colonial rule more than a hundred years earlier, European and American economic domination of the region created a semi colonial order" (807).

set people free from all notions of injustice, alienation, and oppression. This would result in creating a new human form of socialism, which shaped a "New Man"[10] who contrasts the old idea of individualism that led the world to egoism and ultimately to Capitalism. Subsequently, the notion of *Hombre Nuevo* or the "New Man" was perceived as a new path not only for the revolutionary movements in the Third World countries, but even for the leftists in the United States who wanted to initiate this conception in the Capitalist world (41-42).

1.3.1 Revolutionary Values and the Cuban Society

One of the predominant goals of the Cuban revolutionaries after taking power in 1959 was to give back the nation to its citizens. In other words, the creation of a new society that would serve the Cuban people in the first place was eminently needed, especially after a long and hard history that was characterized by torture and submission under the dictatorship of its political system in one hand, and the imperialist threat of the United States in another. Chomsky gives a succinct overview of the Cuban Revolution as being "a 50-year process of consciously creating a new society with many different phases, twists and turns" (43).

The creation of a new Cuban society through the social revolution would not be achievable without two main targets: the first is to own the national sovereignty and the second is to fight for social justice. Intermittently, the Cuban nation went through unsteady political states throughout the twentieth century that pushed its people to call for independence, *independencia o muerte,* which was modified to liberation or death,

[10]- *El Hombre Nuevo* or the "New Man" is a new socio-political idea initiated by Che Guevara that was basically fuelled by the Cuban government. This idea was all about introducing a new way of thinking within the Cuban community who as new men would give all what it takes to liberate their nation (Chomsky 35).

libertad o muerte. By the start of the 1959 revolution, homeland or death *patria o muerte* became the Cubans' ultimate aim as they became fully aware of their thirst for the national sovereignty (Pérez-Stable 05).

The creation of a new society does not mean the creation of the *Hombre Nuevo* only; it extends this to the construction of a new Cuban genuine society, where the Cubans are preoccupied with the profit of the majority that tends to obtain a national collective identity (On Celebrating the Cuban Revolution 04). The increasing sense of nationalism, which was primarily the result of the revolution seeds, led to an ultimate rise of collective social awareness, in addition to gaining a widespread support for their cause, especially after recognizing that nationalism is the only path for making their island a better place.

Prior to 1959, the Cuban people did not attract much attention to their social dilemmas comparing to the years of the social revolution (Pérez-Stable 05). The social revolution, however, owes a debt of thanks to the radical nationalism that characterized and accentuated the doctrine of the 1959 revolution. Additionally, the texture and nature of the Cuban society, besides the political crises that were the main vehement forces for the mass mobilization, played a vital role in modelling the revolution that came into being as a viable option in 1959.

In this respect, Marifeli Pérez-Stable accepts with some reservations the Cuban community's admission and acknowledgment of the socialist teachings easily and quickly that were particularly the essence of realizing social justice and the key to the major achievements of the revolution (06). However, before 1959, the same society was characterized by a long phase of stagnation. Notwithstanding, the Cubans witnessed a history full of social inequalities, economic instability, and political corruption and

inequity (06). This was until socialism came as a salvation to the Cuban society. Accordingly, Che Guevara contends that choosing the optimal and the most adequate ideology that would work as a moving strategy for the masses is the key. He explains,

> That is why it is very important to choose the right instrument for mobilizing the masses. Basically, this instrument must be moral in character, without neglecting, however, a correct use of the material incentive — especially of a social character. As I have already said, in moments of great peril it is easy to muster a powerful response with moral incentives. Retaining their effectiveness, however, requires the development of a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values. Society as a whole must be converted into a gigantic school. (Notes on Man and Socialism in Cuba)

Prior to the advent of the Cuban Revolution, Cuba was quintessentially a class-based society. Subsequently, the Cuban social hierarchy contributed in many ways to the rise of the revolutionary ideas. It is also important to highlight that the revolution would have been possible if the Cuban society did not spearhead the radical change as a one unit. However, the question of who did support the revolution, or more precisely, which social force did really contribute to the development of the radical movement and national mobilization has been a matter of dispute.

Accordingly, three main sub-divisions were categorizing the Cuban social class division. The first class is the peasantry, which represents the largest class, is at the lowest rank in the Cuban society. Peasants are ostensibly the big engine that pushed the revolution forward, due to their proportion in society and their miserable life conditions compared to the two other classes. The second predominant social category is the middle class. It constitutes the basis of the Cuban society as it includes all the working class from

social workers, lawyers, to doctors, and teachers, in addition to other eminent professions. As some scholars proclaimed[11], this social force was crucial in the development of the revolution as well as the mobilization of the peasants (Pérez-Stable 06). The Orthodox Marxists[12] share the same view about the working class, claiming that the social transformation in Cuba was relying on socialism that was basically supported and sustained by the unity and the immense work of the two classes. Unlike the workers and peasants, the industrialists who were at the opposite end of the Cuban social scale, were not concerned with the revolution as the two other classes were (09-10).

In the course of 1959, the popular national empowerment of the Cuban social classes succeeded in the revolution's fulfilment. In fact, the Cubans supported the revolution and participated in the Cuban nationalism that helped Fidel Castro and his followers throughout the years of the revolt, though the communist revolution's main target was to empower the Cuban people. The latter loved their leader Fidel Castro, trusted him, and supported his cause and his radical ideas in many different ways as he was regarded as a humanitarian, socialist, anti-imperialist, and a revolutionist, par excellence. For his detractors, however, Castro was the worst governing authority in Cuba's history because he coupled his revolutionary beliefs with the socialist ideology that was compared to locking his people in a socialist prison, and throwing away the key (Cornwell).

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[11]- Among the scholars who claimed that the middle class played a major role in the mobilization of the peasantry was C. Wright Mills in his book *Listen Yankee!* (Pérez-Stable 212).

[12]- Orthodox Marxism, which is part of Marx's main philosophy, has nothing to do with religion. Orthodoxy, however, refers far more to method exclusively. This doctrine embeds "the scientific conviction that the Marxist dialectic is the correct method of investigation and that this method cannot be developed, extended or made more profound except in the spirit of its founders" (Lukacs).

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The Cuban revolutionists' underlying values of socialism, communism, and anti-imperialism were pertinent and permanently used in the revolution for the good of the Cuban citizens as a whole (On Celebrating the Cuban Revolution 07). Those values summarized into four pivotal elements: improving the economic status, constructing new international relationships, treating the old ill social matters and creating a different political system that would serve Cuba and the Cubans. However, the leader of the revolution saw that some sectors are more important to work on than others, as for the necessity of the social adjustment over the need to develop a good economy of the country or to confront the revolutionary opposition of the United States, which could be easily achieved if the collective well-being is at hand.

The Cuban Revolution created a rebellious mentality that sought a radical societal transformation. Indeed, the revolution leadership highlights the importance of dealing with the Cuban social problems starting with education that would actuate the Cubans in raising their intellectual standards and sense of patriotism (On Celebrating the Cuban Revolution 08). During the years of the revolution, the revolutionists remarkably noticed an urgent need of the rural Cubans to be educated. They finally came to the full realization that underscores the eminence of an educated people for triggering the fight for liberation. In 1961, the Cuban authority started a new social program by creating Literacy Campaign[13]. This literacy campaign could not be successful without the efforts of all Cubans who heavily participated in building schools and educating rural Cubans (09).

[13]- The literacy campaign of 1961 played a key role in mobilizing the Cubans who have long suffered the elevated rate of illiteracy. During the year of the campaign's creation, 707,000 Cubans were able to read and write (On Celebrating the Cuban Revolution 08).

Undoubtedly, the profound nationalist feeling of Cuban people was the key in generating the widespread support of their social cause. Hence, this collective sense of citizenry led to the creation of mass organizations in different social arenas. Consequently, the revolutionary values that all Cubans were stressing with great vigour and enthusiasm were ultimately attainable with the Cubans' mass organizations that did not work just on education but on other daily life issues that the Cuban citizens were obliged to cope with throughout for decades. Additionally, the Cubans did not care about the social values of the revolution only, but they were preoccupied with protecting the revolution from a possible failure. Cubans from all walks of life participated in securing their nation as being part of *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, CDRs) through which they could guard their nation's coasts and crucial places day and night (08). Thus, the mass organization has been the main concern of the state as well as people. Such organizations exist for workers and farmer, man and women, old people and young students; that is to say the Cuban Revolution was an eventual construct of Cuban civil society.

1.3.2 Women and the Cuban Revolution

Cuba faced a myriad of challenges during the years of the national revolution. However, the problem of gender was not among the challenges met by the Cuban leaders. On the contrary, the leader of the Cuban Revolution, as well as the revolutionary participants gave a crucial importance to the role of women in rebuilding the Cuban society, which emphasized the importance of a good and healthy familial relationship. This positive futuristic vision for the status of Cuban women begun after a long oppressed

woman's past, a past that was remarkably against all possibilities of women's effective participation in the Cuban society (Hinze).

Before the beginning of the revolution, women's position in society was depressing. Hence, oppression touched almost every aspect of the Cuban women's life. They were perceived as only householders, with low to no literate level, and no employment that would improve their everyday life. Furthermore, the job that was available for working-class and peasant women was a job with a very low salary, even lower than the one of their male counterparts. The pronounced difficulties that faced the Cuban women throughout their country's history were decreasing during the times of social change that targeted fundamental social alterations in Cuba.

Immediately after the rise of the revolutionary values, women took active position in the revolution. They remarkably played pivotal participatory and even leadership roles that enabled them to tell the Cuban women's story and fixing it for a better Cuba. It is crucial to point out that class division in Cuba is one of the most important factors that helped shaping the experience of women before the revolution. Women in the Cuban society were categorized under two main social classes, with significantly different modes of living. In this regard, Nicola Murray describes this categorization by stating, "The history of women in Cuba thus embraces two principal images; that of the upper- or middle-class, submissive, protected virgin or devoted wife, and that of the assertive, working class or peasant, single parent for whom struggle is a way of life" (60).

It is eminently important to mention that the history of women in Cuba was predominantly marked by the subordination of women of the two already mentioned classes to men. Man was the central power in the Cuban society. Accordingly, the power

of man over woman went back to the colonial era, when the Spanish Civil Code of 1888[14] gave a new insight into the relations between male and female in Cuba by prioritizing the role of male in the family and granting him the total authority in society (Allahar 91). In Anton L. Allahar words, "the Code gave the husband total control over conjugal property, sole right to speak and act on behalf of his wife in legal and financial matters, and final say in what was best for the children" (91).

Hence, this patriarchal society gave birth to a silent female revolution that stressed the important role of women not merely as mothers, wives, and household, but principally as an effective entity in society, economy of the nation, and even as active political participants. Consequently, the transitional state that affected the traditional male society, gave more space and freedom of choice to women, and produced a 'matrifocal' society. Moreover, one of the pivotal key factors that gave chance to women to be partially liberated was the country's economy that was in need of working-class and peasant women (Murray 60). Thus, the economy of the nation worked both with and against women's favour.

However, this 'revolution within the Revolution' as Fidel Castro called it, did not come to a full existence until the threshold of the Cuban revolution. In this course, Marjorie King refers to the great interest of the leader in ameliorating matters of Cuban women by stating that "Cuban women have, in the person of Fidel Castro, the single most influential individual advocates for women's equality" (114). The introspective reality of Cuban women as interpreted by Castro opened doors for many women to be more

[14]- The initiation of The Spanish Civil Code of 1888 gave Cuba a new social order, especially in all what concerns the matters of the two genders' role and position in society. The code clearly "assigned undisputed authority to men". Henceforth, Cuba was distinguished by its hierarchal society ever since (Skaine 07).

engaged in the labour world. As a result, Castro raised women's self-esteem and self-confidence by his continuous and effective speeches targeting women. In this vein, Fidel Castro highlighted the fact that,

> ...the whole topic of women's liberation, of full equality of rights for women and the integration of women into society is to a great extent determined by their incorporation into production... to the extent that women are incorporated into work, so will the way to their liberation become easier and more clearly defined. (Granma Weekly Review 03)

The long history of female marginalization started taking a new diversion in the course of the revolutionary years under the leadership of Castro who recognized the role of women and the alterations that they could bring to the island. This is to say that the main goal of the revolution was not restricted only to the national victory over the corrupted government as most of Cuban people believed, but to support and help women to gain their legitimate rights together with their male counterparts. Moreover, that end was not attainable without the involvement of women in different social spheres were they could manifest their power of will for a better Cuba. Therefore, women started being active and more productive in the same society where they were perceived by old *macho* ideas as no more than caretakers, householders, and servants, that had no place in society.

Subsequently, Cuban women in the post-revolutionary society made obvious changes at the traditional structure of the Cuban family by occupying different and critical roles in society. Thanks to Fidel Castro, women could obtain a variety of opportunities that reside beyond the restrictions of the old patriarchal society bounds, for the ultimate goal of being dynamic and effective contributors. Ultimately, women got the right to be educated, to get an adequate job, and to be producers, besides other privileges (Lawless).

This gave the Cuban women a new position in the Cuban society. Subsequently, the empowerment of women by the new installed government created numerous and enormous uplifts in society.

The initiated change that was effected by Cubanas was so present in many different ways in the Cuban society. Starting with one of the most important sectors, which is education, where women took advantage of Castro's calling for a free illiteracy and better healthcare. At this level, women volunteered in constructing a campaign for challenging the old idea of homebound women that was the product of male community. Half of the volunteers in this newly created campaign were able to read and write, standing up high for the pre-revolutionary period and the previous principles that women's place is at home, raising their children, having no right to be educated. The Cuban revolution came primarily for eradicating such corrupted and ill-conceived traditional ideas that work against the growth of society in general. Alongside overhaul of the educational system, which moved the citizens away from the nightmare of illiteracy that has been long dwelling Cuba, the revolution gave a great importance to healthcare. As in education, women were given more healthcare due to the harsh health conditions they went through especially regarding their reproductive health (Lawless).

Cuban women's mobilization disseminated rapidly in different sectors in Cuba. *La Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* or the Federation of Cuban Women[15] accelerated the national mobilization through the commitment to Cuban women by targeting the female citizens' matters in the society. The Federation of Cuban Women was a product of the

[15]- The Federation of Cuban Women, FMC, was basically formed just 12 months after Cuba's revolution by Fidel Castro and was led by Vilma Espin. This organization helped shape Cuban women's main cause, which was primarily to defend women's rights and repositioning them in different spheres as health, education, and labour (Federation of Cuban Women).

revolutionary leadership that urged for promoting gender equality besides other underscored goals. Again, Castro saw a pressing need for establishing the federation of women that came into full existence in August 1960 as a replacement of the old National Union of Women.

The main objectives of the Cuban women federation were varied and stimulating. Focusing on the prominent role that Cuban female could play in different fields for the aim of improving the country's state, women were perceived as the revolutionary's engine that moved it towards success and eventual transform of the Cuban society. More specifically, they could provide a good support for the revolution and its leader. Subsequently, there was a cooperation between the federation and the Cuban government in order to raise women's self-esteem as an entity that could overcome all the obstacles in order to be politically involved, to be economically productive, socially active and advocate both at the national and the international levels (Allahar 99).

Eventually, in the pre-revolutionary era Cuban women have witnessed an awful experience caused by machismo society. After those hard times, women together with the revolutionary advocates started drawing new perspectives for a better future for them and for the generations to come, and that was due to the Cuban Revolution and its intended goals. Obviously, the federation's intended goals were remarkably achieved. In 1961, education, for example, recorded a remarkable increase in the number of the illiteracy that shifted from 21.0 percent to 3.9 percent in one year only (Allahar 101). We can ultimately conclude that compared to men, women took the lead in scoring the highest number of the literacy. Moreover, women extended illiteracy and started occupying important jobs exactly as men.

1.4 The Renaissance of the Cuban Political Culture

At the turn of the twentieth century, Cuban political image was no different from the previous centuries that the Cuban history went through. The revolutionary history that Cuba underwent had been activated long ago for it left a profound belief and conviction for Cubans to be involved and participate in politics that constitutes the crucial aspect of modelling their lives. Subsequently, the transformation that the Cubans longed for was primarily to gain social stability that cannot exist without a stable government. Yet, it is of a vital importance to realize that the issue of political stability and social change dwells at the centre of both political culture, political structure, and political participation.

The Cuban Revolution is one of the political upheavals in the Cuban society that has introduced pivotal changes, especially in the way Cubans were thinking of their participatory need in their country's politics. Indeed, the revolution initiated new cultural ideas that did not exist before, the fact that led to the emergence of new national values and different social relations. Accordingly, during the years of the Cuban Revolution, more rights were granted to the pro-revolution Cuban citizens, in addition to an unconditional freedom of joining the social life, and a wide variety of work opportunities (Hernandez and Dilla 38). In other words, the Cuban people during the revolution enjoyed a new kind of personal participation in their community, besides the ability and legitimacy of the political participation, the fact that contributed to the construction of a new Cuban political culture.

Prior to the revolution, the Cubans witnessed an array of political discomfort throughout the Cuban history. These political vicissitudes helped shape the Cuban culture and civic structure continuously. At the very beginning of the Cuban history, the

indigenous Indian groups[16] did not leave as much cultural heritage in the Cuban society as the Spanish colonialism did. The Spanish language, traditions, religion, and their lifestyle dominated the land for decades, until the arrival of the slaves from Africa to Cuba during the years of the Cuban sugar revolution[17] that had a deep impact on the left behind Spanish cultural components. After that, the Cuban land went, once again, through various internal and external political problems during the nineteenth and the twentieth century that were incorporated in the way the Cuban political culture has been shaped (Hernandez and Dilla 39).

It is also important to highlight that the Cuban people were also eminently concerned with Latin American political issues. Due to its central location, the Cuban island was a refuge for countries in the region that sought political exile. Additionally, the Cubans were supportive and cooperative with the other Latin American countries. Due to their popular movements, the Cubans were so involved in the socio-political matters of their neighbours. In this respect, Rafael Hernandez and Haraldo Dilla gave good examples of the Cuban movements' participation in helping some Latin American countries. They stated that "There were organized movements in Cuba to overthrow the dictator Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, to increase the forces of President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, and in solidarity with the Colombia of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan" (40). Hence, the popular Cuban movements contributed to the tightening of the social and

[16]- Before the early European exploration of the Cuban island, the latter was inhabited by three different Indian cultures: the Ciboneyes, the Guanahatabeyes and the Taínos. The most recognizable people among the three were the Guanahatabeyes due to their long existence and pertinent culture on the land ("Ciboney").

[17]- Since Cuba, the largest island in the Antilles was characterized with rich soil and fertile plains, the Spanish opened Cuba's ports up to foreign ships that introduced a great sugar boom that lasted until the 1880s. Cuba was an eminent exporter of sugar cane during the nineteenth and twentieth century, and sugar became the product that dominated the country's agro-industry ("Ciboney").

political relationships with the external world, resulting in a subsequent worldview perspective, in addition to developing national values that accentuated the Cuban identity.

All of the accumulated Cuban national and international socio-political experiences contributed to the evolution of the Cuban political culture. Gradually, the Cubans constructed new social notions that were inseparable of the Cuban political affairs. The revolution, however, intensified common feelings of collectiveness, socialization, and nationalism that played a key role in the mobilization of the masses whether against the national political and social problems that were dwelling the nation for centuries, or against the international greed, especially the United States, and the increasing tension between the two countries. In this course, the Cuban government created many possibilities and offered many facilities for getting the Cubans involved into their country's social, economic, as well as political issues of the Revolution. The creation of various campaigns and organizations, the effective use of the mass media, besides education through participation, as some examples, were among the new institutions that were set into service for the sake of mobilizing the masses for demonstrating a rejuvenated version of the new Cuban political atmosphere (Fagen 257).

Being aware of the Cuban political domestic or external reality was not a matter of concern for almost all of the Cubans due to the free access to the national and international political knowledge. The widespread of education during the 1960s, especially throughout the 1961 that was known as the "Year of Education", was a useful means through which the political information was disseminated in a wide and easy way. The political development, as the leader Castro perceived it, was seriously in need of a political education work. He maintained, "The most important education is the political education of the people". Henceforward, Castro was working persistently and

consistently on this philosophy that sought to be the key factor of changing the Cubans' political perspectives in accordance to their societal norms (qtd. in Fagen 261).

The previously illiterate Cubans started recognizing the internal as well as the external political conditions that were vital components in the construction of their current political culture. More importantly, the Cuban revolutionary system surpassed integrating the general political education in schools for establishing special schools that invite the Cubans to apprehend the basic teachings of the Marxist-Leninist Theory[18], which were known as *Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria* or Schools for Revolutionary Instruction[19]. Hence, the educational system in Cuba changed from being an institution that targets social and intellectual matters only to mirroring the socio-behavioural orientation that is in essence the product of the political reality (Hernandez and Dilla 43).

Mass media was another medium for publicizing for the mass mobilization. Yet, before the revolution, media was at work. During the revolution, however, this method of communication knew a noticeable improvement in terms of availability, quality and variety of the means, such as the emergence of the electronic media. Media was not limited just to journalists who were generally concerned with the spreading of the political issues, but even the leader of the revolution himself was discussing the sensitive political matters on air, showing no confidentiality in publishing such topics. In addition to television and radio, newspaper was another effective tool in the teachings of the

[18]- Marxist-Leninist Theory is a revolutionary theory in essence that is a pure adaptation of Marxism developed by Vladimir Lenin. As the ideology of Marxist-Leninist was successful in giving birth to the communist revolution in Lenin's Russia in November 1917, many communist countries followed the doctrine and became the foundation for the world communist movement ("Marxism-Leninism").

[19]- As the literary campaign led by Fidel Castro was prioritizing and calling for a Revolutionary Culture in Cuba, *Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria* were constituted in order to mobilize the Cuban population by using education to promote its embrace of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

revolution, as *Revolución* and *Noticias de Hoy* that were actively working for Castro's 26th July Movement[20]. Fidel Castro was certain that no other mediator could be as effective and useful as media would be. In this vein, José Antonio Portuondo (qtd. in Fagen) synthesized the main idea of the revolutionary media philosophy by claiming that:

> . . . The desire of all the revolutionary leaders, beginning with Fidel Castro, is to transform radio and television into educational instruments through which the masses may be both informed and formed. Each appearance of the leaders of the Revolution is always a lesson in economics, politics, history, and even in specialized techniques, with a profound Marxist-Leninist revolutionary meaning.... What is sought.... is the formation of a new type of intellectual, of socialist man, a conscious actor in the formidable tasks of his time. (257)

Thus, media was a shortcut for publishing, advertising, and easily politicizing the Cuban politics. Furthermore, the main social and political goals underscored by the revolutionist would not be easily and quickly announced without the support of such means of communication, through which the leader himself took the lead of teaching and preaching to a large audience via screen and radio, in order to reach the widest populace. Eventually, the revolution was targeting the dissemination of certain political ideologies for eradicating the previous corrupted politics.

Going back to the solid and long lasting organization and association of women, other organization systems were at work either. People from all walks of life were politically involved and socially engaged for the sake of achieving what the revolution had already promised them. Thus, the target was one, but the ways of accomplishing it

[20]- known as M-26-7, Spanish *Movimiento 26 de Julio*, is a movement that was born by Fidel Castro's overthrow of Fulgencio Batista's regime that took place on July 26, 1953.

were varied. One of the most important tasks was “education through participation”. According to Richard Fagen, the Mass participation of Cubans, especially youth, provide them with good insights to get into the revolution’s matters and the main tasks that should be accomplished (260). Hence, the engagement into political subjects, which boosted their political consciousness, was a national experience through which Cubans would change the long history of subordination and submission.

1.5 The Cuban Political Participation and Social Change

The rise of a national consciousness that stresses the eminence of getting politics into the social matters is largely an imitation of the old traditional Cuban family model with some major changes (Hernandez and Dilla 41). During the revolutionary era, the Cuban family became more aware of the extent to which the involvement of the individuals into the political arena could be useful and beneficial on the individuals and society. By time, this belief was confirmed, especially during the 1960s when Cubans were acting and reacting in society according to their political system (41). Hence, people started taking firm decisions in accordance to their country’s political situation to join and strive for the revolutionary cause.

In broader sense, the most compelling evidence in inquiring political participation is that previously, the idea of being politically involved was restricted to the western systems. Moreover, peoples of the under-developed countries had no right to interfere in politics that was a governmental matter only. Conversely, the non-western nations that underwent a series of political disturbances were driven by mass mobilisation that facilitates their political participation, which has been victimized of illegitimacy and

untrustworthy. This participation, moreover, is mostly common in the pro-communist countries, as many researchers in political science have admitted[21].

Taking part in the radicalization that the revolution underscored since its beginning is a hot subject of discussion. The participation in the revolutionary matters was not an easy decision, due to the emergence of determinant factors, which were deeply rooted in the socialist doctrine that prevailed the nation. Cubans were free to join the cause of the revolution whenever they like, but they were also responsible for assuming the consequences. On the other hand, the need and necessity of a collective national collaboration for initiating radical social and economic transformations was the dominating feeling. However, many Cubans were not as concerned with the social and economic changes as they were anxious about the construction and representation of new socio-political concepts and ideologies that would be prominent in their new political culture not only for the Cubans, but also for the external world as well (Hernandez and Dilla 44).

The External world for the revolution ideology has never been discarded from the socio-political framework. In this regard, 'national defence' was one of the main political ingredients for the citizenry participation. With respect to the revolution era, the sense of belonging and patriotism grew deeper in the Cubans' minds and souls, leaving a burning desire to a militant mass mobilization. Hence, 'national defence' that has been activated to face any threatening external force like North American foreign policy, became an overall source of inspiration and a moving cause for the revolutionary members. As a

[21]- Both Richard D. Little in his article titled *Mass Political Participation in the U.S. and U.S.S.R.: A Conceptual Analysis*, and Jerry F. Hough's *Political Participation in the Soviet Union* discuss this point.

result, the Cuban community eagerly adopted the notion of 'national defence' to their lives, and acted accordingly.

The revolutionary oriented political involvement of the Cuban's internal politics, however, has witnessed an intensified national support and a relatively high rate of public participation. Notwithstanding, the importance of the popular involvement was not quantitative per se, since it was distinguished by its intervention in different societal spheres as social protection, health care, literacy, civil rights, besides other communal activities (Hernandez and Dilla 44). This is to say, the extent to which the revolution was successful or not is not by stating the number of its supporters and participants, but by testing its credibility and functionality that could be measured by its existence in various social disputable affairs.

Furthermore, the revolution did not favour one gender over the other or one race over another, the fact that gave it more communal trustiness. In this regard, Fidel Castro was continuously stressing the importance of collectivism over individualism[22]. In one of his earliest speeches, he declared, "we are going to establish a system of collective surveillance. We are going to establish a system of revolutionary collective surveillance!" Thus, the leader was quite clear about his objective that could not be achievable without a collective force. In another speech where he wishes for a better future shaped by a collective mind-set, he declares that, "The day must come when we have a Party of men

[22]- It was not until the years of the revolution that Cuba thought of adopting the collectivist over the individualist ideology for an effective contribution to the political and social interests of the citizenry and their island. This social behaviour is basically rooted in the communist ideology that favours the needs of the group over the needs of the individual.

and women, and a Leadership of men and women, and a State of men and women, and a Government of men and women."[23]

During the 1975 and 1976, the Cuban Constitution together with the Family Code[24] accentuated the significance of the equal status of Cuban men and women in society, which would be critical in ameliorating the political involvement quality (Evenson 309). Indeed, the newly established constitution, with the reinforcement of the Family Code, prohibited all kinds of segregation and inequality as being two hindering components for the society overall advancement. The constitution clearly discussed this matter by claiming, "Discrimination because of race, colour, sex or national origin is forbidden and is punished by law. The institutions of the state educate everyone, from the earliest possible age, in the principle of equality among human beings"[25] (qtd. in Evenson 310).

With respect to political participation, the notion of *civic participation*[26] is essentially considered as a mirror that reflects the reality of political culture. In other words, civic participation is thought to promote unity and a collective creation of a certain social order. As the study of *Civic Participation* suggests, a good scrutiny of the social

[23]- The speech was depicted from the Second Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women (Nov. 29, 1974), in Second Congress of the Federation of Cuban Women, Central Report 276, 304 (1975).

[24]- The current constitution of Cuba was drafted in 1976. The Cuban government passed the Family Code into law in 1975. The code under the number 1289 was approved by popular referendum and was officially published in the International Woman's Day. The Family Code, generally speaking, aimed at ensuring gender equality in society and equality for women in the home (Evenson 309).

[25]- The same article goes on by stating that: "In order to assure the exercise of these rights and especially the incorporation of women into socially organized work, the state sees to it that they are given jobs in keeping with their physical makeup; they are given paid maternity leave before and after giving birth; the state organizes such institutions as children's day-care centres, semi boarding schools and boarding schools; and it strives to create all the conditions which help to make real the principle of equality" (qtd. in Evenson 310).

[26]- *The Civic Culture* (1963) or *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* is a well-known book about political culture and the popular political participation by the two political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba.

pattern of Cuban political participation should include first the value perspective of the Cubans in response to their political system. Second, we should not dismiss the psychological as well as the personal treats of the Cuban community in general as it played a key role in determining their political feedback and outcomes. The cognitive side is the third point, which is about the acquired knowledge and shaped beliefs of the Cubans about their own politics and the way it works.

After the triumphal years of the Cuban revolution, the Cuban society became more politicized. Yet, it is undeniable that this communal society has long been participatory in their governmental matters as political matters were continuously present in the everyday life of the Cubans prior to the revolution. After the years of revolution, however, politics was deeply rooted into familial life. This was in good part ascribable to the leader Fidel Castro's efforts to get his revolutionary doctrine widely spread by orienting and empowering the masses through media, providing intensive political education, publically discussing ideological strategies, and inviting the whole community to be part of his political programs. Consequently, this socio-political program changed the outset of the Cubans' involvement into politics, especially during and after the years of the revolution. Work is a good case in point, as it is a crucial brick in the construction of a strong society. For that matter, Castro promised his people that, no matter what, all citizens would be guaranteed jobs with fixed regular income (Hernandez and Dilla 41). In fact, this promise gave more credibility to the revolution that maintained its asserted claims of transforming work from being a means of exploitation to an effective tool for initiating new social attitudes as collectiveness, hard work, and productivity.

In the framework of the revolutionary organizations, mass mobilization in different social participatory arenas felt deeply involved, more responsible, and wholly

dedicated to their communal interest that has been evolved to an optimistic faith in the ability to transform Cuba. This rise of the Cuban national consciousness was not concerned just with the internal economy and society, external supremacy and political authority only, but it was also giving great importance to new social values and revolutionary ideas for a unified action (Hernandez and Dilla 44).

Public participation in criticising Castro's pro-socialist administration was a welcoming idea for the amelioration of his political system. With his famous line "Within the Revolution, everything. Against the Revolution, nothing," Castro wanted to create a sense of belonging not only to his cause, but also to his people and supporters. Therefore, both positive and negative citizenry participation were present at the political cultural scene. Following the first argument of the civic affirmations for the ideological revolution, many Cubans were involved in politics but they could not support the idea of living into a communist country; victimizing the pro-Castro followers of political passivity and submission by the manipulating politicians. In the pre-Revolutionary era, many Cubans ultimately came to the full realization that their government was a mere lie. Carlos, who is a Cuban citizen in *Pueblo Chico, Infierno Grande* or Small town, big hell, confessed bitterly,

> I used to think that, that I loved the Revolution. I always thought that. But it wasn't true. I was hypnotised by collective hysteria…because they make you believe certain things. I don't know if psychology, if such a thing as manipulative collective psychology exists. I don't know, but it should because they can make you believe certain things [nervous titter], things like that you love the Revolution. They can make you believe that…you

> are jumping with joy. They can make you believe that you are happy and, I just don't know.[27] (qtd. in Dore 41)

Throughout history, the Cuban people witnessed continuous governmental disappointments, starting with the Spanish colonial period, the U.S imperial policy, and ending up with the Revolution. Subsequently, the Cuban people developed a suspicious relationship with their subordinates by being less trustful in their politics and policy makers. At the outset of the revolution, the Cuban community was enthusiastic about the revolutionary project and the things it would bring to their island; hence, they elaborated a psychology of collective consciousness that has been shaped and formed by the chief commandant of the Cuban Revolution who strove for publicizing his cause. Accordingly, the communal Cuban psychology was driven by the slogans of the revolution that bombarded them, and that by the same token was interpreted as being a mere instrument of disseminating communism.

With a strong disapproval to Castro's regime, many Cubans who were dissatisfied and unwilling to live in a communist nation and being guided by socialist beliefs wanted to live in a liberal, free of all restrictions world. Eventually, exile was the ultimate choice for them. Yet, the Cuban migratory experience to the United States in general and Miami in specific goes back prior to Castro's takeover. The contemporary mass migration, however, has been noticeably modelling itself on the North American lifestyle. In this context, Gerald E. Poyo's work *The Cuban Experience in the United States, 1865–1940: Migration, Community, and Identity,* confirms that the experience of the Cubans in the United States lacks the historical framework, and that was one of the main reasons for the

[27]- On Carlos' admission, two Cuban researchers recorded this interview on March 2005 with Carlos who was born in San Mateo in 1954. Carlos is a security guard and state employee.

Cuban refugees to feel more of Americans than of Cubans. Poyo further explains, "Scholarly community, social scientists have recently suggested that Cubans in the United States during the 1970s were ready to change their self-imposed identity as "exiles" and to assume their place within the world of North American ethnicity. They have lacked, however, a consciousness of the historical context of their experience" (20). Indeed, the Cuban exile initiated a new diversion in the course of the Cuban traditional political culture.

In general, the Cubans were satisfied with their national government that prioritized the citizenry in terms of the provision of social services. However, the major reasons that led the Cuban people to manifest an obedience to authority are still unclear. For identifying the common attitudes of the Cubans towards their government, besides their politicization or depoliticizing after the revolution, one thousand face-to-face interviews were conducted[28]. The main findings of the survey articulated the fact that the Cubans that have been interviewed namely in Havana and Santiago de Cuba were dissatisfied with their political regime in general, at the same time they showed a moderate confidence about the Cuban system of governance, which was essentially that was preoccupied with the collective well-being (Alvarado and Petrow 79). It is also important to highlight that the revolution and its leader were interchangeably related in the minds of Cubans who held a deep trust in their leader who was an iconic figure of revolt on the island. Evidently, things would be very different if the Cubans had a democratic government where the communal judgment over the political regime and its policy makers or leaders are two separate aspects.

[28]- The Gallup Organization that treats fear issues in several countries around the world issued this interview in September 2006.

1.6 Conclusion

The Cuban Revolution historiography has been a matter of discussion for many decades. In spite of the well-known insurrection of Fidel Castro in Cuba that was eventually successful in undermining the corrupt dictatorship of the U.S.-backed Batista, many questions remain pervasive and unexplained. With the economic changes, seizing uncultivated lands and redistributing them to peasants, lowered rents, raised wages, the introduction of a well-planned education programs, besides other societal and governmental vital alterations, the Cuban collective awareness raised drastically and started being massively mobilized by creating organizations for advocating Castro's programs.

However, the anti-Castro regime sentiments grew fast, as Castro's rejection of The United States' Capitalism led him to the adoption of the Soviet Union's Communism. Many scholars claim that Fidel Castro's decision is a political visioning for the citizenry favour. On this detail, Pamela Kyle Crossley portrays her thoughts about Castro's communist leanings in her book *The Earth and Its Peoples: a Global History*. She states that, "There is little evidence that Castro was committed to communism before the revolution but his commitment to break the economic and political power of the US in Cuba and undertake dramatic social reform led inevitably to conflict with the US and to reliance on the Soviet Union." This remarkable and radical governmental change shook the Cuban society, the fact that led to the emergence of the Cuban exilic experience in the United States where they could live in peace.

Contrastingly, the supporters of Fidel or the *fidelistas,* though against the socialist then the communist doctrines of their leader's political system, aimed at serving their

beloved nation and supporting the leader. Those adherents of *Fidelismo* or *Castroism* where calling for a new revolution, a revolution that is different from the one that took shape in the 1959, which was issued in attempt to take control over their country. The new revolution was more demanding and hard to realize because the Cuban community members of both genders and all ages were all needed for the reconstruction of Cuba.

Both revolutions have transformed Cuban national values and the social life. Yet, the amount of the revolutionary beliefs and socio-political involvements depends heavily on each generation's witness of the revolutionary process. With this in mind, the Cubans' belief system as well as their culture are the pure product of the new social relations shaped by the revolution, mass mobilization, besides their political and social participation. In theory, all of the above-mentioned elements contributed in a way or another in forming the contemporary Cuban political culture, which is distinguished by its participatory quality, where collectivism is the main engine for social, cultural and political change.

The Cuban women were noticeably active in the new issued revolution. In spite of the fact that they were not on the Cuban Revolution's agenda. In prior-revolutionary era, women were belonging to an oppressed class in the Cuban society, being relegated to subordinate roles. In the pre-revolutionary Cuba, however, notable governmental endeavours were advanced in favour of integrating women into the social, political, and economic life of Cuba. Subsequently, the revolution's leader, who was continuously stressing the pivotal role of justice and equality in processing the revolution, granted new possibilities for the long frustrated and oppressed women, the fact that awakened women to new prospects for a better life in Cuba. Gender equality, free access to educational institutions, volunteer service, health care, besides a wide range and different

opportunities for women to get decent jobs are among other advantages that Cuban women were ultimately achieving, leaving behind centuries of patriarchal tradition.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Underpinnings of Magical Realism

2.1 Introduction

The Cuban society witnessed a long history of political problems that brought a massive change to the structure of its social state. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many events took shape on the Cuban island that determined in many ways the story of the Cubans. Starting with a separation from the Spanish colonialism in 1898, which attracted the U.S interests to Cuba from 1783 to the 1950s. Moving on to the period between 1940 to 1959 that was characterized by the U.S-backed authoritarian government of the Cuban president Fulgencio Batista. The long lasting dictator regime of Batista led to the emergence of an armed revolt conducted by Fidel Castro from 1953 to 1959, besides the involvement of Cuba into the cold war that lasted until 1991. This chaotic political scene have had a fair share in disturbing the Cubans' social life, which by means led to a drastic alteration at various levels that authors of Cuban origins, namely the magical realists, come to manifest their position in this respect.

Notwithstanding, representing and interpreting the socio-political matters or just some aspects of that reality is a process which is so demanding. In other words, a literary discourse that is adopted to give reality new breadths and different depths could not be so credible dealing with a subject like that of political culture, and hence would lead to suspecting and misperceiving the reliability of realism in the first place. For that matter, magical realism plays a crucial role in the way reality is perceived and delivered, and then we should be concerned about the reader and the way he would interpret the reality that is interwoven with fantasy and marvellous. Yet, this could not be achievable without a new construction of reality that resembles the one declared in the text.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Magical Realism

Various works on the newly form of representing reality suggest considerable critical theoretical questions, besides the proper definition and incarnation of the magical mode in different arenas, especially social, cultural, and political. The widespread of the term among critics, moreover, has brought a problem of definition and a state of confusion for the appropriate use of this concept.

As a first step for a good understanding of the magical realist mode, this chapter will concentrate on the term's historical evolution and definition as well as the appropriate contexts where the term has effectively been utilized. Without missing the intrigue and importance of the key concept from where the magic departs, which is Realism. To that end, the present chapter seeks, primarily, a deep understanding of the oxymoronic term that has been initiated as a new alternative approach to reality. The importance of that literary mode in both Western and non-Western contemporary fiction is yet another vital point to be raised in this regard, besides magical realism milestone in the literary arena and the extent to which this literary mode of narrative is embraced and acclaimed by writers and readers world widely.

2.2 The Birth of a New Politics of Aesthetics

Before talking about magical realism as a literary genre and the different interpretations that the concept has received, we should pay attention to Realism that is a crucial part in the construction of a magical reality. Moreover, the term has long been encircled by many variants that could not be discarded or avoided due to the crucial role that they play in constructing the full image of magical realism. It is also important to highlight the fact that by examining the relationship existing between magical realism and other modes we will gain a good understanding of the term, its origins, besides the

ability to locate the term within its appropriate theoretical framework in attempt to remove the ambiguity and confusion that occurred due to the conflation of criticism.

2.2.1 The Demarcation of Realism in Magical Realism

At the very beginning, realism appeared as a philosophical issue being discussed by predominant mid-eighteenth century thinkers in relation to Aristotle's concept of mimesis. Realism in literature and art, however, came to its fullest a century after (Bowers 20). Within this framework, the critic Ian Watt elucidates the realist philosophy by stating that, "Modern realism…begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through his sense: it has origins in Descartes and Locke" (89). Similarly, literary realism does not mirror reality, but rather tries to interpret it the way it perceives it, although it can arguably alter our perception of reality. By assuming that the only way to know about reality is through our senses and that there exist a tight relation between what is reality and how is it perceived.

As in Raymond William's own terms, "Realism is a difficult word"; yet, it is much complicated in trying to define it as being part of another mode as magical realism. For George Levine, however, it is a term that manifest itself as a "dangerous multivalent one"; yet others see that realism is the most important and the most dominant narrative mode that contributed a lot to the modern English novel. In fact, though Realism is considered abstractly, it seems to be as simple as a literary mode that is heavily depending on perceiving, reasoning, and comprehending of ideas, people, and notions.

It is also important to note that realism walks hand in hand with the tradition of the novel that depends primarily on demonstrating reality. Ian Watt is among the twentieth century critics who used the concept of realism in order to form and shape the fictitious

works mainly that of the modern narrative. On this account, we can say that the main implication that is assumed in this respect is that the reality being utilized in fiction is a kind of simulation, which by means resembles the truth that exist in the real life but it is not the visualized or the real one (Bowers 20). The feature of writing a novel that is part of reflecting the reality is what gives credibility to the writer that would consequently ensure the engagement and interest of the reader.

Mimesis is another theoretical concept that is of a vital importance to the understanding of reality and its relation to mimicry in the novel. In this context, Hugo Von Hofmannsthal tries to display the major overlapping functional facts about mimesis: the first as, "to depicting and illuminating a world that is (partly) accessible and knowable outside art, and by whose norms art can therefore, within limits, be tested and judged". The second fact, moreover, is the position and vision of mimesis "as the creator of an independent artistic heterocosm, a world of its own, though one that [...] may still purport to contain some kind of 'truth' about, or grasp of, reality as a whole" (qtd. in. Benito Jesús, et al. 07-08). These two variations of mimicry being used as novelistic crucial details are best explained through Halliwell's comparison of two other ideas of representing reality, which are the "world reflecting" model versus the "world-simulating" or "world-creating" model (23). In the "world reflecting model", art and literature are portrayed as a mirror that is turned to the world. Yet, in "the world creating model", the mirror is turned to the viewer and reader and his or her own understanding and beliefs of the mirrored reality.

Conversely, to the above-discussed argument, Pam Morris rejects the idea that literature could reflect the factual details, as she wrote in her introduction to *What is Realism* on the fact that the fictitious work could not mirror everything; hence,

imagination and adjustments must be part of the process of writing fiction. She explains herself clearly by claiming, "No writing can encompass every tiny visual detail as a mirror faithfully does. Writing has to select and order, something has to come first, and that selection and ordering will always, in some way, entail the values and perspective of the describer" (04). Morris muses on the difference between the reality adopted by the writers in their novels and reality that dwells the real life apart from the literary text as it appears that "realist novels *never* give us life or a slice of life nor do they reflect reality" (04).

Eventually, the realist literary mode is meant to demonstrate or represent what is really happening in society, yet it is not supposed and not required to provide the reader with an identical or a copy pasted version of everyday life. A convenient and convincing proof for the above mentioned statement is the inaccuracy of the used means for mimicking the reality, which is language that could not be reliable in representing the truth. As Pam suggests to "think for a moment about a mirror reflecting a room and compare it to a detailed written description of the room, then reversal of images aside, it is obvious that no writing can encompass every tiny visual detail as a mirror faithfully does" (04).

Ultimately, we can deduce that realism is a literary narrative mode that constructed the basis for narratives in general terms, yet it cannot be the identical experiential reality. Obviously, when anything is told for the second time, the addressed reality will lose some if not most of its characteristics, simply because the reflection of reality is meant to cover everything with the least detail. Notwithstanding, realism is the most credible and reliable narrative mode to be deployed by authors for representing the social reality; subsequently, realism gave birth to a wide variety of literary modes that aim at representing reality but in a new way.

Indeed, realism formed the basis for or was the starting point to many other literary styles. Accordingly, Peter Brooks explains this idea by contending, "We tend to think of [realism] as the norm from which other modes - magical realism, science fiction, fantasy, metafictions- are variants or deviants" (05). As the most rational and reliable mode that is able to exhibit the truth like it is or as it appears, Realism was broadly disconnected to the supernatural or magical. The latter with its most engagingly realistic features, would never exist without the framework of realism that construct the basis for the unrealistic guiding principles and factual events. In this regard, Rosemary Jackson discussed the unbreakable link between the supernatural and realism claiming that, "Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it, it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real" (20).

The seemingly irreconcilable terms that constitute the core value of the concept abstract meaning, establish the demarcation of this literary mode. In other words, magic realism, magical realism, or marvellous realism is a combination of two abstract terms that collide but could never coexist in a world that could have a space for either. Within the bounds of magical realist texts, however, the contradictory elements of the mode are constituting the preliminary core idea for the adaptation of magical realism.

2.2.2 The Surreal, Fantasy, Marvellous, and Magic of Magical Realism

At this level, we should comprehend the meeting point of realism with other modes that resemble magical realism in the way marvellous, fantasy, and magic are used for representing reality. By doing so, we will get a clear idea about what makes magical realism different compared to other artistic and literary modes of expression as surrealism, fantastic literature and the marvellous real. We start with surrealism, which is meant to

be used in art and literary texts as a tool for talking about evils and rejecting the wickedness of the imposed restrictions over society. The surrealists use this mode by inventing and imagining images that are most of the time accidental and a mere result of "the unthinking impulse, blind feeling or accident" (Foster). In describing the surrealists, Stephen Foster declares that, "they believe that alternative realities are just as valid and more beautiful, although much of the beauty sought is violent and cruel and they consider [it to be] the deeper, truer part of human nature". According to the foremost surrealist writer, Andrea Breton who referred to Surrealism as "the prison of rationalism", the rational and typically ideal reality exists only in the stage of childhood where everything is innately innocent, besides our dreams where there is no modifications for reality.

Correspondingly, the parasitic relationship between realism and the supernatural is the distinguishable treat that constructs the core basis for all of the supernatural realism(s). Taking fantastic literature, as a case in point, in the words of Jackson who claims that it "introduces confusion and alternatives; in the nineteenth century this meant an opposition to bourgeois ideology upheld through the 'realistic' novel" (35). This obviously means that any literary mode that is combined with realism must entail contradictions and opposition to a given idea existing within the boundaries of a given society. However, as Jackson observes, "Fantasy re-combines and inverts the real but it does not escape it: it exists in a parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real" (20). This is to say that reality and the irrationality in the combined modes of realism could coexist but could never be separated.

Marvellous Real, however, is another term that appeared and was confused with the fantasy, supernatural, and magical realism. The marvellous real or *Lo Real Maravilloso* caused a critical disturbance in the understanding of the concept until Alejo Carpentier

gave an explanation in his prologue to *El Reino de Este Mundo and his essay De lo Real Maravillosamente Americano*. He declared that marvellous refers to supernatural occurrences and that the term belongs to European literature. Following this argument, Carpentier claims that marvellous is real and it concretely exists in the real world. Yet, the idea of marvellously real according to Cartenpier is completely detached from literature and aesthetics (qtd. in Imbert 03).

Discussing the possibilities of Latin American *realismo mágico* of 1950s, the one can say that the term has since gained a good and wide reputation being used as an expressive literary tool applied to all works of fiction that embeds magical happenings in a realist narrative way. In this vein, Zamora and Faris hold that, "the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, and everyday occurrence—admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism" (03). Indeed, in this kind of narrative fiction, the writers are intentionally making their readers acquainted to the magic pronounced in the text and perceived as a usual and obvious fact.

The adopted concept of magic in magical realism is a crucial yet critical part of this paradoxically combined mode. The term 'magic' means the abstract mysterious side of life, where the extraordinary and the unbelievable take place. Accordingly, magic of magical realism is typically quite the same, whereby magical realists rely on their imagination for the creation of unusual and hardly believable daily occurrences as the appearance of ghosts and strange creatures, irrational and hard to believe happenings, besides unrealistic settings and weird atmospheres (Bowers 19). In this regard, Maggie Ann Bowers upholds,

> The variety of magical occurrences in magic (al) realist writing includes ghosts, disappearances, miracles, extraordinary talents and strange atmospheres but does not include the magic as it is found in a magic show. Conjuring 'magic' is brought about by tricks that give the illusion that something extraordinary has happened, whereas in magic (al) realism it is assumed that something extraordinary *really* has happened. (19)

With respect to what Bowers has elucidated in her insightful work about what is magical realism, the one can understand that magic, which we know, is far too different from magic used in the magical realist texts. The latter is believed to be true since the primary aim of magical realism is to convey an idea that took place in the real world but it is told in a different way, yet the fictional characters together with the writer are accustomed to that magic. Subsequently, this kind of magic is quite unusual, the fact that makes it a unique kind of representing and demonstrating a specific idea or conception.

2.2.3 Defining Magical Realism

The history of magical realism knew lot of disturbances that led to the misunderstanding of the term, which by means was characterized by mystery and confusion. It is important to know that the concept went through three significant periods of time that took shape in three different places, its creation in Germany in the 1920s, its voyage to Central America in the 1940, its residence in Latin America in the 1950s, and its spread throughout the world later on.

Initially, the German art critic Franz Roh[29] coined the term magical realism, which refers to a new artistic tendency for demonstrating the irrational reality that started taking

[29]- In 1925, the German critic Franz Roh gave the name magical realism to refer to a group of German impressionist painters who were depending on nature of objects and to their own chromatic sensations who painted what they saw it was an art of reality and magic.

place in European paintings. Moreover, the term officially appeared for the first time in Roh's 1925 essay that was expended into a book entitled *Nach-Expressionismus, Magischer Realismus* (Post-Expressionism: Magic Realism) (Bowers 07). On the time the term was born, it was independently used in literature, with a varying meaning, by the Italian novelist Massimo Bontempelli[30], but this literary mode was soon forgotten in Europe and was applied in Latin America fiction. After being circulated in Latin America, the magic realist mode of expression has become one of the most vital contemporary trends in international fiction by gaining a wide popularity and significant use especially in postcolonial contexts.

The oxymoron term of magical realism has been defined in a million ways, as its paradoxical texture suggests combining magic and reality at the same time. Mindful of the fact that facing difficulties in defining a literary mode is not restricted only to magic realism, as Alastair Fowler states, "genres at all levels are positively resistant to definition" (40). In fact, the critics' creation of different definitions for the term caused vagueness and misunderstanding to the concept of magical realism. Yet, discarding the term's historical evolution is the main reason for having too much assumption about the concept's meaning, which by means will cause confusion and ambiguity. It is also important to state that the term has received many critiques for the disguised reality and the use of magic that mystified the truth, the fact that led to abandoning the mode that was perceived as a scandal to the general conventions of literary history.

In attempt to define magical realism, it is preferable to explain the term as it is without interfering different views and interpretations for the term; this is because most

[30]- Due to his fascist beliefs, Bontempelli's magical writings and aesthetic theories have been largely influenced by the Italian politics. Bontempelli became secretary of the fascist syndicate of writers and authors in 1928.

of the literary concepts suffer continuous modifications. To further understand this point, James Rother proposes in his article *Face-Values on the Cutting Room Floor: Some Versions of the Newer Realism* to try understanding the general notion of the term rather than wasting time and efforts trying to improve our knowledge of the concept. As a good illustration for this context, Rother initiates Augustine's Confessions on the subject of time where Jean Wittgenstein suggests, "What, then, is time? I know perfectly well what it is if no one asks me, but if I'm asked what it is and have to explain it, I find I'm just as perfectly ignorant of it. We feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena: our investigation, however, [should be] directed not towards phenomena, but ... towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena…." (67). One of the recurrent presumed possibility of understanding the concept of magical realism is, as Weisgerber acknowledges,

> Magical realism is neither an avant-garde movement nor a school of thought but a simple literary trend which includes different authors and is part of the extended realism of the twentieth century. Magical realism attempts to grasp, by intellect, intuition, imagination, the ontological background [of the worldly objects] (the metaphysical, the religious, the mythical), which underlies, informs, enriches or undermines, whichever the case, empirical reality. (qtd. in Arva 77)

In relation to Weisgerber's definition of magical realism, it is apparent that the concept in its essence is a literary mode, this is to contradict others' suggestions about magical realism as being a literary movement or a school of thought that has been created in order to oppose previously existing literary thoughts. In other words, magical realism is not a literary mode that came into the literary scene for opposing any other literary narrative style, as Weisgerber explains, by giving the example of the twentieth century realism that was an extension of the newly born magical realism. In like manner, Zamora and Faris emphasise this point by stating, "[M]agical realism may be considered an

extension of realism in its concern with the nature of reality and its representation" (06). With this in mind, writers who adapt this literary trend aim primarily at recognizing the empirical truth that is embedded within the adopted abstract concepts through reasoning, thinking, and imagining.

Again, as Wendy Faris elucidates the continuity of magical realism to realism, we grasp the idea that magical realism, which unlike the logical representation of realism, is not concerned with the rational demonstration of facts per se, simply because reality for magical realism could not be explained (Arva 78). Simultaneously, magical realism is not used to disorient or mislead the reader for understanding the specificities of the reality under scrutiny. On the contrary, the magical reality authors constantly tend to disrupt the habitual belief system in attempt to simplify and solidify the comprehension of the real world reality. As explained by Arva, he asserts that the "One must understand the magical realist universe not as a flight from reality but as a flight simulator, an artificial world within the real world, meant to prepare us for a better grasp of it" (79).

In what concerns critical opinion on magical realism, Angel Flores declares that the concept is one of the most accurate literary terms if we compare it to other literary modes like naturalism and romanticism for instance (qtd. in Fraser 20). Indeed, the texture of the composed term makes it more understandable and unique at the same time. Subsequently, this literary trend with its paradoxically composed structure succeeded in unifying the Latin American literature so far. Back to Flores' viewpoint about magical realism, he defines it as "an amalgam of reality and fantasy, an art of surprises, a timeless flux" (qtd. in Fraser 20). Actually, this succinct and simple definition by Flores is exactly what the concept stipulates and entails. Again, the literary mode is referred to as art of surprises simply because the reader could know about reality presented in the text, but he could

never anticipate the magic being used, that is why he is in non-stoppable state of exploring new magical things.

Luis Leal, however, who is another scholar to contribute to the study of magical realism, disagrees with the definition offered by Flores. He disclaimed the amalgamation of reality and fantasy because he believes that magical realism imply the discovery of mystery that inherently exists in reality (qtd. in Fraser 20). Essentially, the magical is part of the real, or most of the time it finds roots in the real and that what makes magical realism more credible compared to other literary techniques that combine the imagined and the real. Again, presenting Luis Leal's viewpoint about the same idea in *Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature*[31], contending that,

> Magic realism cannot be identified with either fantastic literature or with psychological literature, neither with surrealism hermetic literature that Ortega describes. Magic realism does use, like superrealism, dream motifs; nor does it distort reality create imaginary worlds, as do fantastic literature or fiction; nor does it place importance on a psychological analysis of the characters, since there is no attempt to explain motivations behind their actions or which prevent them expressing themselves.

The demarcation of magical realism has been a matter of discussion and dispute since all other literary genres that use fantasy, imagination, and supernatural ideas are recurrently compared to magical realism as the latter uses the process of imagining and creating magic. However, Leal certifies the adoption of certain psychological aspects like dream motifs, as other supernatural writings imbed; yet, these aspects are disrupting the

[31]- In response to Angel Flores' ideas on magical realism, Luis Leal wrote this essay on March 16, 2009 in order to repudiate a number of Flores' points besides his definition of magical realism.

flow of ideas relatively linked to the text, and does not separate the imaginary from the real, on the contrary, they coexist harmoniously and naturally.

I hasten to add that magical realism has been a well-supported narrative mode due to its usefulness of addressing delicate issues, which reality alone could not depict. Hence, the writers who want to address their national, socio-political, and cultural problems or to talk back to their oppressive regimes have appropriately utilised the mode for that cause. Other magical realists preferred to open closed social subjects like gender inequality, racism, belonging, etc., the fact that gave the mode more interest and wide popularity. In view of this, the postcolonial critic Brenda Cooper maintains, "Magical realism at its best opposes fundamentalism and purity; it is at odds with racism, ethnicity and the quest for tap roots, origins and homogeneity" (qtd. in Bowers 04). Actually, magical realism has particularly been used by Latin American writers and adopted to third world literature. Therefore, the argument that I have mentioned above is valid, and that is why magical realism was and still is tightly linked to Latin American literature.

2.3 Magical Realism as a Postcolonial Literary Mode

As being initially used by Latin authors, magical realism is extensively thought of as the most suitable literary device utilized for pronouncing the political, social and economic concerns of the Latino population. The most compelling evidence, moreover, is that the articulation of reality in an imagined way serves as a decolonizing language that addresses the Western literary canon. This orientation is primarily highlighted by Homi Bhabha, who is one of the most eminent figures in contemporary post-colonial studies, referring to magical realism as "the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world" (Nation 06). To put it differently, for establishing magical realism as a global

mode that is rooted in the political and cultural margins, it must be written to the centre as a "writing back" or as a kind of "colonization in reverse" (Hegerfeldt 02).

In fact, most contemporary critics presumed that the majority of the magical realist narratives are notably postcolonial par excellence. Simply put, much of this kind of writings are produced by postcolonial authors who want to declare a cut-off from the central colonialist and imperial other. Upon that, Bowers claims that the two big concepts of magical realism and post-colonialism seem tightly connected because English magical realist texts that have started been written at the end of the twentieth century took shape at the same time of the production of postcolonial literature (90). Subsequently, we can see that the appearance of the two concepts during the same period reveals or implies the interchangeability of magical realist writings and the postcolonial context.

In its essence, postcolonial writing means any literature that is written to oppose the colonial power, which is essentially targeting the political, social, and cultural disseminated colonial ideologies by the colonizer and his exploitation of the colonized as well as his riches. It refers to the nations that underwent a period of colonial oppression and have ultimately gained their independence from an imperialist authority. For that reason, postcolonial writers wanted to rectify their past and retell their truth from a colonized standing point. Maggie Bowers comments over that point stating that, "it is generally agreed in postcolonial theory and criticism that the effects of colonialism were not just the imposition of one nation's rule over another, but it included attempts to change the colonized people's ways of thinking and belief to accept the cultural attitudes and definitions of the colonial power" (91). In what concerns the main usage of magic as a tool for responding and disavowing colonial beliefs and attitudes, Elleke Boehmer (qtd. in Bowers) asserts that,

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> Drawing on the special effects of magic realism, postcolonial writers in English are able to express their view of a world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement…[T]hey combine the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures to represent societies which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation, and political corruption. Magic effects, therefore, are used to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath. (92)

It is true that magic is usually and commonly used as a way to revive and restore the past mythical beliefs and religious doctrines; yet, it is essentially and crucially adopted as a literary technique to address the eminent issues of authoritative political regime and the long colonial history that was coupled with imperial hegemonic stance. As explained by Boehmer, postcolonial writers took the advantage of writing in the language of the colonizer in order to be well understood; they, simultaneously opted for using magic that is intertwined with imagination and local legends as an effective way to talk to the local people. Ultimately, it is assumed that magic has helped give a shorter alternative route to a good comprehension of both the colonial and postcolonial experience.

It is worth mentioning that postcolonial impulse, which is a socio-political approach in essence, is a form of discourse that is highly correlated with a political perspective whether it be colonial or post-colonial as the majority of postcolonial criticism insure (Bowers 91). Interestingly, magical realism is a form of postcolonial discourse, which means that magical realism and postcolonial language aim at revealing a deep concern with political matters, the fact that makes the two modes of expression meet. As a matter of fact, much debate has been raised about the way those two socio-political narratives are working interchangeably in representing the postcolonial subjects.

Accordingly, the postmodernist critic Stephen Slemon has been identified as the most eminent figure to talk about the theory of postcolonial magical realism. In this vein, Slemon favoured talking about postcolonial magical realism by combining postmodernist thought and the discourse theories of Mikhail Bakhtin[32]. On this basis, he infers that due to the duality of magical realism or its ability to use magic in order to tackle real facts, it could convey three postcolonial elements. First, through its unique way of representing reality, magical realism as a postcolonial discourse has the ability to reflect both the colonizers' and the colonized viewpoints at the same time whether through its adopted themes or its unique literary structure. The second point, it has another advantage of presenting realities within the text that could demonstrate paradox, harmony, and disparity in a given context. Third, magical realism has also the ability to modify and restore historical and cultural realities presented in the postcolonial text by presenting the colonized experience that is plainly discarded.

Although the essence of the magical realist fiction is predominantly postcolonial but it is not limited to postcolonial literatures since it is used in Western texts as well. In addition to that, we can notice that not all of magical realism participants are using this mode for projecting postcolonial issues, as it is not linked to the writer's personal experience, but more importantly to the text needs and the writer's aim (Hegerfeldt 03). Other scholars like Ross Murfin and Supriya Roy are holding another point of view; they admit that, "Postcolonial literature includes works by authors with cultural roots in South

[32]- As one of the most recognized literary theorist of the twentieth century, Mikhail M. Bakhtin main work focuses on the language theory that is portrayed in his concepts such as dialogue and dialogism, polyphony, and carnival. These concepts enable us to approach the literary works from a previously inaccessible point of view. (Mambrol)

Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and other places in which colonial independence movements arose and colonized peoples achieved autonomy in the past hundred years" (357).

In contrast to what is mentioned earlier, other critics argue for the tight link between the author's birthplace, his orientations, and perspectives in writing about his people. This can be illustrated by the Cuban literary experience as the nation went through colonialism for over five hundred years, the fact that led to a literary production that is more or less concerned with the postcolonial matters. In his master thesis, *Creation of Identity as a Bridge between Cultures in Cristina García's Dreaming in Cuban*, Jon Schneiderman contends that Garcia's first literary work is definitely a postcolonial, and that her novel suits perfectly Murfin and Roy's description of the postcolonial writings (04).

However, this standpoint seems less convincing to me since Cristina García's both novels *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters* could be read and perceived from other different breadths, even though the author is a Cuban-American, but she is apparently more interested and concerned about the Cuban diasporic issues and their quest for Cuban-American identity. Additionally, the magic in the selected novels is yet to accentuate the patriotic and nationalistic fervours of the Cubans not as colonized or pre-colonized, but as people who went through a revolutionary era.

2.3.1 Magical Realism as a Narrative of Difference

Magical realism has been long perceived as a different literary mode. This prominent difference exists not only at the level of the literary structure but also at the level of the mode's intended goals. In fact, magical realism has different components if compared to the previously existing fictional modes of narrative, the fact that contributed

to its distinguished texture. However, the difference that resides this critical fictional device is intentional and purposeful.

Since the birth of the magical realism discourse, Franz Roh highlighted the vital role played by this discourse in underscoring the truth of the marginalized entities as read by the mainstream. In contrast to the Old Exoticism of European painting, Roh believes that the authenticity of magical realism's New Exoticism[33], which is denigrated by many people as a kind of primitivism, shows up in a form of difference in order to be distinguished and outstanding. As being compared to Edward Said's Orientalism[34], magical realism as an exoticist literature is ostensibly acting as a "… political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar…and the strange" (qtd. In Stevenson 145).

In their work on magical realism, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin gave a well-thought perspective on what makes magical realism to be a different literature. They contend that magical realism, which is used primarily by Latin American writers, succeeded in demonstrating what is real via the deployment of the supernatural that is depicted from the indigenous mythology. In this vein, Hart and Ouyang stresses the fact of an opposing mode of magical realism to that of the European realistic literature. He declares that, "magic is derived from the 'supernatural' elements of 'local' or 'indigenous' myths, religions or

[33]- Both Old and New Exoticisms are better explained in the recently released book *Intercultural Masquerade: New Orientalism, New Occidentalism, Old Exoticism.*

[34]- For a good understanding of the relation between orientalism and magical realism, consult the *article Fusion of Orientalism and Magic Realism: An analysis of Salman Rushdie's The Enchantress of Florence where* Nikitha Rita et al. explain, "Orientalism as a term propagates certain false notions about the Orient. Edward Said perceived Orientalism as a series of false assumptions underlying western attitude towards the East ... He contended that from a perspective that takes Europe as the norm; the orient becomes deviant, exotic and inscrutable" (1832).

cultures that speak directly to the imposition of Christianity in addition to post-enlightenment empiricism on the 'natives' of South America" (16).

With attention to the use of magical realism as an exoticist ideology, Faris Wendy highlights the importance of magic as an effective mode to talk about a truth that is different to some extent. In her article *"The Question of the Other: Cultural Critiques of Magical Realism"*, Wendy goes further by categorizing the non-realistic mode as being able to be interpreted as a kind of narrative primitivism as its initial intention is to give voice to the local cultural practices and the indigenous traditional myths (103). Being associated to primitivism, Erik Camayd-Freixas maintains, however, that magical realists firmly uphold the claim of nativism instead for writing about different dimensions of reality in search for their cultural identity (298).

It is undeniable that magical realist writings are heavily based on the representation of the cultural reality. Additionally, the contradictory essence of this mode helps to illustrate the various interpretations and many explanations. Many critics consider magical realist fiction to construct an amalgamation of two worlds together in one script. Basically, these two related worlds, as clarified by Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris, would lead to the construction of two mixed cultures that would contribute to the formation of new third space, in order to "… admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among these worlds" (06). For this reason, pro magical realist literary mode, like Cristina García, are commonly sharing the quality of having different cultural backgrounds.

We cannot talk about magical realism as a distinguishable mode, which is used either as a kind of primitivism or exoticism without referring to the language of narration

in these texts. Moreover, the oxymoron nature of this non-realistic mode imposes the utility of a binary opposition between what is literally real and the language used to express that reality. In his seminal article entitled *Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse*, Stephen Slemon underscores the role of language and its important effects especially in the context of postcolonial cultures. He advocates that "in the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other" (10-11). In other words, the language used in the magical realist literary works suggests the use of two irreconcilable discursive systems, each of which is: "… locked in a continuous dialectic with the 'other'…" (11).

Reading magical realism as a postcolonial discourse could be interpreted as a tool used for sharing, especially, the cultural, socio-political, and historical experiences of a long colonized people in response to the lasting imperial history. On a more general level, magical realist texts are not based merely on the conception of marginality, but also as a connotation for a new literary expression, that is based primarily on two different and opposed systems. This binary opposition of a language used to mirror a reality is basically used in order to illustrate the importance of this hybrid mode. Mindful of the fact that magic realism is a kind of fiction that is making room for world-views that have the same standards and standpoints, which differentiate them from those of the cultural centre. As Zamora and Faris write, "it creates space for interactions of diversity" (03).

This in turn is a vital characteristic of the magical realistic writings that give space to fantastic and imaginative events that are reflected through characters who strongly believe in the effectiveness of the fabulous and marvellous. In this regard, Anne C. Hegerfeldt perceives these characters as focalizers that could be considered as 'Other'.

The conception of 'Other', as Hegerfeldt maintains, is not forcibly related to the author, who still occupies an ex-centric position; however, he frequently prioritizes the experience of individuals that departs from the rational-empirical outlook (115-117). On the other hand, the theoretical frame of otherness is of a vital importance as political readings suggest.

The political context in the magical realist literature is most often used as a post-colonial base. Hence, examining the magical realist mode from a post-colonial perspective would definitely lead us to various theoretical and debatable issues. Accordingly, the politicized approach to magical realism suggested by Homi Bhabha (qtd. In Aldea), as a key figure of the post-colonial theory, accentuates the emblematical utility of magic realism as a postcolonial politics of resistance (105). In that respect, Bhabha declares in *Nation and Narration* that, "'Magical realism' after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world" (07). Indeed, many researchers have approved this fact, by stressing the obvious differences between the magical realist texts and the western literary canon resulting in an ultimate post-colonial analysis.

Ultimately, we can notice that one of the vital roles played by the post-colonial literature is to accentuate the difference between the colonized and the colonizer. Hence, Magical realism has arguably emerged as a literature for demonstrating difference. In consonance with this argument, the present work is predominantly concerned with the use of magic as a means for presenting the socio-political and cultural realities of a nation apart from the representation of the cultural counters through post-colonialism. Hence, we definitely have other lens through which we can interpret the existing magic in the

magic realism mode as a political reading. In other words, magical realism as a literary device cannot be merely adopted as a basic conceptual structure for post-colonial theory.

2.4 Postmodern Magical Realism

The literary mode of magical realism has long been linked to post-colonial theory, the fact that limited the broaden vision of that magical mode. In addressing the development of magical realism, one should be aware of the wide range of theories that have been adopted within magical realist writings throughout the world. Postmodernism is one of the most important concepts to be examined as a contemporary approach of literary criticism for a good grasp of magical realist fiction. It is also important to highlight the fact that postmodernist analysis interrelates with magical realism as it targets all of the tyrannical implications as post-colonialism do. Additionally, both post-colonialism and postmodernism have many commonalities; hence, magical realism is their meeting point (Sasser 13).

Though the term post-modernism seems new, it goes back to the 1960s when it gained wide acceptance and recognition exactly as magical realism did. Technically, this contemporary critical movement is a combination of innovative qualities of the previous literary movements. Just like the conflation of the fictively real and the unbelievable magic in magical realism, postmodernism has many traits such metafiction, eclecticism, and the erasure of boundaries that characterises magical realist texts as well. Jesús Benito emphasizes this same point, he claims that, “Many of the distinctive characteristics of postmodernist fiction, such as the crisis of representation, the rejection of Western empiricism and rationalism, the denunciation of binarism, and the preoccupation with borders, mixing, and hybridity, are traits that define magical realist texts equally well”

(67). Subsequently, we can say that the contemporary cultural production of postmodernism and magical realism have many commonalities in what concerns the literary production; yet, through a close and careful examination of the two literary genres, we can notice that those common traits are quite different in essence.

In order to place magical realist text into a postmodern context, we need to know the common things of those two literary modes of writing. In her book *Magic (al) Realism,* Maggie Ann Bowers posits the idea of examining the relationship existing between postmodernism and magical realism. She summons for considering Fredric Jameson and Jean-François Lyotard's definitions of postmodernism[35], which in many ways resemble the one given to magical realist texts. Since the end of the twentieth century, which marked the start of the postmodernist phase, literary writings have taken historical treats, and have had a thrust for demonstrating history; however, this could not be easy with the use of "ordinary discourse" (72). Henceforward, magical realism shares the same viewpoint of history representation in literature. Additionally, this literary technique suits perfectly the scene of presenting facts whether historical events, political issues, or even cultural differences, since it goes beyond ordinary discourse.

In this context, Fredric Jameson ends up with the fact that regardless of postmodernists' endeavours for exhibiting the historical truth, but could not present it in an appropriate way, since it is written in a new era that starts to forget about the old days; unlike magical realism that successfully think the past as well as the present historically.

[35]- For Lyotard, postmodern is a continuation for what modernism initiated, as it questions the "metanarratives" of western thoughts, which include the preeminent philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The postmodern literary and art critic Jameson, however, works within master narrative thoughts relying on Marxist thoughts for a postmodern society analysis. Other modernists like Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida among other believe that, "were no such things as "facts", only modes of discourse that forever block us from making truth claims about, and the term "postmodern" became a pejorative term to deride these thinkers as adhering to epistemological and moral nihilism". (Theorizing the Postmodern)

Following Jameson's Marxist position, the reason behind postmodernists' failure for writing about history is that they do not have a firm conviction for the historical events, believing that history is basically told by those who know that these facts would serve them in the first place. The use of master narratives, as a case in point, can best illustrate this. Most postmodernists attack the idea of master narratives that most of the time serve just one part, would definitely lead to opposition, which suits in many ways the postcolonial writings, and "us against them" way of thinking rather than unity (72). Consequently, the postmodern reality is ill represented since truth is no more reliable, the matter that led to a misplacement of facts in the present moment as it has no accordance with the past and old realities.

What gave magical realism more credibility in thinking historically, is the magical realists' attempt to adopt a new and unusual way of presenting history, a history that is not the one written in colonial history books, but is manifested through individuals that have been overwhelmingly and wholly involved in their countries' histories and personal ones'. Bowers' gave an adequate illustration of this idea, by referring to Salman Rushdie's view on that point, claiming that, "history is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge". For a better understanding of this quote, Rushdie's magical realist novel *Midnight's Children* portrays a historical story of a constructed reality that is told by the writer not as an autobiography, but rather as cultural history (Bowers 73). In other words, Rushdie tries to show the witnessed and lived history that is demonstrated in a subjective way through characters who have ostensibly been involved in the historical process.

Following Jameson's argument of history that is part of postmodernism, we can notice that in Rushdie's same novel, the protagonist is remarkably forced to think historically throughout the novel, since he witnessed crucial and critical historical events in India, as a way of recreating the past, rather than misrepresenting it. Therefore, we can say that magical realists embrace and celebrate the postmodern aspect of reconstructing and recreating the past with a cast of doubt and sense of unsureness. However, the fragmented history, or as Rushdie refers to as the multiplicity of historical perspectives in magical realist fiction, is not to be perceived as a drawback, on the contrary, it is one of the most important characteristics of the style and one of the main points that associates magical realism to postmodernism.

The status of magical realist literature in the postmodern criticism has been a matter of dispute. Yet, most recent criticism agree that just like the relationship that exists between what is real and what is magic in magical realism, postmodernism has unsuccessfully been demarcated from the magical realist fiction. Geert Lernout claims that "what is postmodern in the rest of the world used to be called magic realist in South America and still goes by that name in Canada" (qtd. in Zamora, et al 18). Paradoxically, the two newly recognisable narrative modes share similar literary and aesthetic treats as Theo L. D'haen pointed out. In his article *Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers*, D'haen gives a close scrutiny to postmodern literary characteristics that are also utilized in the magical realist texts, some of which are intertextuality, discontinuity, metafiction, in addition to other qualities (192-193). However, in *Magic Realism and Postmodernism*, D'haen shares the same idea as Linda Hutcheon's and Brian McHale's, who find out that magical realism is not similar to

postmodernism but it is just part of it, or a prominent trend within the postmodern movement (qtd in Benito 69).

The oxymoronic texture of magical realism, from a postmodernist view, allows the mode to be effectively used as a political tool for resistance, since it is composed of two opposed notions. D'haen, again, highlights the importance of eccentricity in the magic realist works as being an essential feature of demonstrating and pronouncing an objectively reported reality viewed from a marginal position, which by means participates in contributing to the postmodern movement. Subsequently, the idea of eccentricity is a plain objection and rejection to former instructions. Hence, speaking from the margins as described in the words of D'haen is "a voluntary act of breaking away from the discourse perceived as central to the line of technical experimentation starting with realism and running via naturalism and modernism to postmodern experimentalism" (qtd in Benito 69). Furthermore, the emphasis on the creation of fragmented realities presented from an ex-centric point of view by writers coming from the periphery through the representation of what is real and what is unreal, is a quality that is predominantly defining magical realist texts more than any other literary trend (Benito 69-70).

In addition to the already mentioned postulations, I believe that magical realism and postmodernism also meet at the point of using the old teachings, traditions, myths, and political status to meet the contemporary reading. This exact point confirms the idea of eccentricity as being a crucial notion that the postmodern stream supports. Therefore, this also proves the validity and utility of magic used in magical realist works that is assuredly not coincidental but it is instead a tactic set by magical realist authors whose interest is neither to incapacitate the reader nor to challenge his mind, but to get rid of the mundane. The characters in the magical realist texts agree to have faith in the unrealistic world as

well as readers as demonstrated by Jean-François Lyotard in his article *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

It is also important to stress the eminence of the two contradictory ideas of fact and fake in such texts, which give more interpretations and widen the scope of perception and analysis of facts that occur in a specific time and place. Therefore, realism would restrict the variety of interpretations that magic would provide and, hence, narrative magic is giving the literary text a new breadth by freeing that narrative from realism constrains as being a univocal narrative. As a result, magical realists are predominantly targeting all kinds of totalitarian discourses.

2.5 The Magical Realism Language and Metaphor

Pursuant to the previous point, we admit that Magical realism is a post-modern phenomenon par excellence. This statement could be clearly viewed and examined through the displayed language and adopted linguistic style that wholly belongs to this postmodern narrative. This is to say that the modern stylistic features that legitimately belong to magical realist writings are what predominantly characterize magical realism as a modern literary genre. From this perspective, we can say that linguistic heteroglossia and multivocality[36] are two good examples of demonstrating key attributes of linguistic energy that are used principally in magical realism in order to draw a certain attention to

[36]- Heteroglossia is a term that appeared in the writings of the Russian linguistic and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin where he addresses the linguistic variety as an aspect of social conflict, like in tensions between central and marginal uses of the same national language that contains a varying ways of experiencing and perceiving facts. Multivocality, which is yet another linguistic term created by Bakhtin, is a concept that emerges with the creation of a text with many voices. Like in *Dreaming* or the *Agüero*, the author gives voice to multiple characters in attempt to reflect various views and perceptions of a given situation. Thus, when concepts regarding multiple voices come together, a multivocal work is created.

the new expression of dialectical conception of ideas and voices through the description of different elements within the same discourse.

Approaching the postmodernist writings of magical realism through overviewing its supernatural textual elements is a quite essential part in understanding the disguised reality demonstrated in the magical realist text. In effect, postmodern literature meets magical realism in the way of representing reality and the way it disrupts conceptual framework. In the light of this, Brian McHale highlights that, "Postmodernist fiction … is above all illusion breaking art, it systematically disturbs the air of reality by foregrounding the ontological structure of texts and of fictional worlds" (Qtd. In Arva 71). The textual strategies that are used by postmodernists, including magical realists, are indeed modern literary strategies that are used in attempt to get rid of the old conventions of most realist works. For this reason, the postmodernist fiction tends to create new criteria that would disturb the nature of perceiving and understanding the core values of reality of the real world. In this respect, Arva claims that,

> Postmodernist fiction in general and magical realist fiction in particular create impressions of reality from what Baudrillard has called the hyperreal, or the reality of signs of other signs. Re-presenting postmodern hyperreality (the excess of reality provided by an omnipresent process of simulation and successive layers of simulacra) as fictional reality is what I call writing the vanishing real by a deliberate and rigorous, but also playful, use of imagination. (72)

Following this line, it is quite clear that the core value of reality in a magical realist work dwells in the attempt to represent a certain reality that is detoured by pronounced elements of fantasy and magic. However, the portrayed reality becomes heavily

dependent on the text and the metaphor that builds it accordingly. Drawing attention to that point, we can notice that in such texts, truth is automatically related to fictional world; hence, the discursive norms that characterize magical realist text is the only medium for demonstrating a particular reality. The discursive norms, however, depend heavily on two pivotal elements: inspiration, which is an important component of describing the reality, besides imagination that is an integral part of a hyperrealist narrative, which is described by Baudrillard as something that replaces reality.

It is worth mentioning that imagination, in most cases, is purposefully utilised in order to hide the hardest part of the foregrounded reality. The use of dual ontological makeup seems to be a dominant narrative strategy in magical realist texts that are embodied in the rhetorical and figurative strategies, in addition to the causal relationship between what is real and imaginative that could successfully make an eventual delineation of the border between the two distinct realms. Referring back to the ontological motif that is one of magical realist's dominant trends, Arva declares that the ontological tenet described by the author, as the primary witness describes, and the conception of the reader, who is considered as a secondary witness, is essentially used for depicting the overwhelming feelings of sorrow, misery, and pain caused by death and violent events. Therefore, the analogical reasoning that is inflicted by traumatic imagination creates a comfort zone that Arva calls "a consciousness of survival", especially for those who lived or re-lived such tough experiences, where they can feel distant from painful situations (73).

Critics like Elaine Scarry, however, argues that feelings as sorrow and pain cannot be easily described with language, which cannot incarnate, or more accurately, personify similar emotional scenes. In the words of Scarry, pain is "objectless, it cannot be easily

objectified in any form either material or verbal. But it is also its objectlessness that may give rise to imagining" (Qtd. In Arva 74). To the furthest reaches of abstract meaning, imagination here is used not to describe pain as it is or how it is felt, but rather to create images that would typically exemplify or intend to simulate pain, and language, in this case, could successfully do that. The creation of images that would define certain contradictions and misunderstandings would open a dialogic space. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin viewed the modern prose fiction as a literary form best suited for the exploitation of heteroglossia. He reveals that:

> The prose writer confronts a multitude of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down in the object by social consciousness. Along with the internal contradictions inside the object itself, the prose writer witnesses as well the unfolding of social heteroglossia surrounding the object … The prose artist elevates the social heteroglossia surrounding objects into an image that has finished contours, an image completely shot through with dialogized overtones. (278-279)

Indeed, the fictional narratives are certainly doomed to have various interpretations that are the result of social heterogeneity and heteroglossia on the first place. At this level, the writer is to create a frame that would be suitable to the object that is under the literary descriptive scope. Bakhtin goes on by confirming that: "The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse", this is to say that magical realists also use the dialogic tendency, yet what differentiates the magical realist dialogic writing modality is the insertion of a third, figurative, connecting element.

The connection between what is magic and what is real in magical realism is made by a literary bridging technique that is described by Wendy Faris as a literalising metaphor, which "enable[s] the narrative to conflate the different physical and discursive

worlds" (110). Subsequently, words and the real world are linked with the use of the verbal metaphor that is imagined and pronounced with literal magic. Hence, a new space emerges, which is the narrative space where we as readers forced to believe in magic that describes the real.

2.6 Wendy Faris' Theory of Magical Realist Narrative Techniques

Magical realism is a contemporary literary mode that has been designated as one of the most important contemporary trends in international fiction. The magical realist mode has become a critical literary technique for expression as it has provided the literary production with a good variety of cultural and aesthetic works with considerably new traits that distinguish magical realism form the existing literatures. Due to its ability to challenge the conventions of western literature, magical realist works could radically replenish and rejuvenate worldwide literary production by working on the very meaning of representation from within.

However, we should note that the particular power of this innovative and re-emerged literary narrative resides in the use of certain narrative techniques that perfectly suit the cultural status and address the main concerns of those who are adopting the magical realist mode of expression. The theory of narrative techniques has been well developed and examined by Wendy B. Faris in her work *Ordinary Enchantment: Magical Realism and Remystification of Narrative,* where she could successfully give account of five main elements of magical realist narrative techniques.

Through an examination of a set of contemporary magical realist novels, Faris' exploration of the five elements was illustrative and insightful for it shows the common characteristics of the adopted techniques for different contexts with different

backgrounds. Additionally, Faris backed up her theory with a good understanding of the magical realism historical context that resulted in well-structured formation of the predominant components of what make the mode an amalgamation of reality and magic.

As the title of her book suggests, Faris believes that magical realism has primarily emerged as a writing that targets the Western perception and representation. Therefore, magical realism emerged as a 'Remystification' of Western thinking. By the reuse of myths, religious beliefs, traditions, and cultural bonds the way it was understood and interpreted by the westerners, magical realists tend to put the mystification back into western thinking. Moreover, reporting events that could not be verified, or most of the time, are hard to believe, as ordinary humans are incapable of verifying, is a way of challenging the empirical realist works of the West. Faris states that, "magical realism is also imbued with a certain visionary power. Thus the mode constitutes what we might term a Remystification of narrative in the West" (03).

Examining the very nature of magical realism within its cultural background requires a good understanding and a well-developed structure on how the mode is constructed. In this context, Faris suggests five essential traits of the mode that characterizes any magical realist work. The First vital element is the irreducible element of magic. The second trait is the existence of a phenomenal world. Third, the prevailing feeling of unsettling doubts is a matter of fact in this mode, which is the result of a difficulty in trying to think of two contradictory happenings that take place at the same time. Fourth, the magical realist narratives merges realms; and, ultimately, the ability to distorting the notions of time, space, and identity (07).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Magical Realism

Starting with the first eminently important element that is referred to as the "Irreducible Element" of magic, as it cannot be reduced or diminished since it constitutes the core value of the magical realist texts. As explained by Faris, this element is irreducible yet magic. It cannot be explained in a logic manner in accordance to the physical world and its conventional laws. In her terms, "The narrative voice reports extraordinary- magical- events, which would not normally be verifiable by sensory perception, in the same way in which other, ordinary events are recounted" (07). Hence, the reader is in a continuous wonder as he cannot link and order proofs, as well as comprehend the occurrence of events and status of characters in such texts. In this predicament, Amaryll Chanady (Qtd. In Faris) suggests:

> While the implied author is educated according to our conventional norms of reason and logic and can therefore recognize the supernatural as contrary to the laws of nature, he tries to accept the worldview of a culture in order to describe it. He abolishes the antinomy between the natural and the supernatural on the level of textual representation, and the reader, who recognizes the two conflicting logical codes on the semantic level, suspends his judgment of what is rational and what is irrational in the fictitious world. (08)

Indeed, at a certain level, the reader of magical realism has to suspend certain cognitively rational ideas and avoid seeking truths in order to both enjoy the literary work and understand the targeted meaning that the author wants to emphasize. This matter could not be achievable without the author's continuous attempts at reconciling the world of logic and reason where he was born and he lives, and a supernatural one that is very different from the former. By doing so, the magical realist blatantly disregards the imagined lines that separate the two worlds in the text through textual representation, in order to give an ostensible, plausible and credible description to the magical occurrences.

At the textual level, the use of the irreducible elements means that the author, as well as the reader, are or should be aware of the existence of supernatural power and irrational happenings that are unexplainable according to the laws of the universe. In this sense, the text presents a non-conflictive coexistence for the reader, who already knows how magic is functioning in such literary narrative. In order to comprehend the way those irreducible elements are assimilated into the realistic textual environment, the one can find many magical realist literary works that firmly believe in this pivotal element. As a case in point, the irreducible nature of a dead person's reappearance is a good example. In *Beloved,* for instance, Toni Morrison portrays this idea in the murdered child, Beloved, who is killed by her mother. Years later, Beloved comes back again as a young woman to torture her mother. However, the reader in this case is in a state of incertitude, as it is unclear whether the girl returned alive or it is just her soul. Faris also refers to Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*, where Espiranza, who is a dead person, "was also occasionally seen… not only by La Loca, but also by Domingo who saw her from the front window… And once, although she had thought at first it was a dream, Esperanza came and lay down next to her mother." (Qtd. In Faris 08)

Following the above-mentioned examples, we can deduce that magic in the magical realist texts seems to grow organically within the real or ordinary happenings; though the irreducible element of reappearance after death as shown in the examples may seem a cliché that many other literary modes use. In this connection, Faris attests the fact that presenting the irreducible elements in the magical realist text differs from other narrative planes, as magic is an inseparable part of truth and a component of narrative reality. In other words, what magical realist author wants to convey is that the reader should unsettle

scepticism and doubting the status of events. Subsequently, fantasy in magical realism should be accepted and expected at the same time.

The phenomenal world is another crucial magical realism narrative technique that presents the realism in magical realism as Faris claims. We certainly agree that realism in magical realism is not the realism that has been adopted as a mode by many writers in attempt to portray the reality that existed during a given period of time. This comparison, however, transcends the existence of two different worlds the real world and the phenomenal one. The latter, accordingly, departs from a reality that is well depicted with minutous description of details that would ultimately lead to the creation of magical factual events and phenomena that are well related and well connected to the real world. Faris writes, "Realistic descriptions create a fictional world that resembles the one we live in, often by extensive use of detail" (14). This important characteristic of magical realism is a tricky literary technique, I believe, since it is used to imply certain beliefs of credibility and truthfulness as the magical detailed description holds a heavy weighted reality.

Actually, the realistic description of the magical details is a unique feature of the magical realist writings that tends to renew the traditional way of describing real facts, characters, and events, as well as to stress the authenticity of the magical textual traits that play a vital role in accentuating the validity of sensory details. Hence, this phenomenal world, as Faris refers to, tends to tie the supernatural and phenomenal ideas that really exist in the old beliefs and myths of any peoples to the genuine, veritable, and real facts that legitimately belong to the real world. Following this reasoning, Faris explicates that the phenomenal world do really exists but is modified by being, "grounded textually in a traditionally realistic, even explicitly factual, manner". Furthermore, Faris

writes, "[magical realism] may include magic and folk wisdom…but real history is a weight that tethers the balloon of magic" (15).

The usage of the irreducible details of magical realism, that is way too different from the mimesis of realism, gives a sense of the magical growing within the real. Thus, this interwoven combination gives reality another breadth by projecting the triggered message with detailed descriptions. Isabel Allende articulates this idea by asserting that, "magic realism is a literary device or a way of seeing in which there is space for the invisible forces that move the world: dreams, legends, myths, emotion, passion, history. All these forces find a place in the absurd, unexplainable aspects of magic realism.… It is the capacity to see and to write about all the dimensions of reality" (54). Subsequently, we can say that the invisible forces are the core values of this literary mode, and the vehicle that moves magical realist fiction; hence, this phenomenal world would never come into existence without the invisible and unbelievable forces.

Referring back to the earlier comments over the magical events that are textually grounded in a traditionally realistic manner, one should be aware that those magical events or the invisible forces as referred to by Allende, share the fictional space with real historical facts and events. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by way of illustration, Melquíades chronicles Macondo's history after turning back from his death, with a good description of the horrific massacre of workers by the banana company and the actual incident in the United Fruit Company's history. Similarly, in *Midnight's Children*, the events surrounding India's independence and the turmoil that followed it are at the centre of the novel. Following this line, we can say that magic has a solid grounding in reality the matter that resulted in the emergence of a reality that is coupled with magic, which

gives more life and ambiance to the text, and ambiguity and mystery in trying to understanding it at the same time.

The third element of magical realism is the element of unsettling doubts. Since ambiguity and mystery are two adjectives that could be best used to describe the magical realist fictional writings, the reader would definitely be confronted with some kind of hesitation over deciding about the meaning of some parts of the text. As proposed by Faris, the irreducible element that dwells the magical realist narratives is what causes the reader to hesitate: "the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events." (17). The attempt of grasping the magical described details that could never descend to the represented world is what causes an unsettling doubts and distorted perception of the image drawn by magic. Trying to reconcile the two opposed phenomena that belong to two different worlds is yet another dilemma that most of the time leads to contradictory understandings of events.

Again, for Faris, experiencing unsettling doubts is tightly linked to the belief system that differs from one person to another. Yet, what is meant by belief here is not the set of social conventions merely, but even what could be logically believed, and what could correspond to the laws of the natural universe. Magical realist scenes like sweeping the salt from the tears, household flying objects, and people die and return to life[37], are some instances that really cause us to hesitate and feel lost, as there are two contradictory facets

[37]- For eyes that sweep up salt, see *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel. See the description of household objects in *Light is Like Water*, by García Márquez, however, for people that fly see *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; for people die and return to life see *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and also in *So Far from God* by Ana Castillo.

for transmitting one truth because many understandings and different interpretations exist in this situation.

The idea of encountering the marvellous that would certainly lead the reader to doubt and hesitate between what is logically believed and conventionally known to what is irrational and unbelievable according to the laws of our universe. Notwithstanding, magical realist text intentionally pushes its reader to hesitate (Faris 18). The appearance of the remarkable butterflies in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a case in point, where "The yellow butterflies would invade the house at dusk. Every night on her way back from her bath Meme would find a desperate Fernanda killing butterflies with an insecticide bomb" (Qtd. In Faris 18-19). Explaining the way butterflies die in this passage seems logical and in consonance with the principles of the physical universe, since the character used insecticide to kill the butterflies. However, what sounds peculiar is the appearance of a specific coloured butterflies at a specific time to a specific person.

Those recurrently vacillating ideas, on the other side, are the essence of the fourth characteristic of merging realms in which, "the narrative merges different realms" of magic and reality. At this point, a new space would emerge, as the process of merging two worlds would take place. On this point, Brian McHale notes that the emergence of a new space that he calls the postmodern fantastic as it borrows certain traits of contemporary life is, "another world penetrates or encroaches upon our world, or some representative of our world penetrates an outpost of the other world, the world next door. Either way, this precipitates a confrontation between real-world norms and other-worldly, supernatural norms" (Qtd. In Faris 21). In the light of this explanation and the previous argument, the magical realist writer as well as the reader have ultimately realised that the possibility of creating another space where the writer could set his imagination free, and

the reader would both enjoy and explore the beauty that hides behind the non-fictional world is a necessity.

The nature of the oxymoron magical realism and the merging of two different realms is what makes the mode different and challenging at the same time. Moreover, the narrative space or the space of in-between that was a result of this fusion creates uncertainty yet more possibilities. According to Faris, this space is "not…any recognisable supernatural realm, such as a secret garden, heaven, the underworld, or a mythical past" (21). This is to assure that the space lying somewhere between reality and fantasy magical realism uses the realm of magic in a recognizably distinct way, though it often uses some elements that are similar to those used in the supernatural realm. Faris best explains this point:

> The magical realism vision thus exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions. Ghosts and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly, inhabit these two-sided mirrors, many times situated between two worlds of life and death; they enlarge the space of intersection where a number of magically real fictions exist. (21-22)

In this passage, Faris provides us with a good description of where magical realism really exists within the delineated merging realms. In the light of this, the magical narrative is definitely reliant on the realism and thus its characters and events are oftentimes occur at a space where the two worlds meet. Therefore, all of the magical realist happenings are ostensibly dwelling the space of intersection, the space that is often manifested in a crossroads of the two worlds of life and death. Moreover, imagination, here, plays a key role in creating a suitable magical description to a given situation.

Indeed, we can say that what magnifies the effect of magic, as well as enhances the function of the portrayed reality in magical realist fiction is imagination.

With respect to the concept of imagining in magical realism, the process is an absolute combination of a very close and detailed realistic atmosphere with an element of the extra-ordinary and unusual. For Eugene L. Arva, "Images devoid of the power of imagination cannot inform our consciousness, let alone speak for it; we are who we are only by producing images of ourselves and our world through imagination" (67). Though the component of imagination is crucially needed in the magical real fiction, it is contrastingly blurring its vision as well as the boundaries between facts and fiction in what concerns vital concepts to the mode like time, space, and matters of identity and the self. This is to say that the imagined scene or event would automatically be classified as a fictitious part for getting out of the worldly and mundane happenings that characterizes the realist fiction. However, magical realism extends this to a much more unbelievably imagined manner due the disruption of certain notions as time and space that are used conventionally in the writings of fantasy and marvellous. Here, Faris illustrates this point by declaring that:

> With "four years, eleven months, and two days" of rain, an insomnia plague that erases the past and the meaning of words, and a room where it is "always March and always Monday," our usual sense of time is shaken throughout *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Our sense of space is disrupted when tropical plants grow over the automobile club's pool in Paris at the end of *Distant Relations*, when Cortázar's axolotl and his observer seem to change places on either side of the glass in the aquarium, and when Grenouille smells virgins across town. (23)

Magical realist authors tend to use this last literary technique, as explained by Faris, as a narrative paradigm that is purely and uniquely magical. The fact that the magical alterations affected even the notion of time, as shown in the example above, is quite interesting yet confusing since time is one of the most important landmarks for measuring time. Similarly, space is magically portrayed with no trace of reality; hence, the depiction of a certain place in an extensively irrational manner would disrupt our understanding of both the physical place and the real nature of space.

In destabilizing the basic notions of time and space, the reader would trace a "lack of reality" that Jean-François Lyotard categorizes it as a pure modern trait. According to Lyotard, "Modernity, in whatever age it appears, cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the 'lack of reality" of reality, together with the invention of other realities" (Qtd. In Arva 69). Here, we can notice that magical realism that is associated with postmodern literary works tends to reveal an extra textual reality that is ill represented, shaken, and shattered. As a result, the lack of the full reality besides the element of invention and imagination are what characterize magic realism's super naturalization of what is real. By doing so, magical realism's ultimate purpose is not to create new realities only, but most importantly to re-create our reality and invent other realities. In Faris words, "the invention happens solidly within the narrative, taking us beyond a mere representation of the world, as we perceive it, to a re-representation."

2.7 Conclusion

The pertinence of magical realism to modern ideas and new ways of talking about reality in a fictional and an artistic way that tends to be part of the larger postmodern discourse, though postmodernism could not succeed in achieving a thorough and accurate representation of the world as magical realism did. The magical realist version of experienced reality could indeed fabricate a unique body of fictional narratives that does not seek a logical representation of the occurrences and events due to the inexplicability of reality. To that end, magical realists imbue the reality of their texts with imaginary events, characters, and objects in attempt to portray an unexplained reality.

Although magical realism has marched through a path of the critical minefield, but it managed to adopt a number of elements or literary techniques that are manifested in Wendy Faris' theoretical model, besides the textual attempts of describing and defining the magic discourse that primarily mirrors daily existence into a life-like or realistic text. By doing so, the imagined world that is essentially characterized with magical seems to weave the real events, which exaggerate, parody, or defy the same experience, making an original and integrative whole.

The knowledge gained and conclusions drawn in this chapter fulfil a relatively good understanding of the magical realist narrative mode and its paradoxical nature of the two seemingly irreconcilable terms. It is at this point that we come up to one of the most important underscored aims of this research, which is highlighting the inherent contradictory elements of the mode that succeeded in sustaining its usefulness and popularity to tackle alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy.

Chapter Three

The Cuban Socio-Political Experience through The Lens of Magic

3.1 Introduction

The fundamentals of depicting and writing about a certain reality that is recognizable outside the artistic world is no different from the literary framing, which seems to be more demanding in terms of thinking and relating the process of imagining to the portrayed truth. However, it is undisputable that writing in a realistic manner does require discarding the element of imagination, and being more concerned with all aspects of reality for the sake of attaining an accurate representation of the status quo. The treatment of realism as one-sided and a clear-cut thought is yet another problem in talking about that reality.

The notion of mimesis in the artistic world, however, has a critical role in this respect, since it is used as an effective medium in reflecting the world. The mimetic description, or rather, the artistic representation through mimesis, which has a great support by magical realists, has also a binary feature of the actual versus the imagined. Hence, this dichotomy of depicting or reflecting the reality versus imitating or simulating the same reality is what resulted in our growing concern about reality and search for the truth as the first and most important step towards a good understanding of the mimetic process and vision.

Regardless of the starkly demand for mimetic accuracy, the pronounced potentials of magic realism in representing the irreducible contradictions lie precisely in its ability in providing a multi-faceted reality that entails a lot of readings and various meanings. Yet, it is also important to highlight that the contradictions suggested by mimesis is not to accentuate difference merely, but most often to demonstrate a meeting point of two opposing but interrelated ways of thinking and portraying thoughts.

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For the same reason, we may feel unsure when talking about a certain reality within its socio-political scope, as it is a socially constructed discipline that has been interpreted from a number of perspectives and through different lens. For this reason, the framework of analysis in the present research is based primarily on the philosophical dispositions of political realism, besides an examination of the ways through which magical realism has been able to construe the underscored socio-political realities of the Cubans and the Cuban American community.

The cultural displacement, psychological and physical escapism, and the exilic experience are major topics that occupy a significant and important place in the Cuban society, as being the direct causes of the political changes in the country, and the primary reasons for the re-creation of Cuba as a national and international image within the literary scope. The issues that have been brought to the fore by Cuban American writers are predominantly linked to the political generated issues namely displacement and exile, gender problems, social instability, and identity problems. Hence, mirroring such vital issues in a type of narrative that does not believe in representing the truth in the conventional western style is what brings ambiguities and confusion as it uses certain techniques and motifs that should be understood in the first place.

Therefore, this chapter will focus first on the epistemological meaning of realism as a theoretical framework for political realism. In this sense, it is important to dig deep into the veracity and accuracy of truth as expressed in magical realist literature, besides its ability in conveying the message that is most often related to the social, cultural, historical, or political matters. Ultimately, the focus would be shifted to the specific techniques and essential motifs used for creating the sense of an ostensible binary opposition between what truly exists and what is magically created. In other words, the

exquisite intricacy of magical realism resides in its versatile nature that emerges through the distortion of boundaries of reality and magic.

3.2 Rethinking Realism and the Cuban Socio-Political Background

Appraising communal behaviour or individuals' attitudes towards their social status that is imposed primarily by the political reality could not be achievable by the mere observation and description. However, we can postulate that without the knowledge, regardless of its definite boundaries, which leads to the behaviours and resulted actions and reactions we cannot get a comprehensible and a full vision of the intriguing facts. An examination of realism would facilitate getting into the roots of reality that would cut off all doubts and speculations about the Cubans and the reality of their political culture. Thus, before dealing with the historical truth of the Cuban community, we need to shed some light on the question of reality that is the essence of realism and political realism.

3.2.1 Reflections on Reality and Political Realism

At this point, it is worth looking closely at the nature of the terms reality, realism, and political realism as there is an illuminating distinction to be highlighted between different strains of reality. Yet, the focus here in what concerns reality is far from the literal explication of the philosophical term of reality that would not be helpful whatsoever for understanding the political reality. According to K. Mannheim (Qtd. In Griffiths),

> inasmuch as man is a creature living primarily in history and society, the 'existence' that surrounds him is never 'existence as such', but is always a concrete historical form of social existence…a functioning social order, which does not exist only in the imagination of certain individuals but according to which people really act. (15)

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The targeted reality in this part of the study is the political reality, and its subsequent social truth that has to do with concrete existence of people who inhabit a certain place and share one history. Hence, the metaphysical sense of the term reality would not be relevant in tackling such fields of study. As in his edition of *American Realism*, Eric Sundquist notes that realism, in general terms, includes "the sensational, the sentimental, the vulgar, the scientific, the outrageously comic, the desperately philosophical" (vii). He goes on by proposing a definition for the concept of reality that seems like "the dream of a mad philosopher", since any conception that is related to reality would logically have an entailed philosophical connotation.

Following this line of reasoning, we can notice that we have two distinctive realisms. The first realism is essentially used as a philosophical notion or is always based on abstract thoughts, definition and description of things; however, the second Realism with big "R" refers to the distinguishable school of thought (Griffiths 15-16). Contrastingly, many other critics[38] assume that realism with its philosophical underpinnings cannot stand alone, as it is a pluralistic concept that comprises other sub-fields that are connected to and interrelated with realism. As Glazener notes, "Realism, therefore, is no monolithic entity, but a shape shifting term whose uses varied according to its different proponents (Qtd. in Benito 19). This recognition remind us with the vast range of realisms that we know namely magical realism, political realism, idealistic realism, moral realism, critical realism, and the list goes on and on as many subjects that are coupled with the ambiguity and illusiveness of realism.

[38]- Harold Kolb and Benito Jesús are among those who are sided with the pluralistic nature of reality. For more ideas, check (Kolb's *The Illusion of Life* 11-12).

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One of the recurrent names in defining realism is W. D. Howells, who gives a succinct vision of how reality is and how it should be talked about in fiction. For him, the first thing that we should do in order to get the truth in anything we should activate our reasoning by "ask[ing] ourselves before we ask anything else, is it true?" (Qtd. In Kolb 21). This is true, I believe, for both fictional and non-fictional writings where we cannot verify the extent to which a certain idea or fact is true since realism "is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material," as Howells asserts. In what concerns literature, he claims, reality should not be manipulated or falsified for reaching certain esthetical and artistic qualities, it should, rather, stop lying about life and its truthfulness.

The term 'Truth' is of a vital eminence in the construction of reality. For Berki, 'Truth' is not considered as an attribute to the core meaning of reality merely but it is the essence of reality. Yet, most of the time the two concepts are used interchangeably as both allude to the abstract existence of factual things and events that are at the heart of realism. Within the same context, Berki contends, "Here the real is seen to reside not in the positively existing, in actual institutions and relationships, but in a more concealed realm that itself accounts for the existence of politics. Reality is Truth and to find the Truth about politics one must go beyond politics" (Qtd. In Griffiths 22). This claim literally means that reality is all about mystery that dwells the intangible, and which by means can be neither perceived nor measured.

For that matter, I argue that treating 'Truth' within its political context would definitely have different exegesis depending on the various types and purposes of political actions. Hence, we can say that the ultimate purpose of examining the political practices is to know the 'Truth' that constitutes the building blocks of political and social life.

Accordingly, Leo Strauss explains accurately the reality of political philosophy holding that:

> Political philosophy [is] the attempt to replace opinion about the nature of political things by knowledge of the nature of political things [which are] subject to approval and disapproval, to choice and rejection, to praise and blame…. To judge soundly one must know the true standards. If political philosophy wishes to do justice to its subject-matter, it must strive for genuine knowledge of these standards. Political philosophy is the attempt truly to know both the nature of political things and the right, or good, political order. (95)

Undoubtedly, this explanation touches the exact same point that we intend to clarify and examine in this part of the research, which underscores the significant importance of dealing with political realism. Political philosophy that acts as the only fountain of political knowledge and political reality is supposed to be the first-hand source of knowledge and not what have been said about that knowledge that would definitely doom to distortion and misunderstanding. It is also important to mention that the critical role of political philosophy is to fairly judge and decide upon crucial and contradictory ideals, the thing that would not be achievable without a prior political knowledge and the recognition of how it should function properly.

In the book *Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, David Miller gives a clear and succinct elucidation about the functionality of political philosophy. He holds, "We can define political philosophy as an investigation into the nature, causes, and effects of good and bad government" (02). Following this definition, we can notice that the field of politics is so vast and full of ambiguities as it tends to cover all parts of political truth, which by means tries to uncover the nature of good and bad government respectively. In

fact, the quality of the government would automatically affect the quality of human lives; hence, when talking about a certain social order of a particular people we cannot discard the eminent role played by politic and our duty to know about that particular political reality. Therefore, "we cannot turn our back on politics, retreat into private life, and imagine that the way we are governed will not have profound effects on our personal happiness" as Miller asserts (02-03).

Continuing on this line, it is worth looking more closely on political philosophy, and more precisely on the 'Truth' in political theory. It is obvious that when we talk about politics we should mention government where authority is practiced[39]. Yet in addressing matters that relate to politics, it is preferable to advance a brief sketch on how politics has been perceived through history in order to cast a shadow on political truth. According to Miller, the history of politics went through different distinguishable stages throughout history. The period that has been described as cyclic, when good government would necessarily and naturally changed to be a bad corrupted government and back again to its stable state. The other period that is yet characterized by a straight lining of historical events that has started from the primitive barbarism to a more enlightened and advanced philosophy of life.

Regardless of the philosophical thoughts that contributed in understanding the history of political theory, Miller believes that people are the first responsible for the quality of their government. Likewise, when treating political subjects all concerns are to

[39]- Miller goes on demonstrating his thoughts about what he really means by the politics at practice, he contends: "When talking about government here, I mean something much broader than 'the government of the day' – the group of people in authority in any society at a particular moment. Indeed, I mean something broader than the state – the political institutions through which authority is exercised, such as the cabinet of ministers, parliament, courts of law, police, armed forces, and so forth. I mean the whole body of rules, practices and institutions under whose guidance we live together in societies. (04)

be shifted towards the regimes that govern societies instead of considering the character of people who share relatively similar qualities with those who govern them (Miller 05-06). Subsequently, the major role of political theory is first to understand the traits of the given society, and then, to pronounce and expand the social and moral restrictions, which would ultimately lead to self-determinacy and freedom of choice in attempt to improve the quality of the state. In light of this, Berki believes that:

> Change and action with a view to improvement are not only possible, but morally obligatory in politics…this is what recognition of the reality of resistance means: unless we understand resistance as resistance and obstacles as obstacles, we are not realists, but conservative defenders of Realpolitik. The proper understanding of 'resistance', that is to say, implies that we should continually seek to overcome it…the constraint or necessity of morality is what makes us 'free', actively and relevantly, in the midst of the conceptual realm of necessity confronting us in the reality of practice. (Berki, 27, 152 qtd. In Griffiths 27)

Here, change and action are seemingly not concerned with governed people only, but also the politicians as well; the fact that affirms the morality of opting for change and taking action. However, morality in politics should be framed and adjusted in order to meet people's needs that would never be attainable without clear articulated societal moral guidelines. Moreover, as it is articulated in the statement above, change and action are important components of morality that are used as tools for resisting the imposed constrains on society by politics. Yet, resistance here does not mean a confrontational and challenging opposition that is generally reified in the idea of revolution. In this vein, Griffith states, "There has always existed a tradition of thought (which he calls revolutionism) whose adherents subscribe to a Platonic conception of a world-society of mankind, whose division in the sensible world of appearance is an aberration" (24).

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Notwithstanding, the political authority does not often respond to its people's quest for change, including all the ostensibly theoretical ideas and thoughts of political philosophy. However, the only way that could bring change and made up the politicians' minds is definitely the use of power and threat, collective mobilization, and revolutionary thoughts. This pretext, furthermore, would raise the questioning of the politicians' existence, as Miller puts it, "One central issue in political philosophy is why we need states, or more generally political authority, in the first place, and we need to engage with the anarchist argument that societies can perfectly well govern themselves without it" (05).

A this level, we should not forget to confine ourselves to political debate that lies closer to the socio-political Cuban reality, as there is still plenty of political thoughts and social realities that exist only within the Cuban context. Yet introducing some preliminary ideas about the political theory is so important in following the underscored line of thoughts on the present issue. It is also important to claim that, though political philosophy seems to be irrelevant in this study, but it is an indispensable subject, which would bring us kind of truth about the subject matter of politics instead of relying only on general opinions and uncertain declared ideas.

Referring back to the previous point, we assume that there is a possibility and ability of a society to govern itself with no need to an authoritative state that would not only restrict its people's freedom but it would exceed that to a more abusive and oppressive political system. The emergence of an ideology driven by the right to live a good life is what characterises the revolutionary societies that aim at a radical change that would alter the corrupted political authoritarian regimes under which they endured all kinds of maltreatment and persecution.

3.2.2 The Politics of Moralism as a Cuban Social Conduct

It is undeniable that the Cuban political history have had a huge influence on the social experience. In fact, the Cuban society witnessed a long history of repression and oppression under totalitarian regime that led to the creation of new generations of Cubans that envisioned a stabilized and respectful life whether in their home country or elsewhere. However, with the newly installed regime, a new ideology with an organic quality has been initiated.

The Cuban revolution, which is a crucial turning point in the Cuban socio-political history, has been described as "the longest running social experiment" in history[40]. As a matter of fact, this Cuban social experiment was able not only to morph the political old constraints that had direct influence on the people mostly, but also to bring back the social and national values and old existing ideas. The notion of salvation that goes back to the years of independence wars is a case in point. Furthermore, the ideas of sacrifice and saving the nation, or '*Partia',* seem to be among the fundamentals in the constitution and preservation of the Cuban nation.

It is important to highlight the role played by the ideals that characterized Cuba. Indeed, the pre-revolutionary morals are an integral part in the formation and understanding of the social experience during and after the Cuban revolutionary era. Back to the nineteenth century, moralism increased and disseminated among the Cubans, functioning as a moving social force and a collective cultural bound. In this context, the philosopher Félix Varela who is known for his nineteenth century writings described as

[40]- The Cuba Studies Trust, International Institute for the Study of Cuba, http://www.cubastudiestrust.org/plan.html (last visited Feb. 11, 2010).

"bible of Cuban identity", talked a lot about the importance of morality to the Cuban history. By preaching an "emancipatory moralism", he emphasized the effectiveness of morality that is predominately "useful to the fatherland" (qtd. in Deborah and Marsha Weinssman 317).

José Martí[41], who is one of the significant figures in the Cuban struggle, stressed the useful idea of imbedding morals for the achievement of national independence. Accordingly, the Cuban political culture is based on common national ideals that target radical ethical alterations, which by means would lead to the change sought by the Cubans for decades. Marti claimed, "It is to the substance of these matters that we are going, rather than to the forms … It is a case of changing a nation's soul, [its] entire way of thinking and acting, and not just [its] external clothes" (qtd. In Deborah and Marsha Weinssman 317). In this quote, we feel that the essence of the Cuban revolt was based on the morality or as Marti referred to as "the soul of the nation".

On the outset of the Cuban revolution, Cubans were already equipped with the required national ideals of a 'moral republic' as Marti named it. With the aim of establishing a society that prioritizes the common sense of morality, the Cubans went back to the already existing ethics of the nineteenth century of honour, respect, loyalty and patriotism, saving the nation, civic participation, and collective responsibility, in attempt to carry on the resistance by using the same traditional underscored socio-political pattern. In this respect, Deborah and Marsha Weinssman conclude that,

[41]- José Martí is also referred to as the soul of the Cuban revolution and the island's national hero. In, *People's World* W.T. Whitney Jr. confirms that , "during his short life he became the master of societal change in Cuba. Martí took charge of—was the master of—preparations for the revolution aimed at securing national independence. He was a master for Cubans in another sense of that word; he was their teacher. He took on that task with a seriousness little seen among political leaders at any time." (José Martí, soul of the Cuban Revolution. https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/jose-marti-soul-of-the-cuban-revolution/)

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> Cuban scholars have described the revolution as the "resurrection of political and moral charisma" and an "ethical regeneration" derived from a "pre-existing moralistic movement that denounced and fought against selfish interests." Such idealism is the lens through which historic cultural concepts of social duty and moral responsibility have provided the normative context of political change. (318)

This statement serves as a thorough explanation for the moralistic doctrine adopted by the revolution that has been a distinguishable historical stressing the eminence of the idealistic perspective that departed from the authoritative political reality. Here, idealism is yet another eminently important concept that lies within the context of moral politics for social change emerged.

Referring back to the statement, we can notice that idealism is an essential component for attaining the political change, which is related to the abstract thoughts. Griffiths elucidates the notion of idealism that is used essentially as a political strategy. He maintains, "Idealism is the striving after unitary understanding, which presupposes the autonomy of either referent not as a dimension of political reality, but as its essence" (31). Effectively, the set of Cubans' morals and ideals were used as a policy for social unification in order to upraise the struggle that substantially exist in the Cuban political reality.

On this account, the idealist thinking that is a crucial part of political idealism, or as the term denotes a sense of 'utopianism', seems to play a key role in shaping real politics. Linking this fact to the Cuban case, we can say that idealizing the old socially constructed beliefs can be associated with what Berki called the idealism of nostalgia, and I add the idealism of memory, because memories helped the Cuban people to use the

long existing ideals in attempt to create a present and a future of real politics. In Berki's terms:

> The relationship which gives rise to the stance of Realpolitik is an idealism that is revealed as the attempted idealization of the past and the present, the assertion of the supreme value of a 'political' realm with its own rules, laws, moral commands and law-enforcement through power. I shall call this partial arrest the idealism of nostalgia. And the relationship to reality whose typical expression is [utopianism] receives its seeming coherence through its idealization of a future. (Qtd. In Griffith 31)

For Berki, there exist a causative relationship between political idealism and political realism, where the latter is an automatic result of the former. Moreover, when a given society demonstrates kind of a thirst for maintaining the ancestors' set of social beliefs and then glorifying and idealizing its principals, cause, and fight; this would underpin the ethos of the people and strengthen its ideological apparatus.

Yet, all societies have ideological apparatuses, to a varying degree, that are essentially determined by their historical and politically ethical paradigms. In Cuba, however, the ideological liberation project that is fuelled by the moralism is more than just empty rhetoric or a mere theoretical fabric. For Cubans, values and beliefs underscored by the revolution are constructing an integral part of the everyday Cuban society. Subsequently, throughout the years of the revolution, the Cuban government called the Cuban people to continue the journey of substantial popular support and to stick tight to the dynamic of Fidel-patria-revolution that resides in the centre of Cuban politics of moralism.

Ultimately, we can say that the Cuban participation as a moral philosophy in the social and political spheres was at the crux of the revolutionary ideology. In this respect,

we cannot dismiss the role of the revolution that has strengthen the relationship between people and the government through developing the national values. Additionally, all of "The revolution's commitment to fulfilling basic needs, for example, drew explicitly upon notions of moralism as inspiration for the radical transformation of society", as Deborah and Marsha Weinssman outline. Yet, the revolution's social program with its newly developed system of values succeeded in consolidating some notions that the Cubans acquired as part of their understanding of the new reality.

3.3 The Cuban Exilic Experience and Cultural Displacement

The new Cuban reality, which characterises the contemporary Cuban social experience of the revolutionary and the post-revolutionary eras, is a vital truth that would underpin our study especially at the social and cultural levels that are two crucial subsequent products of the Cuban political activities. This social reality is primarily determined by history; in this case, matters that arose after the 1959 Cuban Revolution that are critically delicate and debatable.

Accordingly, a sustained attention has been given to the late twentieth century Cubans' most pronounced subjects entailing self-definition by means of which can determine who can and cannot lay claim to a Cuban cultural identity or consciousness. Hence, one of the vital identity determining factors and self-affirming form for the collective identity is the problem of the physical and cultural displacement and dislocating selves that made unprecedented changes in the recent history of the Cuban community. As a means of cultural and psychic survival, the socio-political phenomenon of Cuban migration to the United States acquired an intense political connotation and social interpretation, independent of personal motivation.

3.3.1 The Golden Exile and the Freedom Flights

Before tackling the Cuban diasporic experience that has a lot to do with matters of migration, displacement and its consequences, it is of a vital importance to highlight, describe and understand the circumstances that had direct effects on the generational and social changes. Hence, it is important to shed some light on the Cuban physical geography that had a huge role in shaping the post-1959 Cuban experience. The small island nation that is situated in the Caribbean Sea has a strategic location that was of a great help to the principal migration waves from Cuba to the United States during the twentieth century, especially since 1959.

Additionally, the Cuban long history with its vicissitudes also contributed a lot in the process of migration. Starting with the early Cuban history, when the indigenous people were forced to leave their motherland by a series of Spanish colonial occupations, the fact that led to inhabiting different shifting cultural spaces. Subsequently, the forced migration had many negatives on the Cuban population that was initially characterized with socially and culturally communal beliefs and morals that bound all the Cubans together; however, the displacement was at the same time perceived as an enriching experience that resulted in a recognizable transnational integration with a diverse cultural roots and influences.

It is also important to highlight that one of the most migrant-sending nation in the Caribbean to the United States is Cuba. Thus, *'El exilio'* plays a vital role in the construction of a hybrid society and the promotion of the existing beliefs. These core beliefs have evolved in different ways over time, their ultimate development were affected by the different waves of exiled Cubans who have headed to Miami and Florida

over the different periods of the over four decades of Castro's rule. Yet, the Cubans' mass migration, which was essentially the result of the previously mentioned political changes besides socio-economic unstable conditions, has been divided into four main phases namely the Golden Exile (1959-1962), the Freedom Flights (1965- 1973), the Mariel boat lift (1980), and the *balsero* crisis (1994).

The Golden Exile and the Freedom Flights are two substantial waves portraying two diverse diasporic experiences. Those two waves are of a paramount importance to the present study, as they took shape directly after the years of revolution and setting the start for the precedent Cuban exoduses. Another point that proves the eminence of the two first phases of exile is that the refugees of the two waves are predominantly of the upper- and middle classes; this is to say that the Cubans opted for leaving their home country not for the sake of getting a better life only, but because they were obliged to. The first wave is called the 'Golden Exile' referring to the most important classes in the Cuban society (Duany 70).

Beginning with the 'Golden Exile' that literarily started with the overthrow of the dictator Fulgencio Batista. This pivotal phase marked the first attempts of the politicians, businesspersons, and military officers who worked with the dictator to flee (Duany 76). Shortly after, and with overwhelming feeling brought about by the intensity of the revolution, the middle class Cubans who are the most educated and occupy important positions in society joined the diaspora. Jorge Duany states that "Nearly 23 percent of all Cuban exiles (or 250 000 persons) fled to the United States during the first wave of post-revolutionary migration" (76).[42]

[42]- For more insightful ideas about this period, see Fagen Richard, Brody Richard A. and O'Leary Thomas, Cubans in Exile : Disaffection and the Revolution, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1967.

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However, this steady stream of Cuban refugee sought a temporary escape from the instability and uncertainty of the political circumstances that their nation underwent. This decision was obviously seen in their choice of the closest place to their country. In fact, Miami was the Cubans' optimum place to go to for their short stay before returning back home. Yet this choice was based on two main reasons first its close proximity, as mentioned before, the fact that enables the Cubans to get back easier and quicker to their homeland, and second is the familiarity of travelling, working, and living in Florida for the earlier refugees.

Yet things did not work as the Cubans wanted, as Duany points out, "In April, 1961, the military fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion initiated a new era in Cuban exile politics: the Revolution was here to stay; exile was no longer a transitory status" (77). Apparently, the Cubans that formed 'the Golden exile' were definitely wrong, since Cuba's status did not improve as they thought the fact that worsened things for them as well as for their families left behind as they requested a visa waiver for the aim of returning to Cuba shortly after.

Though tensions between Cuba and the United States increased rapidly during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Cubans' exodus continued on a relatively similar scale. However, those who migrated the United States during the crisis opted for the illegal migration due to the restrictions imposed by the American government over the Cuban immigrants. In 1965, albeit the unsettled relations between the two countries, the Cuban government opened the port of Camarioca and the United States responded by creating an airlift on December 1965 between Varadero and Miami, and that what has been called 'the Freedom Flights' (78).

With the second wave of exile, the migratory process became much easier, as there are many Cubans living in the United States and habituated to the American life. Settling mostly in the Miami metropolitan Area, the Cuban migrants created a typically identical social structure that has already existed in their left behind country making Miami the second hometown for the Cubans.

3.3.2 The Displaced Selves within the Cuban-American Community

Within their primary place of destination, Cuban emigrants have habituated living on the other side of their country, yet, kept nostalgic feelings to their natal place. In the light of this pertinent feeling, diasporic theorists like Avtar Brah and Benedict Anderson confirmed that exiles, refugees, immigrants, or emigrants have the prevailing feeling of 'homing desire' and 'imaginary homeland' as appellations for nostalgia (Abdul Jaleel 333). As a result of this, the Cuban-American community stayed strongly attached to the Cuban life style, traditions, culture, social rituals, etc. the efforts for doing so were portrayed in the continuous work on bringing all what is Cuban. In relation to that, Duany clarifies this point by stating that, "They remain connected to the Cuban homeland through specific spatial practices, such as renaming streets and schools, establishing businesses with the same names as in the home country, redecorating inner and outer spaces, establishing hometown associations, and organizing parades and festivals based on Cuban traditions" (87). Therefore, the Cuban-Americans chose to be socially enclosed to their Cuban original way in their new communities, which is a consequent of longing for home and homeland.

Consequently, we can say that displacement and dislocation is assumed to be one of the crucially direct reasons for such long lasting feelings of nostalgia, uncertainty,

identity crisis, memory, cross-cultural conflict. At this level, we must consider the meaning of the term displacement that is defined in Cambridge dictionary as an opposite notion of place, 'the situation in which people are forced to leave the place where they normally live'. As the literally explanation suggests, the various tough and unbearable conditions are the major reasons that push people to be displaced physically, however, the psychological displacement offers another interpretation that we will discuss in details.

The sociological elucidation, however, embeds the idea of the cultural and traditional eradication from the mainstream life. Hence, the sociological interpretation of displacement, according to Angelika Bammer is "the separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation or the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture" (qtd. In Abdul Jaleel 332). Thus, the displacement could be physical, as the Cuban exodus described above, where people under political or socio-economic circumstances are obliged to move from the place where they have lived to another place. On the other hand, the displaced selves or the psychological dislocation is essentially the state of feeling disconnected and separated from the communal cultural bonds. Moreover, the dislocation by the "colonizing imposition of a foreign culture," as Long Le demonstrates, can lead to the physical displacement whether from or in the homeland.[43]

Referring back to nostalgic feelings of displaced selves, it is important to point out the fact that the feelings of 'homing desire' and longing for the past through memories is a psychological state that varies from a person to another and from a country to another, thus this variation depends on many different environmental conditions. Accordingly,

[43]- In his article *Theorizing and Conceptualizing Displacement in the Vietnamese Context*, Long Le tries to give a succinct interpretation of Angelika Bammer's sociological definition of displacement.

Smadar Lavie and Swedenburg posit that the displacement phenomenon could relatively be measured depending on the motives and consequences of the exilic experience. They claim that displacement "is not experienced in precisely the same way across time and space, and does not unfold in a uniform fashion" (qtd. In Abdul Jaleel 333).

Another point that needs more consideration is displacement as a directly related notion to the emotional and psychological state of the displaced individual that is often demonstrated through memories and the process of remembering not only certain personal experiences and trajectories, but also certain dominating historic moments and predominant socio-political happenings that mostly determine the degree of estrangement. This can be illustrated by discussing the Cuban diaspora, which is not a mere physical displacement in response to the Cuban politicized life, but it is also a deeply rooted psychological experience that ensued from a political revolution and a subsequent radical transformation of the society and economy towards socialism.

Interestingly, the upward occupational mobility has been an optimal choice for the Cubans to create their own lives and their own enterprises with a Cuban taste, especially those arriving in the 1960s and the 1970s. As mentioned before, Miami became the undisputed capital of the Cuban exile. Unlike other cities like Chicago or Los Angeles, where Cubans were more inclined towards acculturation, Cubans of Miami showed a well-established framework of kinship by forming a bind together community that would face all sorts of social threat whether it be physical or emotional. However, this social behaviour has been related to the planned economy of the Cubans who often create their own businesses, their own way, and serving their own émigré community (Duany 89).

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To this end, we understand that the Cuban-Americans exhibit an intentional absence of social integration with other minorities as an effective and easy way for resisting all kinds of physical and cultural dispersion. Hence, this is exactly what explicates the successful entrepreneurial Cuban experience in the United States (Duany 92). Yet, regardless of the economic flourished status of the Cuban-American community, the experience of displacement led to the emergence of many problems such as feeling of nostalgia, fear of acculturation and integration, cross-cultural matters, identity problems, and alienation (Abdul Jaleel 336).

Alienation, as a case in point, is a crucial consequent of the displacement process. In essence, the consciousness of exile does embed the idea of alienation and separation from one's place of birth. However, in the receptive place, the arrived refugees are conventionally mingled with the inhabitants of that place first and subsequently choose to integrate into that society or to alienate themselves if they were mistreated. For the Cubans, however, alienation was the ultimate physical and psychological adopted mind-set for their social and cultural survival from the very beginning of their journey as exiles.

The Cultural dimension is also of a vital importance to the exilic experience. Eventually, the Cubans of Miami could maintain their culture, unlike their counterparts in other cities and other immigrants. This social phenomenon is well elaborated by Mark Falcoff of *Miami Herald* who states that:

> Miami's [and Cuba's] climate and vegetation are so similar, and the Cuban-American community so numerous, that it has been possible there to preserve in exile many traditional social practices, institutions and consumer preferences that other immigrant communities in the United States have been forced to abandon. The result, paradoxically, has not been to put old ghosts to rest but to keep them alive. The periodic arrival of new

> immigrants sharpens the sense of loss, and keeps the wound from healing. (qtd. In O'Reilly Herrera 85-86)

In fact, the geographical proximity, which contributed in displaying an indistinguishable resemblance of the two countries, facilitates things for the emigrants who could easily travel, settle, and get habituated to the climate and the land texture. Notwithstanding, many factors were at work when the Cuban-Americans were proud of their culture and how it could survive in another place. One of those vital factors is the continuous emigration to the United States, which by means disturbed and disrupted both the sense of belonging and the focus on preserving one's culture and traditions.

Therefore, the influence of the nonstop arrival of new immigrants to the emigrated place is one of the main reasons for the unintentional change in one's culture. Eventually, this could be postulated as an answer to Bammer's questioning on "how one's ancestral culture or the culture of the birthplace has been dislocated, transformed, rejected, or replaced by a new one, one of "cross-connections, not roots" (qtd. In Abdul Jaleel 332). In fact, the culture of roots is presumably very hard to be changed or dislocated; however, this depends on the character of the group and the differences of the individuals within the same group, besides the extent to which they believe in the necessity of keeping their culture alive wherever they go.

Ultimately, the subsequent core changes that were initiated in the way of life and culture of the diasporic people led to the dilemma of locating identities. Obviously, culture acts as the predominant component of identity and identity construction. Thus, as people of the diaspora move to a new space with a culture and set of social beliefs that are relatively different, they would have a hybrid identity and move swiftly to the state of

in-betweens that would automatically cause a chronic feeling of uncertainty and despair that affected the identification of their identity (Abdul Jaleel 335).

Hence, it can be construed that maintaining one's culture as an immigrant is a hard decision to take and harder to realise, due to the simple fact that the physical disengagement plays a key role in preserving, changing, or abandoning of home culture. Consequently, we can assume that there is a set of different immigrants in what concerns preserving the culture. There are a few who are abide to their ancestral culture that is part of their pride and fight for protecting and preserving it wherever they go, though their attempts of doing so is not really guaranteed, since defining themselves in a specific culture per see is questionable. Others, however, especially the new generations, have the tendency to change and assimilate into the mainstream society as a reaction to their dislocation.

In relation to this argument, we can refer back to the role and attitude of the two age categories in the Cuban society. As far as societal values are concerned, being faithful to Cuba and the Cuban revolution is legitimated by popular support, however, older persons showed more devotion and loyalty to the Cuban cause compared to younger Cubans. Therefore, many older Cubans still commit to Cuba in exile and manifest sincere identification with the revolution and its accomplishments within as well as without their beloved country. Based on "identification with the revolution", as a well-known expression used as a support for the social, economic, and political improvements brought about by the 1959 revolution.

In this respect, David L. Strug conducted a research on the importance of the revolution and the social beliefs on the Cuban elderly and their lives. Strug ends up with

the following findings, "Over 80% (21/25) of respondents answered, the revolution was of great importance to them because of its achievements. Respondents mentioned the following accomplishments: education and literacy programs, guaranteed health care and family doctors, vaccinations, affordable housing and access to cultural events" (92). It is also important to state that this study includes mainly those who remained in Cuba as their claims suggest. Yet, they hold disproportionately different views about the same circumstances and consequences of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary eras. As Strug's interviews with the different participants demonstrate that,

> The revolution was important to them because it eliminated economic, racial, and social injustice. A 70-year-old former economist stated the revolution was significant to him because meant "total liberation of the Cuban people, ideological, political, and social; the equality of men and women; and lack of censorship." A 75-year-old woman said the revolution was important to her because it brought equality to Cuba. She stated: "For all of us who lived through these events, we know what equality means. It is the right to many things, including the right not to have to fear terrorism and murder." (92)

The idea of collective participation in the Cuban society is so crucial and critical especially for the old generation as they grew up in an environment that prioritizes the social ideals, which work predominantly for the advantage of their country's economy and political system. Almost all of the Cuban elderly were loyal to their country and chose to stay in the post-Castro Cuba; again, since they were firm believer of the revolution that altered radical changes, due many parts to Castro who was their country's saviour.

Unfortunately, this standing point caused a huge crack in the Cuban society and a major clash between the old and young generations, since the latter has never trusted their government, as it failed to afford them to live an independent and respectful life (96-97).

> All of the respondents acknowledged that few of today's youth share their faith in the Cuban Revolution. They noted that a sector of today's youth, including in some instances their own grandchildren, had no historical memory of what capitalist life was like in Cuba prior to the revolution, had lost faith in government's ability to improve the lives of ordinary Cubans, and believed that Cuba should have a more capitalist. (96)

This claim draws our attention towards another prominent point, which is lack of historical memories that plays a key role in the youth's dissatisfaction with their political system and socialist society, which show a great extent of an ostensibly unexplainable loyalty to the country and its revolution. The younger persons that constitute seventy percent of Cubans who were born after the revolution were a witness of the socialist revolution that brought them no good (Strug 99). Thus, comparing their economic system with the neighbour countries, they recognized that the socialist economy and policy did not and could not improve their financial situation.

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3.4 The Instrumentality of Narrative in Understanding Political Philosophy

Maureen Whitebrook believes that the literary narrative has much to offer to political culture, political theory, or political philosophy (32)[44]. Indeed, literature can be an effective instrument in political representation and that the writer who is creative enough could play a key role in addressing the political issues of his people. Therefore, many writers have been accused of not appropriately showing the political truth or avoid talking about facts that are related to the socio-political matters[45]. This is to say that authors are supposed to write for pleasure and art for art's sake, yet shedding light on specific subjects that the community enduring and undergoing is of primary importance for literature and for a fruitful reading and understanding of the status quo simultaneously.

At this point, the most vital question that we should ask is what the literary narrative could offer politics. In other words, the special connection of literature to politics has to focus on specific points in order to achieve the optimal goal of combining the two seemingly different fields of study. As this question has for long been a matter of discussion, it has been argued that there are two main possibilities. The first one is that literature in such cases is used for political illustrations is order to manifest the hidden political arguments, however the second, which is more deep, is used as a way for drawing attention towards morality that has to do with political theory (Whitebrook 32).

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[44]- Maureen Whitebrook, "Taking the Narrative Turn: What the Novel Has to offer Political Theory," in John Horton and Andrea T. Baumeister, eds., *Literature and the Political Imagination*, New Fetter Lane, London, 1996, pp. 32,44.

[45]- In this respect, Vargas Llosa openly accused Borges of sharing responsibility for the evils of the world by his failure to confront issues of justice (Gallagher 281).

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The novel has potentially the ability to leave the reader with a deep thinking of the purposeful content, which makes political subjects so adequate for the literary narratives. Substantially, the literary narratives in general and novels in particular are generally centred around characters' choices in life that have social relevance and political dilemmas, which are an integral part of the process of identity formation. Thence, the novel is a piece of writing that is not for theorising or philosophical interpretation of the social phenomena per see, but rather, for a good envisioning and comprehension of human community. In this respect, Geoffrey Harpham demonstrates this idea in his summary on 'the ethical utilities of literature'; he explains (qtd. In Whitebrook), "Literature […] instructs people on how to picture and understand human situations, […] holds the mirror up to the community so that it can identify and judge itself, represents negotiations between the community and the individual […] and models the "unity" that might be desirable in a human life" (39).

On this account, Richard Rorty believes in the usefulness of literature as a guide for people, which is much more effective than philosophy. In *Essays on Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, Rorty contends:

> A society which took its moral vocabulary from novels rather than from ontotheological or ontico-moral treatises would not ask itself questions about human nature, the point of human existence, or the meaning of human life. Rather it would ask itself what we can do so as to get along with each other, how we can arrange things so as to be comfortable with one another, how institutions can be changed so that everyone's right to be understood has a better chance of being gratified. (Qtd. In Whitebrook 34)

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Pursuant to Rorty's quote, it is obvious that philosophical questions are indispensable in delving deeper into the inner self for understanding the psychological mysterious part of the human being. Yet for a community, it is more important to know about optimal manners, choices, beliefs, and ways of thinking that would ameliorate the society's overall performance for a better communal life. Therefore, we can say that the society's main reference could be the novel, as it tends to interpret people to each other and to express their significance within society as a collective force.

Moreover, in arguing that philosophy is not of a vital importance to literature, Rorty upholds, '[P]hilosophy is not that important for politics, nor is literature'. Notwithstanding, this is not to discard the weight of philosophy that constitutes a crucial role in the field of literary criticism; however, Rorty here is firmly believing that narrative, from a practical point of view, is 'so blatant and obvious that it does not take any great analytical skills or any great philosophical self-consciousness to see what is going on.' (Whitebrook 36). For this reason, the novel is assumed as a great reference of how society is functioning correspondently to their political systems, and can allow reflection in as much as politics is concerned.

It is also important to highlight that the very nature of politics is public and collectivist, unlike political theory where theorists are wholly concerned with interpreting morals, choices, actions, and intentions of the individual. For Peter Johnson, "The political world is a public world involving public aims and purposes which cannot be reduced to the aims and purposes of private individuals" (41). In fact, politics is essentially in favour of the society as a whole, and thus it seems impossible and illogical to consider the private individuals' aims, actions, and behaviours in response to their politics.

However, the predominant 'individualist' aspect is of a central importance to literature because it illustrates or acts as the only microcosm of the whole society. Consequently, the representation of individuals as political agents in narratives is basically an illustration of how each individual acts and behaves within a political context. In the light of this, "Individuals acting politically do so in public, and in concert with others, and with widespread and often unforeseeable consequences; and these factors make a difference to their ethical behaviour—as distinct, that is, from their individual behaviour in a private setting" (Whitebrook 40).

Ultimately, narratives are substantially about the individual who cannot be removed from the society he raised in. Subsequently, the socio-political conditions in any given society is the primary context to link the individual with in order to get a good picture of his ethical behaviour and the way he interacts with others. However, the matter that needs more reflection and careful consideration is how literary devices such as irony and metaphor work in displaying political issues, making overt, and then examining the pronounced events that have a direct relation to politics and socio-politics, before representing data with the rhetorical 'literary' qualities of political contexts.

3.5 Magical Historicity and Cuban Historical Realities

Knowledge production and representation has been one of the most vital components of understanding magical realist works. In contrast to the assumed objective and logical manifestation of knowledge presented by the Western literary mode, magical realism that came as an alternative mode of knowledge production has the same goal of knowing and understanding the world, however, the main difference is the way this knowledge is delivered. Yet some disciplines as history, are basically related to a certain

truth that would be distorted if they are to be presented through magic or fantasy because they will lose some crucial parts of their reality.

For magical realists, contrariwise, contrasting reason with imagination is a technique that is essentially used in order to accentuate a certain reality for rehabilitating the past and reconstructing its historical reality. In addressing this crossing of the fact-and-fiction boundary, one should be aware of the debate raised over this crucial issue, which clearly depends on the historical context, social facts, and cultural background. In fact, by contrasting reason with imagination to present a fictional work that is intertwined with history fits Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction". For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction is a postmodern narrative form that is concerned with the representations of history that are essentially metafictional.

The historiographic metafiction fundamentally aims at drawing the reader's attention to two basic historical truths. The first aim is to remind the reader of the past-colonized dictated fate. However, the second is to promote the reader's understanding of past with some deep metafictional reflections, which are accentuated by paradox and contradiction as a manner of engaging the reader in this critical historical discourse (Hutcheon 59-60). In the light of this, the concept of historiography started to take a new diversion as it shifted from focusing on what is the historical reality, to how this reality is narrated and represented. In this vein, Hutcheon holds that, "Historiography is no longer considered the objective and disinterested recording of the past; it is more an attempt to comprehend and master it by means of some working (narrative/explanatory) model that, in fact, is precisely what grants a particular meaning to the past" (61).

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Actually, blurring the lines between fiction and fact is what the postmodern historiographic metafiction and magical realism tend to focus on through the privilege of history representation. However, back in time, fiction and history have been considered two different and separate concepts as fiction is supposed to highlight universal truth, yet, history is predominantly concerned with facts. Subsequently, historiographic metafiction and magical realism came to challenge this conception by redefining the relationship between fiction and history. In her book *Magic Realism: Social Context and Discourse*, Maria Elena Angulo elaborates this point. She claims that, "[1]iterary discourse may differ from historical discourse by virtue of its primary referents, conceived as imaginary rather than real events, but the two kinds of discourse are more similar than different since both operate language in such a way that any clear distinction between their discursive form and their interpretive content remains impossible" (64).

Ultimately, we can say that this constant boundaries blurring between fiction and history is what created a sense of wondering and an envy to know about history through fiction. As Linda Hutcheon explains,

> For the most part historiographic metafiction, like much contemporary theory of history, does not fall into either 'presentism' or nostalgia in its relation to the past it represents. What it does is de-naturalize that temporal relationship. In both historiographic theory and postmodern fiction, there is an intense self-consciousness (both theoretical and textual) about the act of narrating in the present the events of the past, about the conjunction of present action and the past absent object of that agency. In both historical and literary postmodern representation, the doubleness remains; there is no sense of either historian or novelist reducing the strange past to verisimilar present. (68)

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Following this explanation, it is evident that the use of this eminently vital contemporary theoretical technique for the aim of attaining a good understanding of the past through narrative is not for determining or resolving the philosophically dialectical ideas of presentism versus historicism. On the contrary, its main function is to dismiss the demarcation between the present and past as an act for calling attention to the facts that are translated into words without distortion, however, time and space are remarkably distorted to the point that they no longer matter.

At this level, we can notice that the linguistic production of historical facts in the postmodern literature is neither scrutinized nor interrogated; this is the case for the magical realist works where the writer and his characters are accustomed to the deployed magic, and here the reader is also supposed to pay little to no attention to the magical details. By doing so, magical realist novels are made different from postmodern alternatives by the constant and continuous attempt of going beyond the traditional mimesis for representing the hidden in an artistic way.

This heightened reality perception and production that characterises magical realism is visibly present in the Cuban and the Cuban-American literary arena. The Cuban writers have produced a body of magical realist literature that is indeed worthy of respect, and merits considerably serious attention in order to get an easy understanding of the Cuban experience, and see the extent to which magical realism has been successful in explaining the Cuban past and present. Yet, it is important to highlight that the most important part of this body of writing is the one that has been created as a manifestation of a national image within the United States that used magical realist techniques in attempt to create a unique national identification that is noticeably distinguishable.

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The manifestations of the intricacies of Cuban history, which is forgotten by the old generations specifically, and unwitnessed or barely remembered by the newest one, have been of a great concern and focus for the Cuban-American authors who wanted to examine the struggles inherent in their search for Cuban identity and memory. Cristina García, as a case in point, is one of the best Cuban-American authors to mention in this respect as she intends to call attention to specific Cuban socio-historical conditions and problems, as well as political issues that have direct relation to her native culture and circumstances. According to Lori Ween,

> Authors like García, who writes her novels in English as she translates Cuban-American culture for an audience primarily unaware of the intricacies of Cuban history, deals with issues such as the impossible contradictions inherent in the desire to return to a singular and unchanging place of origin, the invention of an acceptable community story that reflects the multiplicity of political and social Cuban stances, and the tension that surfaces between a search for an authentic image and the inevitable forces of creativity and change within any successful translation. (127)

However, the attempt of demonstrating issues such as the impossible contradictions and the invention of an acceptable community story would not be possible without the use of magical realism. The latter has literally helped the narratives to take the whole process to a completely new level, as it possesses the ability to synthesize opposite categories and transcend the historical, political, social, and cultural realities in an aesthetical manner. Furthermore, the reflection of the multiplicity in the magical realist novels of García is nothing but a representation of multiple realities, which means that the multiplicity in magical realism is of vital importance as it emphasizes the

historical dimensions of the narratives. Hence, we can deduce that García's success in bringing together reality and fiction, historical facts and universal truths is in good part ascribable to magical realism.

3.5.1 Exile and the Birth of a Magical Space

In addressing the issue of exile, which is an eventual reaction to the growing tensions between the citizens and their governments, critics such as Isabel Alvarez-Borland and Carolina Hospital felt a sense of a compelling necessity to give a scrutiny for explaining the different breadths of this social phenomenon. The complexity of the social Cuban experience lies in the nature of the relationship that emerged as a consequent result to the substantial differences between the islanders and exiles, besides among the Cuban exile community in the United States.

It is yet important to keep in mind that the rich complexity of this socio-political exilic experience has been an essential and a vital experience for some Cuban writers to chronicle in their fictitious writings. According to Alvarez Borland (qtd. In O'Reilly Herrera), these outstanding authors belong to a completely distinguishable generation of writers whose "literary identities [are] determined by their direct and indirect experiences with the diaspora which arose after the Cuban Revolution" (82). Hence, the Cuban and Cuban-Americans authors favoured sharing their exilic experiences and expressing their ideas about them rather than risking death for them, though writing about the "direct or indirect experiences with the diaspora" is as complicated as its various situations encapsulate.

Accordingly, the various situations of exiles and its consequent emotional and psychological changes created a new situation where the personal identity and cultural

qualities of origin are influenced by the new culture and tough conditions of the exile, thus developing along new parameters. Such rigorous sentiments have received perceptive examination and considerable attention by the Cuban-American writers, who concentrated on denouncing enforced identity and culture loss and the major consequences of the psychological, the internal, or the emotional exile, *"exilio internal"*, as Hospital names it on what Alvarez Borland calls "ethnic Cuban Americans" (O'Reilly Herrera 82).

Throughout the diasporic era, the Cuban national identity has witnessed an array of alterations that has been marked not by the displaced selves from one geographical place to another only, but by a radical shift in their cultural belief system as well as their psychological mind-set. In this course, Antonia Domínguez Miguela confirms that:

> The reterritorialization of the concepts of nation and culture as a consequence of exile and migration is clearly reflected and represented in Cuban American literature where the geographical limits that determine the concept of national and cultural Cuban identity are challenged. In this literature the geographical spaces become fundamental prominent figures in the life of the protagonists up to the point of making that very conflict and dialogue between both spaces an existential in-between space that does not correspond necessarily with a geographical location but with a heap of cultural experiences that define the person and therefore constitute plots of a fluid identity in constant come and go. (Qtd. In Jurney 72)

Indeed, the Cuban-American literature gave a considerable importance to the subjects of migration, exile, and diaspora, which left deep cracks in the Cuban society and shifted the course of its history. Subsequently, the notion of space started having a key role in the everyday life of ethnic Cuban American, to the point that the idea of belonging to a certain place has become a matter of imagination and memory. Eventually,

the conceptual meaning of space has been distorted, especially in magical realist fictional narratives, which oftentimes portray the individual and the collective reality of migration and exile as an escape that functions like a regulatory mechanism that tend to heal and restore the psychological and mental sufferings of both the Cuban-Americans as well as the Cubans left behind.

For Cuban-American writers, like Cristina García, realism is no more an optimal channel through which modern ideas could be easily and clearly transmitted and understood. "Realism," as Salman Rushdie contends, "can no longer express or account for the absurd reality of the world we live in—a world which has the capability of destroying itself at any moment." (Qtd. In Faris 88). Yet, the absurdity of the modern world accredited magical realism to explain hidden realities and unveil covered truth. However, that is exactly what characterizes magical realist mode for being able to create "a narrative space of the ineffable in-between" (Faris Ordinary Enchantments 88).

3.5.2 Imaginative Reality of Transgressive Boundaries

The oxymoronic texture and nature of magical realism suits perfectly subjects like the exilic experience, the quest of identity, existential notions, etc. as they stress the idea of the so-called binary or versatile conceptions. This fundamental idea has been confirmed and well developed by the two critics Zamora and Faris who prove that, "magical realism is a mode suited to exploring—and transgressing—boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical or generic" (qtd. In Bowers 64). In fact, the concepts of becoming, existence, reality are principally consolidated and integrated into magical realist narratives as the core essence of this literary mode proved to be bilateral.

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With this in mind, it is evident that the organic nature of magical realist writings in general terms is socially oriented, which means that most treated subjects are predominantly social, political, or cultural the fact that reflects the essential features of magical realism as such topics are essentially controversial and assumed to have different interpretations. Further to Zamora and Faris' comments, violating the boundaries of socially conventional truth, which is a vital aspect of magical realism, is what featured the mode to be both 'transgressive and subversive'. However, the main source of the transgressive and subversive treats is that when reality and its subsequent facts starts to be questioned and doubted, the borderlines that shape the truth of other spheres become unreliable and thus vulnerable (Bowers 64).

The unreliability, which is a substantial hallmark of magic realism in demarcating the magic boundaries, is "immediately undercut by the mode's ironic, self-conscious and subversive attitude", as the creation of all what could be discredited or doubtful is what is aimed to in the process of imagining and telling magical realist stories. It is vitally important to understand the utility of magical realism within its contextualized settings, which challenge the monologic political and cultural structures. As discussed earlier, the feature of portraying reality with magic and imagination is essentially used for the exploration of the untold and intentionally hidden truths. However, the adoption of constructed knowledge may weaken its credibility since knowledge and belief are the basis for all human actions. Yet, magical realists tend to disapprove this idea by the simple fact that belief may shape reality (Hegerfeldt 279). Many critics validate the consideration of the irrational. Jeanette Winterson (Qtd. In Hegerfeldt 280), for instance, took the same stream by declaring in an interview:

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> I think it would be very foolish not to take the irrational seriously. There are two ways of understanding reality. There is physical reality, the table, the chairs, the cars on the street – what appears to be the solid, knowable world, subject to proof, all around us. But there is also the reality of the psyche, imaginative reality, emotional reality, the things which are not subject to proof and never can be. We understand the world as oppositions: black/white, good/evil, male/female, mind/matter. What can be touched and what cannot be. But what's invisible to us is also so crucial for our own well-being or health.

On this detail, notwithstanding the invisibility of the abstract realties as memorization, imagination, and dreaming, which are conventionally hard to believe due to their invisibility, they constitute an integral and legitimate part of everyday truth. Thus, we can say that in order to interpret or transmit the inner reality, the one should go back to the already restored knowledge and creative mind-set that is directly related to reality. Additionally, it is true that we oftentimes need to have the psychological, imaginative, and emotional realities for a much better understanding of the daily occurrences as they consolidate and strengthen the extent to which we take the rational seriously.

By way of illustration, memory that is an important magical realist theme for rethinking and restoring certain social and historical issues is a knowledge of the past in general terms. Hence, it is an abstract aspect that is tightly related to a certain already existing truth. Eventually, magic realism uses such abstract concepts although they are accused of being unfaithful to share past knowledge that would definitely be transformed into action, since remembering is a way of doing things. The collective memories of the Cuban exodus, as a case in point, demonstrate the usefulness of memory and remembering of shared renderings of the past that bind them together. Therefore, the first wave of the

Cuban emigrants who had a relatively significant past events in their home country, use memories in rethinking the present and future of shattered identities.

Accordingly, magical realism's linguistic abilities in manifesting reality through memory, imagination, and dreaming, perform a significant success in escaping the portrayal of reality with realism. The characteristics of memory narratives, for instance, coincide with the devices magical realism deploys to "express the real that is beyond language", "to disrupt fixed categories of truth, reality and history", and to "create a space beyond authoritative discourse where the unrepresentable can be expressed" (Bowers 77).

Regardless of the importance of memories in remembering the past, imagination is yet another vital factor in remembering and rethinking the bygone experiences. In this context, Suzanne Leonard underscores the usefulness of imagination as it is used as a means for evoking and bringing back the forgotten past happenings (181). The magical realist author, Toni Morrison, has emphasized this belief as she confirms the prominence of memory with the use of imagination. She writes, "Memory weighs heavily in what I write, in how I begin and what I find to be significant […] But memories and recollections won't give me total access to the unwritten interior life of these people. Only the act of the imagination can help me" (Qtd. In Leonard 181). In fact, memories constitute an essential part in the individuals' characters, identities, and psychologies; however, for transferring those memories in a fictional work, imagination is frequently needed, as it would add more value and versatility in terms of the meaning.

The frequent manipulations through the unpresentable motifs is a magical realist trait, which tend to create a dream space where certain social and psychological healings take place. Thus, dreaming is a fundamental key factor in translating reality to magic, the

fact that is obviously seen in the dream space that is described as an empty space, which is created to talk about the real history and the mythological realities. Correspondingly, Michel Foucault raised a debate about this imaginative space in his heterotopia, claiming that it is "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (qtd. In Leonard 189). Dreams are able to create spaces that are enable of compiling two opposite realities about people, places, and events like past and present, real and unreal, besides other juxtaposed and paradoxical facts.

In most magical realist novels, dreaming is the mediator between the social, cultural, or political realities, especially the blatantly bad ones, and the characters' own emotional states and the longing for reality. For others, however, dreams are the best portrayal of the past and the historical facts. As Leonard clarifies in this respect, "Dreaming has a manifold application: although it acts as a literary motif that advances the narrative of a fictional text, it also signifies a mode of history making by which characters are invited to make imaginative interventions into their own cultural pasts" (182).

For this reason, dealing with subjects that advance revisionary histories for some rectifications, or raise the politicized consciousness for recommending social adjustments are best represented in magical realism by the imaginative connections whether it be dreaming, imagining, or remembering. These imaginative connections, which are commonly used predominantly by the magical realists, have the literary and critical abilities to construe reality that most of the time entails uncertainty and fragmentation.

3.6 Conclusion

Eventually, the political knowledge is a quintessential part of examining and understanding the subsequent social reality. However, the genuine knowledge of the political or social matters could hardly be demonstrated in narrative, namely the truth that is inaccessible to the ordinary people. Notwithstanding, narrative remains the most influential mode of explanation as it proved its validity and veracity in many different fields. Yet, the use of a mode that combines reality and magic by prioritizing magical instances for highlighting specific critical realities seems to lose some aspects of the represented truth.

From this perspective, questioning the limits between fiction and reality is an essential step in exploring the very nature of reality under scrutiny, especially the kind of reality that treats ideological, historical, political or social issues. Hence, blurring the limits between fiction and reality, and between literary and historical narration is what characterizes the intertwining of magic realist treatments of socio-political and cultural concerns of a given people. Yet, this proves the utility and functionality of the use of imagination and dreaming, beside the distortion of eminent concepts of spacing and timing.

Due to its ability to go back and forth in time, and traverse across the logic and the extraordinary worlds, the duality of magical realism created a suitable atmosphere for alternative representations of history, politics, and society. Inevitably, magical realism proves its verity in demarcating the boundaries as a literary mode precisely of historiography, which tends to reshape what counts as history, politics, and knowledge. In this respect, the Cuban magical realist literature is a good example, as most magical

realists work continuously on developing a politicized awareness of the inaccuracies and falsification surrounding historical and political realities that caused a huge change in the Cuban society.

Accordingly, the nature of issues selected in the Cuban magical realist works is predominantly socio-political, as the main concern of the Cuban fictional writers is to focus on the dilemma of shattered selves and the political reality behind. The use of magical realism in such literary writings consolidates and promotes the possibility of intertwining magic with reality by imaginative interventions, dreaming as an escapist method, and the use of memory.

Chapter Four

Re-Writing Cuban Reality: The Dialectics of Change in García's *Dreaming in Cuban*

4.1 Introduction

García is one of the best late-twentieth-century Cuban-American writers who has chosen to accentuate her own experience and to give voice to the deeply rooted suffer of her people that is essentially caused by Cuba's political experience especially during and after the revolutionary era. For Cristina and her family, life of exile was the optimum alternative after the establishment of Fidel Castro's government that caused a state of political and social turmoil. In her works, García's variant narrative voices tried to represent the reality of the Cuban life from a new perspective that challenges the reader to understand the reality of Cubans and the Cuban-American community that was marked by historical disruptions of the 1959 revolution.

In *Dreaming in Cuban,* the conception of hybridity plays a crucial role in creating hyphenated identities torn between two different cultures in two different geographical spaces, seeking a reconciliation that would heal their inner states. For that matter, García borrowed the stylistic qualities of magical realism and moved beyond aesthetics for an in-depth and rigorous treatment of what could the Cuban political changes bring to its people both mentally and psychologically in order to have a thorough understanding of the left behind Cubans and the exilic Cuban story. Besides the quest for identity and the creation of new selves, the novel is a good depiction of the Cuban exilic experience. The character Pilar plainly embodies the migratory theme and the plight of belonging throughout the novel, which by means led to the creation of an identity that has been categorized as culturally in-between and, therefore, able of transcending all obstacles and communicating with Celia who belongs to a different generation by moving psychologically between Cuba and the Unites States.

Re-Writing Cuban Reality: The Dialectics of Change in García's *Dreaming in Cuban*

The present chapter seeks to examine the Cubans' and the Cuban-Americans' newly adapted social status in response to their government through a deep and thorough scrutiny of García's *Dreaming in Cuban*. It will be necessary to dissect the core political beliefs of the Cubans both in the island and the U.S as embodied in the novel through a generational account of a two main oppositional views that have ultimately led to shattered selves. It is easy to notice that García constructs the new Cuban reality by a deconstruction of the Cuban history that has long been perceived as imposed and dictated over her people.

A further analysis of the symbolic magic that García used for stressing and underpinning the different chosen socio-political orientations and life-changing tenets in response to the revolution is of a vital importance. In this case, we will study three generational social ideologies and their attitudes towards the confusing period of change that was initiated primarily by Castro's regime. The geopolitics of the Cuban people who chose to stay loyal to their mother country, especially the first generation as represented by Celia Del Pino together with the one of the Cuban diaspora that is reflected in Celia's daughters Lourdes and Felicia are the essential constructs of the Cuban history. Yet, delving into the Cuban magic that García favoured over the monotonic and tedious sameness in stating historical facts is the main aim of the present part of the work.

Re-Writing Cuban Reality: The Dialectics of Change in García's *Dreaming in Cuban*

4.2 Politically Divided Selves of a Transgenerational Saga

The case of *el exilio* suits Steven Salaita and Edmund Ghareeb's idea of "split Vision"[46] stuck in between the past and the present, reality and falsified truth. Against the grain of feeling wholly and overwhelmingly rooted in the place of origin, the exiles are constantly in a state of moving back and forth in time and place, ending up with the creation of a third space.

Correspondingly, *Dreaming in Cuban* treats the subject of exile and other issues that have a direct connection to the experience of emigration, such as identity, the question of belonging and space, memories and imagination, besides the socio-political life of the Cubans. Yet, that what is best described in the words of Susan Lanser that, "in relation to referential context that is simultaneously linguistic, literary, historical, biographical, social, and political" (614). Moreover, the representation of all those themes were mainly embodied in Pilar, the protagonist of the novel who as the author herself, was born in Havana in 1958, and moved and grew up in the US. According to Isabel Álvarez Borland, though the story has been told by three different generations, but Pilar's plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the exile life of Cuban-born children. He extends:

> In the narrative, the author examines three important dimensions of Cuban exile: the story of the Cubans who remained in Cuba (exemplified in the book by abuela Celia and tía Felicia), the story of the Cuban exiles who came to America in the 1960s (the story of Lourdes, Pilar's mother), and, finally, the story of the children of exile (that is, Pilar's story). (137)

[46]- Ghareeb, Edmund, American-Arab Affairs Council. *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media.* American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983. Edmund's book is three books in one that treats the issue of the American public opinion about Arabs, and the media role in fostering negative thoughts about Islam. Edmund's idea, in this respect, aligns with the Cubans' racial status when reaching the United States, as they hold the same split vision.

As Álvarez Borland portrays here, the novel chronicles aspects of the Cuban diaspora from four different perspectives of four *Cubanas* as they went through political and social vicissitudes during the years of the revolution and exile, which gave birth to a strong relationship with their national heritage and culture. Thus, García's aim in this work is to draw a picture of a typical Cuban family's attitudes towards their country, and their divided identities by politics and geography.

4.2.1 Celia's Intense Cubaness Experience

The family story of Del Pino is typically a story of a Cuban family that was obliged to split up due to the political changes that took shape during and after the Cuban Revolution. The three generations demonstrate their bitter divisions over the revolution. Celia Del Pino, the matriarchal grandmother, is a loyal Cuban patriot who is in favour of Fidel Castro's revolution and strongly believes in his doctrine. Undoubtedly, Celia is "a paradigm of those who remained in Cuba and support the Castro government. Of humble origins, Celia was raised without her parents, and, like the Cuban leader, she is married to the revolution" (Luis 217).

Yet, her husband Jorge Del Pino, was obliged to travel to the United States, but for health problems, seeking medical attention. After his death, Celia married to the revolution, the fact that led to a disagreement with her two daughters Felicia and Lourdes who opposed the idea. Thus, Felicia becomes at a certain point deranged and tried to commit suicide before being forced to join the rebellion, the fact that she did not accept, "Felicia tries to shake off her doubts, but all she sees is a country living on slogans and agitation, a people always on the brink of war. She scorns the militant words blaring on billboards everywhere" (García, "Dreaming" 106). Like Felicia, Lourdes does not hold

any of the revolution beliefs. However, she immigrates to the United States and wants to adopt the American lifestyle as she "becomes an active anti-Communist and an astute businesswoman, determined to live the American Dream" (Luis 217).

Unlike the two daughters, Celia's son Javier was at her side. The son that Celia wanted to have, left her because he was not able to show his emotions and attitudes towards the revolution. Therefore, the only person who shared Celia's enthusiasm for El Líder did not stay with her, instead he ran away to Europe. Javier was almost thirteen when the revolution triumphed. Those first years were difficult, not because of the hardships or the rationing that Celia knew were necessary to redistribute the country's wealth, but because Celia and Javier had to mute their enthusiasm for El Líder. Her husband would not tolerate praise of the revolution in his home. (Luis 118)

Pilar, Lourdes' only daughter, represents the third generation in the novel. Unlike her mother, Pilar had a strong connection to her grandmother Abuela Celia and a clear attachment to Cuba, the fact that created an unhealthy relation with her mother. Pilar left the nation with her mother when she was a child. Notwithstanding, she kept in contact with her beloved grandmother in her imagination and dreams claiming, "I hear her speaking to me at night, just before I fall asleep. She tells me stories about her life and what the sea was like that day." (García, "Dreaming" 29)

The Cubans' blind love for their leader Castro is extensively portrayed in the main character Celia. She strongly believes in the revolution and works as a night watcher, sugarcane cutter, besides other works that provide her with a sense of loyalty to her country and leader. Celia went further than this by her continuous focus on the revolution's merits; she contends, "No one is starving or denied medical care, no one sleeps in the streets, everyone works who wants to work" (García, "Dreaming" 117). It is

quite clear that Celia perceives Castro's era as the golden time, and all that is therein. However, her strong approval to the government worked neither for her nor for her family.

Her commitment to El Lider, besides her devoted political beliefs extend the revolution's merits, and what she could personally get from joining the cause of that revolution. This dedicated intention accentuates even her existence. This makes her believe that she has a higher purpose in life of being a good participant of the Cuban social experiment. Lourdes and Felicia, however, favoured the fulfilment of their own ambitions, and the completion of their own reality, by upholding their claim of personal success elsewhere. Felicia rebels, "we're *dying* of security" she moans when Celia tries to point out the revolution's merits…If only Felicia could take an interest in the revolution, Celia believes, it would give her a higher purpose, a chance to participate in something larger than herself" (García, "Dreaming" 117). In this passage, we remark that Celia is not only convinced of her socio-political adherence, but she cannot understand how her own daughters made up their minds and betrayed their mother and their country.

For Celia, the daughters are "now desolate, deaf, and blind to the world, to each other, to her" (117). At this level, we can also notice a search for identity provoked by a tense ideological struggle between the loyal Cuban mother and the North American exiled daughters. Mindful of recognizing both the Cuban and American identity, García did not lean towards either one as she went through an experience that ended up with bifurcated identity, something in between Cuban and American.

At first glance, we may assert that García is intentionally distorting history and political reality to fit her opinion of Castro's presidency, the fact that is outright in her characters Lourdes and Felicia. Their mother, on the contrary, is the main character to

disapprove our assumption. In this case, Celia's experience fits perfectly Paul Connerton's argument in his book *How Societies Remember*. Connerton advances the importance of the individual memory that cannot be detached from the social memory, which by means depends on their past and the recollected knowledge of it. He affirms that, "our experience of present very largely depends on our knowledge of the past" (02). This is typically the case for Celia who can relate coherently to past knowledge that clearly shapes her present.

4.2.2 Hyphenated-American Identity and Identities-in-the-making

In spite of Celia's overt allegiances to the Cuban past that is conveyed and sustained by her ritual performances, she is a model of a Cuban-Cuban woman who could maintain her sincerity and faithfulness to her country and to her own self. Conversely, her children could not live the peace of mind that their mother took advantage of, as well as their father to a certain extent. All of Lourdes, Felicia, and Javier struggled to figure out which place suits their needs and could fulfil their dreams as Cuba failed to do so. Yet, by leaving their place of birth and their parents, things became more complicated for their parents especially the mother who recurrently feels guilty of uncontrollable authority and for their selves as they belonged to neither spaces. In her article *Hyphenated Identities,* Veronica Popescu explains the hard mental and psychic state of the Cuban-Americans who suffer the shuttered identities,

> Children of Cuban-Cubans feel they have a duty towards their parents' culture, which they experienced in their families through stories and nostalgic recollections, and, on the other hand, to the culture in which they function as adults, the U.S. cultural environment in which their education and professional lives have taken shape. In the particular case of Cuban-Americans, the conflict between these two cultures is further complicated

> by history and politics more than in the case of any other Latino community. (156)

Indeed, the birth of a Cuban-American minority in the U.S was due in good part to historical truth and political conflict that has deeply affected them in a myriad of ways. Regardless of what they have witnessed from the revolution and what could bring with it from social divisions, the Cuban-American community feel rooted to their island and feel obliged to go back in time to remember their shared and unforgettable past. For that matter, the Cubans who chose to leave Cuba are constantly dreaming and longing for better circumstances so that they can revive the old days of a shared dream-like reality by returning to a liberated Cuba. Therefore, as Popescu tries to clarify, this category of deliberate isolated diaspora is no more Cuban-American minority with a hyphen. They are instead Cuban Americans as they could fulfil themselves and could achieve their educational and professional goals in the United States; at the same time, they want to restore their past and move to the island where they do really belong.

As opposed to Celia's unicultural and Cuban-Cuban identity, and the bicultural Cuban American women of the same generation, Lourdes is a clear opposite to the archetypal Cubanas whose commitments to the country modelled their character and shaped their lives. For Lourdes, contrastively, Cuba could only perceived as the main source of her psychological disturbances, suffering, dishonesty, and cruelty. In fact, the revolution left transparent impact on Lourdes as she was raped by revolutionists for her disapproval of what would the revolution bring about to its people and country. Shortly after, when the Cubans were busy heading the revolt, Lourdes together with her husband where heading northwards as far as they could reach, in attempt to escape the Cuban nightmare. García describes this decision and experience:

> Lourdes considers herself lucky. Immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful. Unlike her husband, she welcomes her adopted language, its possibilities for reinvention. She wants no part of Cuba, no part of its wretched carnival floats cracking with lies, no part of Cuba at all, which Lourdes claims never possessed her. ("Dreaming" 73)

The couple reached New York, unlike their counterparts who generally choose Miami as the nearest place to the island. By doing so, they share good intentions of their readiness to go back to their homeland as soon as the revolution would stop and things would get better. Again, unlike many Cubans of her generation, Lourdes could structure her life and shape her identity in New York. She established new beliefs that would permit a new citizenship to take over.

As a mother, Lourdes could not treat Pilar well as she was not taught how to be a good mother. By the same token, Celia who is an orphaned from an early age showed strong feelings and a remarkable devotion to political matters over caring for her children; "Celia makes a decision. Ten years or twenty, whatever she has left, she will devote to El Lider, give herself to his revolution" ("Dreaming" 44). The lack of love and deep warm feelings created a state of coldness and superficiality, which by means led the main characters to act accordingly.

Celia's relationship to her other daughter Felicia and son Javier is not that stressed and present throughout the novel. Their relationship is again cold and superficial as the son Javier moves away to Czechoslovakia and gets married. Wherein his marriage ends, he returns home and dies of cancer. The second daughter Felicia, whose opposition to the Cuban government coincides with the Cuban Missile Crisis[47] is a bit different from her

[47]- García is purposefully recording the eminent birthdates of the main characters with crucially political and historical events. Pilar, as mentioned before, was born at the eve of the revolution. On this point, I can assume that both characters' birthdays are a mere projection of their perception and reaction towards the Cuban politics.

sister Lourdes. Evidently, Felicia suffers from a mental disability, as she seems to develop a chronic forgetfulness, an amnesia, which was able to imprison her thoughts in the revolutionary era. She spent the rest of her life infected by an abuser husband with syphilis, and trapped in dysfunctional relationships. We could find some similarities between the two daughters, as both feel distant to their mother and from their culture. They are marginal to both the old and the new worlds, and are fully part of neither of them." As they feel belonging to neither places they are in a regular process of proving themselves right, trying to create a third space that exists in their minds only. Gloria Anzaldua comes to explain that mental space that she calls "borderline", where the hyphenated identities like Lourdes and Felicia create a "tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" that results in "mixture of confusion, ambiguity, uncertainty, denial, anguish, and/or paradoxical love/hate feelings toward things Cuba (and/or America)" (Qtd. In Popescu 157).

Popescu describes Felicia as "a misfit in the new social order, who slides into madness and takes refuges in Santería" (162). Eventually, Felicia could find peace only in Santería[48], the religious rituals that provide her with a little solace and keep her attached to the Cuban beliefs and social values. She recurrently visits *La Madrina* seeking inner relief that could only be fulfilled through observing and being convinced about the weird practices of Santería,

> "Hermania has told us of your dystopia." La Madrina is fond of melodious words, although she doesn't always know what they mean. She places a hand heavily ringed with ivory and bezoar stones on Felicia's shoulder and

[48]- The new social order is affected by Catholicism, the religion that is believed to be the Whiteman's ruling class. The Cubans, however, could find the spiritual solace by practicing their ancestors' Santería that is one of the most critical aspects of their Cuban identity. As Clark comes to explain that the Santería, "Developed by the descendants of slaves, Santería became, and remains, the primary religion of the mestizo and black working class Cubans". For more ideas about the Cuban Santería, check Clark, M. A. *Santería: Correcting the myths and uncovering the realities of a growing religion*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. (2007).

> motions toward the *santero*. "He has travelled many hours from the south, from the mangroves, to be with us, to cleanse you of your infelicities. He will bring you and your father peace, peace you never knew while he lived on this earth. (García, "Dreaming" 14)

In a broader scope, the Cubans' practices and beliefs of Santería have intensely been manifested in pre and post-revolutionary Cuba. Felicia, hence, comes to portray those who selected rituality and sacrifices for soothing their corrupted and tortured souls. However, things are different for the new generation of Felicia's daughters Luz and Milagro who are more of their grandmother's love and devotion to the revolution, yet they are against their mother's cold feelings towards the Cuban case. The two daughters are the future hope of a more controlled Cuba.

4.2.3 The Reconciliation of Pilar's Conflicting Cultural Identities

Pilar, who is García's alter ego and the granddaughter of the Del Pino family, left Cuba at a very young age but maintains a strong spiritual connection to the country. She becomes an involuntarily exile who dwells a place that dragged her into oblivion between Cuba and the United States, the matter that ended up with an identity crisis as she constantly feels trapped in-between her establish ancestral kinship and her present torn apart familial relationship. Her intercultural identity is a mere result of a forced identity and an identity that is under identification, but Pilar needed to choose one identity and deny the other, and ultimately changing the way she identifies herself and comes to terms with her shared self. Therefore, more than anything else, Pilar wants to know about her roots, and her grandmother that would help her to figure things out in order to feel at home again.

Pilar is unquestionably attached to the revolution; she "was born eleven days after *El Lider* rode in triumph to Havana. Pilar slipped out like a tadpole, dark, hairless, and eager for light" (García, "Dreaming" 24). In this passage, Pilar is compared to the birth of the revolution that happened quickly and desirously. Simultaneously, the girl is an embodiment of the revolutionary new thoughts that made a deep change within and without the Cuban society. For Pilar's mother, the revolution did not bring any good neither to Cuba nor to its people, thus she chose not to leave the country only, but she wanted to go as farther as she possibly can, "I want to go where it's cold" Lourdes told her husband" (69). For Pilar, however, things are different since she left Cuba at a very young age, but she feels deeply attached to her grandmother and nostalgic to Cuba, the place where she belongs.

The young girl is noticeably representing the ABCs who are the American-Born Cubans or the CBAs who are the Cuban-Bred Americans as Pérez Firmat categorizes them. The two categorizations that refer to the same generation could only know about their country through stories told to them, they were in Perez Firmat's words "children at the time of migration, but grew into adults in the United States. They feel fully comfortable in neither culture but are able to circulate effectively in both. Unlike their parents, who will never be North Americans, they will never be Cubans." (Qtd. In Popescu 157). This generation that Pilar belongs to are eventually unicultural, with just one culture, they are similar to their grandparents who were born, raised, and spent the rest of their lives in Cuba. Yet, what they miss is the disconformity to the North American culture, since they know that it is not their motherland and were rather obliged to move with their parents. In this case, Pilar rejects the American values that she has long lived with; instead, she is forced to cope with, she says, "Even though I've been living in

Brooklyn all my life, it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out. If only I could see Abuela Celia again, I'd know where I belong" (García, "Dreaming" 58).

Although the revolution and the parents' decision have deprived Pilar of Cuba and her *abuela*, she still understands her grandmother's political orientation, and even shares many of her beliefs, but could not understand how such beliefs could separate her from both her mother and grandmother at the same time. This situation worsen things for Pilar who started questioning her identity and belonging, after being taken away from the island and her grandmother. These facts pushed Pilar to travel to Cuba again in search of who she is, and where she belongs.

As the novel's title suggests, Pilar unceasingly dreams in Cuban as the only means through which she could get the connection to her memories of her homeland and beloved grandmother. This mental travel from Cuba to the United States gives a seemingly good account to the reality that is interwoven with magic through the constant dreaming and the telepathic conversations with her beloved grandmother. In Suzanne Leonard's terms (qtd. In Collado 06), "Dreaming, aided by the power of imagination, has contributed to the fictionalization of the island as a paradise-like place where the reconciliation or spiritual communion with herself and her past would finally materialize". Otherwise, Pilar travels to the island spiritually, through the *Santería*, a strong link to the cultural background of the island and a component of her hybrid transcultural identity. On the other hand, dreams were not sufficient and did not fulfil her thirst as such, until she processes the physical return to the island.

Similar to her counterparts who underwent the same experience, Pilar returns home in attempt to cure her inner wounds, and to reconstruct her fragmented self that would,

"shift from a portrayal of memories in Cuba to a depiction of the alterations in memory caused by the Cuban revolution and the Cuban diaspora" (Collado 05). Largely, the told stories of her family about Cuba together with the American environment have greatly affected Pilar's memories and her diverse recollections. In the same vein, Paul Connerton advances the importance of the social and individual memory that is essentially the product of a recollected knowledge of the past, which is most often supported by ritual performances, and that what would consequently lead to a performative memory. Correspondingly, the performative memory, as Connerton explains, includes all the social interactions that are at the core of identity creation and maintenance (05). Ultimately, we can assume that Pilar reached the point where she was obliged to create her own memories as she could not relate to her native social performativity. However, she started creating notions of herself as she was able and ready to relate to her environment, what she has been told by her family, and what she could remember.

Eventually, the various means with which Pilar wants to feel reconnected to her roots underscore her intercultural hybridity as a completely liberating and empowering component of her identity. Hence, the reconciliation is present in her longing for a return to Cuba that is demonstrated in the novel with unconscious acts as well as conscious ones, when she felt a driving force to visit Cuba in order to negotiate her past and present. Pilar was, finally, able to decide about the two identities the one of origin and the other one of destination through an oscillation between her multiple selves that are essentially divided by the Cuban political issues.

Re-Writing Cuban Reality: The Dialectics of Change in García's *Dreaming in Cuban*

4.3 The Political Events in Cuba as a Subtext in *Dreaming in Cuban*

It is without a shadow of doubt that the main scope of *Dreaming in Cuban* is historical par excellence as it depends on a series of events that covered the period from 1972 to 1980, pointing at particular crucial political events in the Cuban Revolution. As already mentioned earlier, García's narrative is a clear depiction of different Cuban lives namely of refugees who sought political asylum after Castro's take over in 1959. By focusing on the issue of exile, the narrative discloses the complex layers of the Cuban society, history, politics, and culture both on the island and in the United States. Correspondingly, García records the recent stage of the fragmentation of the Cuban family that has recently been shattered between its past and present, its old place and the new one, between reality and illusion. Hence, García's characters also want to figure out about their own Cuban realities.

A good part of the novel takes place in Cuba, since it is the place of all characters' birth, and some others' present life and future. Conforming to the opening and closing scenes of the novel, García emphasizes the role played by the place of birth in creating the suitable emotions as accentuated by Celia who is a paradigm of obedience and faithfulness. When the story opens, Celia del Pino is in a good position that enables her to have a clear and direct vision up to the horizon. She carefully guards the northern coast of Cuba from any kind of threat that could bring harm to her beloved country.

The story commences with a close description of Celia who is "equipped with binoculars and wearing her best housedress and drop pearl earrings, sits in her wicker swing guarding the north coast of Cuba. Square by square, she searches the night skies for adversaries then scrutinizes the ocean …. No sign of *gusano* traitors. Celia is honoured" (García, "Dreaming" 03). As reported in the very beginning, Celia is an

untiring advocate of Cuba's protection, though no one asked her to do so but she feels a driving force for safeguarding the northern Cuban coast. Her devotion and vigilance picture the protective operations that Cuba adopted as a defensive process since the 1961 Bay of Pigs[49] invasion up to the 1970s. In this respect, Celia is oftentimes placed on alert and watchful for possible danger, "from her porch, Celia could spot another Bay of Pigs invasion before it happened" (03).

It is easy to spot Celia's nativity and innocence in striving for protecting her beloved country. By a careful and meticulous shore guarding, Celia is personifying the extensively adopted strategies for defensiveness that have existed in Cuba since the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. However, this failed military invasion of Cuba, which aimed at eliminating Castro's power, was not the first invasion by the white man. This endeavour was not the subsequent result of the island's introduction of a counter-revolutionary protective method, but it went further back to the first voyages of Christopher Columbus that set the scene for many other antecedent attempts at invading the Caribbean. "Celia returns to her post and adjusts the binoculars… there are three fishing boats in the distance—the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*" (04). In this passage, García is using a good reference to colonialism and its long lasting effects on the Cubans who stayed hunted with the Spanish colonial epoch. After what Celia could capture in the horizon of Cuba's northern coast, no physical presence approaches the shores but her deceased husband's spirit that was a result of her own illusions and figments of imagination. Celia's first love relationship is another clear portrayal of the Spanish existence in the lives of the Cubans. Gustavo Sierra de Armas left Celia after a love affair that hunted her memories.

[49]- Named after the southern coast of Cuba the Playa Girón, invasión de playa Girón, the invasion of the Bay of Pigs marked the start of the Cuban government's concern of the surrounding threat, as a group of CIA-financed and trained Cuban refugees tried to attack the Cuban shores. Celia Del Pino, in this context, represents the Cuban citizenry that stands against any resistance to the revolution's leader.

It is also important to shed some light on the closure that resembles to a good extent the opening. The delineation of the scene has also been devoted to Celia's overwhelming feelings of confusion and despair as she chooses to be swallowed by the darkness of the same ocean that she is in charge of watching. "It occurs to Celia that she has never been farther than a hundred yards off the coast of Cuba…. Celia steps into the ocean and imagines she's a soldier on a mission- for the moon, or the palms, or El Lider" (243). Serving the country or *El Líder Maximo* is a top priority for Celia all throughout the novel. However, guarding the coast is not the only thing that she serves the country with, she extends this to an enduring work that for her would alter change and prosperity to Cuba.

Continuing on this line, Celia del Pino is not the mere figure in the novel to mirror her country's political reality. On this account, the two preceding generations of women, namely Celia's daughters and granddaughter, are of a primary importance for a full depiction of the Cuban political scene during the revolution. For this reason, the sentiments for and against certain political beliefs are well portrayed through a thorough involvement of the three generations of women.

The Cuban Revolution is a crucial event in the Cuban history and a critical subtext for *Dreaming.* The beginning of the revolution is starkly illustrated by the birth of Pilar, who was born on 11 January 1959. "[H]er daughter was born eleven days after El Líder rode in triumph to Havana. García goes on by describing Pilar's birth that "slipped out like a tadpole, dark, hairless, and eager for light" (24).

A decade after the triumph of the revolution, a wave of radical political alterations had swept the island. In 1970, Cuba underwent one of the most complex and unifying events in the history of the country as the Cuban government had taken new precautions. Fidel Castro mobilized an enormous number of resources and workforce for sugar to grow

and sugarcane to cut campaign. Under the slogan *Azúcar para Crecer*, The entire country was mobilized for the campaign and all Cubans were involved including those who had no experience in cutting cane.[50] Unfortunately, the Cubans' efforts doomed to failure, as the country's amount of sugar production did not reach the underscored goal.

4.3.1 Cuban Women and El Líder

It is of a vital importance to talk about the Cuban feminist power that played a crucial role in the Cuban revolution. The Cuban women during the revolutionary era showed an unprecedented love and devotion to Cuba and most importantly to Fidel Castro who was perceived as an archetype of patriotism[51]. In the revolutionary Cuba, the socio-political status quo for the Cuban women was very different from that of the pre- and post-revolutionary eras during which the Cuban woman's position in society was referred to whether as a virgin or as a prostitute. However, during the years of the revolution, the feminist power sought radical change that was waving in the horizon. Cuban women wanted to change the long-standing feminine archetypes by being more active and productive in politics that has been for a long time monopolized by masculinity. On this point, the feminist movement that emerged in the late 1960s and continued into the 1980s acted as a catalyst for radical change.

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[50]- Historically speaking, Cuba's economy was heavily depending on the sugar production and exportation. Cubans from all walks of life took part in the sugarcane project for becoming main prosperous sugar-producing island in the Caribbean. Despite all their efforts, the country could not reach their leader's underscored goal, the fact that disappointed and eventually upset the people and their government.

[51]- Maria Salome Campanioni from Radio Cubana explains that remarkable relationship between Cuban women and their leader when she writes in her article *Mujeres Cubanas* (2010) "Esas son nuestras mujeres cubanas, grandes damas que con su enorme sonrisa han llevado en su mochila medio siglo de amor y entrega a Fidel, a la Revolución, y a la Patria". "Those are our Cuban women, great ladies who with their huge smile have taken in their backpacks half a century of love and dedication to Fidel, to the Revolution, and to the Motherland". (qtd. In Butler 129)

It is worth looking closer at the Cuban feminine desire and sexuality that overwhelmed and characterized their relation to the revolution, and most importantly to their leader. As corollary, The Cuban women have symbolically viewed Fidel as the single and good-looking man, who after his divorce to his great love, was married to Cuba[52]. Ultimately, a body of literary narratives have been produced praising his remarkable love to Cuba. In this respect, Butler quotes the Cuban exile Mirta Ojito's related idea in her 2005 memoir where she explains the extent to which the Cuban people were unwillingly obliged to obey and love their leader due to his serious and deep feeling for Cuba. She extends, "In the Cuba of the 1970s, even children knew that no loyalty was more important than that owed to Fidel Castro and the Revolution…. [I]n school we were made to memorize slogans such as 'Fidel es mi papá y Cuba es mi mamá'" (130). For Cubannas conversely, Castro was not there father but there lover.

This idea leads us to another critical point about gender dilemma in a society that was patriarch par excellence. It was not until Castro's arrival that the Cuban women were getting ready for a new era of gender equality. Indeed, the start of the Cuban revolution gave hope for the increasingly and sizable number of women within the women's liberation movement. They needed an authoritative and determining power that would strike the balance of sexual politics that was suffering the great amount of power given to men by men.

Shedding some light on Castro's life with women would explicate the essence and nature of his relationship with Cuban women in general terms. Essentially, Castro was not the kind of men who would take advantage of is influential and weighty position in

[52]- Other sources, like *Castro's One True Love* By Graham Keeley assure that Castro have had a lot of affairs and fathered four other children. Keeley reports, "Mr Castro, 80, whose love life is almost a state secret in Cuba, has acknowledged having four girlfriends - Naty Revuelta, Maria Laborde, Celia Sanchez Manduley and Dalia Soto."

order to seduce women and have many affairs. All what is said about him in that concern is that he loved and married only one woman Dalia del Soto, with whom he has five sons. In *dreaming in Cuban,* Felicia gives a succinct description to Fidel's personal life,

> They say his first wife, his one great love, betrayed him while he was imprisoned on the Isle of Pines, after his ill-fated attack on the Moncada barracks. She accepted money from the government, the government he was trying to overthrow. El Lider never forgave her, and they divorced. There's been another woman in his life since his days in these very mountains, but everyone knows she's only a companion---a mother, a sister, not a true lover. El Lider, it seems, saves his most ardent passions for the revolution. (110)

Felicia here suspects her mother's strange love to *El Lider* who should not be given that amount of importance and caring, as Felicia doubts his attitudes and thinks, "El Lider is just a common tyrant". Celia, on the other hand, seems worshiping him, and her fidelity is often described in erotic terms the matter that led her daughter, who is complaining about her deteriorating relation with her mother due to Castro, doubts the unnatural love that for her must be sexually driven. Ultimately, Felicia's belief was confirmed by Castro's framed photograph that was hanged by Celia's bed, instead of her father's photograph.

From the outset of the novel, Celia's commitment to Castro is made clear as García accentuates the different ways and settings for expressing Celia's love to him. Celia Del Pino could also be compared to Celia Sanchez, the second woman who has been in Fidel's life as both were good servants to Castro and to the revolution. Ever since, Fidel was viewed as the lonely man who devoted his love and life to his country. Again, the real relationship that joined Fidel and Celia Sanchez was, nonetheless, of a more close friendship than any other thing. Similarly, Celia's devotion to Castro at the end of the

novel turned to be a mere relationship as she lost belief in the revolution. This point is beautifully described by Andrea O'Reilly Herrera in her work *Women and the Revolution in Cristina García's "Dreaming in Cuban"*, where She explains, "Despite her passionate devotion, Celia eventually becomes dispirited and disenchanted once again; in consequence, she loses faith in the ideals of the Revolution" (76). Eventually, Celia's passion to Castro ended up just like her love to Gustavo and to her husband Jorge, which ultimately turned to be a mere illusion.

4.3.2 Cuban Gender Pattern and Sexual Politics

In referring to Cuban sexual politics, the Cuban men are distinguished by their sexual ability and vitality. Hence, they are driven by their sexual desires, which is in reality a weakness that women should bear. In the Cuban society, however, men's sexuality is what privileges and empowers their masculinity. Continuing on this line, Smith and Padula develop this phenomenon: "Men were perceived as impulsive and dominated by sexual drives, and it was women's duty to accept and forgive this moral weakness. Men were sexual, women spiritual" (qtd. In Butler 132).

Pursuant to scholars that treated the issue of the Cuban masculinity[53], sexuality is a crucial and a critical component for construing and understanding the Cuban society that is renowned for its masculine nature. Significantly, legends and myths enhanced and promoted to the Cuban male hypersexuality that eventually created a manly society filled

[53]- In their work *Masculinities in Cuba: Description and Analysis of a Case Study from a Gender Perspective*, all of Soura Formental Hernández, Iyamira Hernández Pita1, and Teresa Fernández de Juan shed the light on gender issue that most male Cubans were dissatisfy with and wanted to change although the Cuban society was masculine par excellence. Among the scholars who treated this subject is Suárez, J.C. who clarifies that, "despite living in a sexist culture that favors power of the male over the female, these stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, which constitute divisive patterns or paradigms, negatively affect both genders because they prevent discovery, development or expression of human qualities and values, without distinction of sex" (12). Hence, it is clear that both genders in Cuba suffered from the dilemma of gender inequality and being treated as sexed beings as their sexual culture dictates on them, and thus wanted to find a way for eradicating such negative draining beliefs from their lives.

with empowerment, self-confidence, and arrogance. This socially constructed pattern introduced and imposed a set of limitations and social segregation that Cuban women were forced to endure, as this imposed traditional gender pattern could successfully alter all of the historical, social, economic, class, cultural, and religious conditions in Cuba.

This set of alterations gave rise to a noticeable imbalance between the two genders in the Cuban society. In *Dreaming*, almost all of the female characters experienced impermanent or failed relationships with men. Arguably, Isabel Alvarez-Borland's discussion about Celia and Felicia in that respect is similar to nearly all women in the novel. She further elucidates, "As women, Celia and Felicia have been victimized by their men; as Cubans they have not been served well by their history. Their poverty, their unhappy childhood, and their lonely existence are indirectly tied to events which have rendered them powerless" (Qtd. In O'Reilly Herrera 75)[54] . In the same context, one can ensure that the Cuban women, especially during the years of the revolution, went through considerable hardships that the Cuban man was in good part responsible of.

In contrast to the Cuban men, Fidel Castro models the Cuban masculinity that is different from the widely spread pattern. Fidel in reality portrays a new and virtuous sexuality that metaphorically combines private passion and patriotic duty. Eventually, Castro's new and attractive sexuality made the Cuban women to be wholly engaged in Castro's revolution. Indeed, women engagement in the revolution is a blatant evidence of their rejection of the prevailed gender pattern that was dwelling the Cuban society for decades. Fidel's role as patriarch has been central to the construction of his masculinity as well as to the consolidation of his power the fact that advanced his case within a short

[54]- For similar ideas go to Rosario Ferre's *Review of Dreaming in Cuban by C. García*, Boston Sunday Globe 23 (Feb. 1992).

period and caused a wide support by almost all members of the Cuban community, especially women who hoped for the revolution to bring sexual equality.

From this perspective, women's social participation took a new diversion towards significant improvement and social achievements. As a result, Cuban women entered the political scene with such a creative force that proved them right, and proved to the whole community of what they were able of realising apart from the feminist pattern of being a wife and a mother merely. Their long-lived absence has been traced by feminist criticism that has observed this traditional exclusion of the feminist element from two essential domains of economy and politics (O'Reilly Herrera 76). In fact, addressing women's absence is crossing its threshold with one broad step that marked a new start of a rapid increase of female social participation in the Cuban society.

In light of this and throughout *Dreaming*, we can say that García tends to privilege the main female characters' individual experiences within the scope of gender and the political life. Through an open acknowledgement to the Cuban women's crucial role during the zealous revolution, Garcia wants to redress the core values of her society that was suffering a steady imbalance between both genders, and most importantly between women and history. In consonant with García's main idea of a dialectical relation between Cuban women and history, the novel tells the saga of three dominant female voices that essentially belong to different paces and different eras as it is told in a nonlinear fashion. The constant move between characters, places and times in the novel, gives a sense of contradiction as Andrea O'Reilly Herrera portrays in her close reading to the prevailing

subject of women and History[55], she writes,

> On one level, Garcia endows her female characters with Historical significance by weaving the overarching political themes of revolution, exile and betrayal through the lives of three generations of Cuban women. When approached from a different perspective, however, the novel offers a feminized Glissantianre-emplotment not only of the events of the Cuban Revolution, but of Cuba's relationship with the colonial powers that have dominated her since 1492, when Christopher Columbus established Spain's claim of possession over the island. In other words, Garcia presents a kind of Caribbean post-modern herstory, as it were, which is rooted in paradox and there by undermines and throws into "free orbit," to borrow Antonio Benitez Rojo's phrase, the very History which she feminizes and claims for her female characters. (71)

The Historical significance in García's work is so crucial for the understanding of women's position and role in the Cuban society through the different female characters. Hence, we can have a broader vision of the extent to which women in Cubawere passive or active in distracting, constructing or reconstructing their history, which is described by O'Reilly Herrera as a kind of "Caribbean post-modern herstory". That is to say, García's main aim is to accentuate a kind of history that would create an outlet for modern Cuban female history that is out of the Western arbitrary power and the Cuban tyrannical patriarchy.

One might add that the whole family of Del Pino is a microcosm of the Cuban family that is divided not only by the different political beliefs as a direct result of the

[55]- Throughout her article, *Women and the Revolution in Cristina Garcia's "Dreaming in Cuban"*, O'Reilly Herrera adopts Edward Glissant's central idea about using an upper case "H" for history. In his works, *Caribbean Discourse, selected Essays* (Charlottesville, VA: university of Virginia press, 1989), Glissant frequently puts the term history with a big "H" to refer to Western History, while he uses a small "h" to talk about Caribbean history written by Caribbean writers. Thus, History in *Dreaming in Cuban* is used to refer to the reconstructed Cuban past, a process that is accomplished by imagination, or to the Cuban past that is told by the Western philosophers and historian.

revolution, but it is also divided by social and cultural conventions, which led to diametrical opposition within the one family. With this in mind, the correlation between personal, historical, and political is so imposing throughout *Dreaming*, as almost every important private experience, does not lack a historical background or political context. This is exactly true when we pay a close reading to Celia's letters that intertwine the record of history by dates and events, "December 11, 1942… the Civil War came and went and now there are dictatorship in both our countries. Half the world is at war, worse than it's ever before", with her individual and most of the time intimate stories, "… I still love you, Gustavo, but it's a habitual love, a wound in the knee that predicts rain" (García, "Dreaming" 97).

Eventually, safe to say that the generational division is a metaphorical macrocosm of the fragmented selves that cannot seize talking and writing about their histories of different and paradoxical aspects, (Western vs. Cuban, personal vs. political, etc.). Arguably, this dialectical representation in the novel is a mere portrayal of the continuities and discontinuities in the history of the Cuban self that alters the idea of a linear history, which lost its unitary from the very start of the Cuban Revolution, or a bit earlier. The parallel between García's fictional female characters and her country's real political events are well established in her novel. Essentially, the magical power plays a critical role in connecting the different paradoxical realities mentioned earlier. In what concerns the depiction of political division and its overarching historical accounts, we can say that magical realism in *Dreaming* could successfully prove its credibility and capacity of describing different generational perspectives that have seemingly different positions about the revolution, besides some other important components of the narrative as the different spaces and places. This endows the female characters of the novel with historical

and political significance, together with a reinforcement to the unique experience of Cuban women.

4.4 Magic as an Escapist Politics for a Virtual Migration

In *Dreaming*, magic emerges as an overwhelming desire, which is emphasized by the exilic experience to reconnect with the authentic past by employing dreaming, memory, imagination, and nostalgia. This fictional enchanting operation is meant to recreate an alternative history, one that is personal and familial to parallel that of Cuba as a nation. For García, thence, there is a need of a reconciliation with her past for drawing definite borderlines between the two cultures. As the title suggests, García's *Dreaming in Cuban* and its labyrinth of journeys and migrations is so dependent on the use of magic that is incorporated by three main conceptions, which are dreams, and imagination, and memory.

One can argue that the psychological and the mental states of the privileged female characters in the novel play a crucial role in accentuating the magic that bridges the pervasive binary contradictions, which are vitally present in the display of different realities. This is so true when paying a close reading to the different portrayed places and the erratic movement of time that is in most cases so hard to distinguish or make appropriate connections between; besides the representation of the national Cuban and the American cultural dichotomy and the ambivalent feeling about the past and the present (Savin 63).

With this being said, the thematic and textual representation of dual realities throughout the novel is in good part ascribable to the author's personal experience. As per James Clifford, (qtd. In Savin), "The author views exile from an extraterritorial narrative perspective, one that allows her to place, displace and replace the characters on

the beleaguered map of the Caribbean. Their loss of territorial and cultural points of reference appears as the expression of divided subjectivities and of the demise of encompassing ideologies (62). Eventually, the undetermined space for García, whether it be geographical, historical, political, or cultural, creates enigma and ambiguity[56] to her story inasmuch as she managed to produce a magical description that delineates particular vital Cuban socio-political angles, as well as hybrid historical and cultural themes, which promote for a new form of Cuban cultural production.

In what concerns time, we can assert that the indefinite time framework is the major aspect of nonlinearity in the novel. However, what is of similar importance to time and its irregularity and unevenness, again with the use of magic that makes the process of disrupting possible, is the displacement of time to another place. *In Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan remarks that, "When the past is displaced, often to another location, the modern subject must travel to it, as it were. History becomes something to be established and managed through…forms of cultural production. Displacement, then, mediates the paradoxical relationship between time and space in modernity" (qtd. In Machado Saez 131). In this quotation, Kaplan has thoroughly and fully exhibit the equation of time and space that are essentially the main two ingredients with which magical realism managed to bring modern truth with its abnormalities into light.

The conflict-induced displacement is a central concept to the comprehension of spatial and temporal aspects in García's novel. Indeed, the forced displacement is a

[56]- Ambiguity is yet an important trait that is present in the characters' actions and beliefs throughout the novel. Celia's love for Gustavo depicted through the unsent letters is a good example of a weird love. Her daughter, however, shows a peculiar attitude towards ambiguity that she despises. "Lourdes abhors ambiguity" (García, "Dreaming" 65) and is firm and fixed on her thoughts and beliefs. Unlike her mother, Pilar underwent a long journey of questioning and wondering about the truth of her belonging as she has two paradoxical virtues, the one of her grandmother and the one of her mother. Eventually, the consequential ambiguity of belonging is the logical result of physical and psychological displacement as well as the political and cultural divisions.

fundamental part in the novel through which García generates a set of different emotional and psychological issues. Celia comes to explain the act of displacing and moving by separateness, when García describes Celia's psychological state of confusion, "Celia cannot decide which is worse, separation or death. Separation is familiar, too familiar, but Celia is uncertain she can reconcile it with permanence. Who could have predicted her life? What unknown covenants led her ultimately to this beach and this hour and this solitude?" (06). separation is too familiar to Celia, the same for the concepts of solitude and isolation, since she underwent different types of separation by all of her relatives and beloved ones.

It is noteworthy that García's literary identity is essentially determined by history of her country. This is quite clear as her narrative embodies the displacement and estrangement caused by exile as she tries to redeem a past that is marginal to her present. As Alvarez-Borlan maintains, the displaced Cuban American authors share this concern of an unresolved forced displacement, thus "this crisis originates in two basic issues which they share with other cultures in exile: how do they reconcile their past experiences in their country of birth with present experiences in their adopted country" (43). As a case in point, García was only two years old at the time of her departure, the matter that helped her like many other Cubans to shape her identity to comply with the new encountered situation of a hyphenated self. In *Dreaming*, García attempts to address and stress this pertinent and pivotal personal matter through a narrative production of a fictional self that relates to her own experience. In the novel, Pilar is a very accurate portrayal of Cuban exile to the United States since the 1960s. García here treats the different themes of exile through Pilar, the protagonist of the novel, who was also born in Havana in 1958 and

moved to the States exactly like the writer, when she was just a child and grew up in New York.

Pilar's role in the novel[57] brings to Crsitina diverse connections of her own exiled conditions as it is demonstrated by her own asserted marginal condition. Pilar, thence underwent typically identical experience of dislocation, exposure to two different cultures, and a positive participation in the reconstruction of a hybrid Cuban identity. All along the novel, Pilar seems to struggle with being uncertain of her identity that resulted in a chronic feeling of confusion and doubtfulness.

Pilar tries to come to terms with the conflicts that her parents have created and the new environment has imposed on her. Eventually, Pilar could not bear her mothers' steady beliefs and decisions of refusing to return to the motherland that she could retain nothing good about but agony and pain. Shortly after the opening of the novel, Pilar took a crucial decision, "That's it. My mind's made up. I'm going back to Cuba. I am fed up with everything around here" (García, "Dreaming" 25). At this point, Pilar is apparently so young to venture for leaving her parents to go to a place that she just heard about and never lived in. She carries on thinking of the best option to get her way to Cuba, "I take all my money out of the bank, $120, money earned saving away at my mother's bakery, and buy a one-way bus ticket to Miami. I figure if I just can get there, I'll be able to make my way to Cuba, maybe rent a boat or get a fisherman to take me." (26)

Since culture is all about the way we understand ourselves as individuals in a given society, and which by means would contribute in the formation of one's identity, Pilar's internal and external conflicts advanced one of the most essential and critical problems

[57]- As a protagonist, Pilar is a round character who narrates almost all of the novel's exilic experience form García's perspective and experience. Pilar's invitation to rethink the way in which life evolves in both cultures lies at the core of García's narrative.

of exile, which is hybridity. Evidently, the fusion and influence of the American culture that Pilar was raised in and the Cuban one that hunted her through her grandmother's marvellous tales could only find reconciliation through a long journey of search for identity truth. To find it, she needed to go back to Cuba.

Through Celia's extraordinary stories, the little girl could feel an intense presence of overwhelming feelings of belonging and nostalgia that ended up in enlarging Pilar's imagination. By means of memories that Celia unceasingly keeps transmitting in the form of dreams and imagination, Pilar could finally understand her past that would eventually shape her future. It was not until this point that García started using magic in translating Pilar's experience of confusion and shattered identity. The above mentioned period in her life, however, was just described as it was with no magic interferences. Consistent with the character's perception of reality, García took a good advantage of the reality transmitted by magic not only for beautifying language, but also for accentuating an already existing truth and underscoring its consequences that affect individuals and their communities.

4.5 García's Magic in Describing the Intense Cubaness Experience

As it has already been reviewed, almost all of the characters in *Dreaming* have a set of firm beliefs, and accordingly work and live to these faiths. Inevitably, magical realist elements play a pivotal role in addressing some critical issues in the Cuban society. In this regards, we should refer back to magical realism by closely examining the fundamental instances in the novel that García wants to draw our attention to. In re-addressing once again the functionality and employment of magical realism, E. Martin explains that,

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> Magical realism is a form of writing which allows, in a perfect way, to express ethnic words in a multicultural atmosphere, where opposite concepts are related, such as life and death or fact and fiction. The magic and the ordinary worlds coexist together in magical realism, characters admit magic as a common element of their everyday lives and consider it as something basic. It is that acceptance in which magical realism is really based, the fact that there is no logical explanation for magical events and they are a normal part of daily living, and it is also that what differentiates it from fantasy. (12)[58]

Martin has beautifully and accurately described magic of magical realism as a component of an ordinary world, which is not regarded by the characters as an external or odd. As it is already discussed in the theoretical part, magical realism, which fuses the natural and normal with the uncanny and peculiar powers, tends to get out of the mundane classic narrative by uncovering delicate and intricate issues. Additionally, magic in such narrative writings do not require explanation or an in-depth analysis as it is intentionally used as an integral part of the characters' daily life.

Following this line, Cristina García has successfully managed to make the circulation of magic and its repercussions throughout the book. On this detail, she has given the majority of the characters their share of magic in order to go even deeper in the treatment of the different fractures and fissures that her country and people were forced to endure. Evidently, the largest portion of magic goes to the predominant female characters in the novel, yet its employment by García in *Dreaming* differs from one character to another. There is no doubt that all of the big mother, the daughter and the granddaughter are a collection of dissimilar experiences through which the author wants

[58]- For more knowledge about magical realism, check Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd* Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1977.

to inscribe the Cuban past, present and future. This tendency of going beyond the self through the projection of different stories, which is essentially a new way of challenging the conventions of modernity, opens doors to a set of different issues of identity formation and reconstruction. In light of this, Charles Taylor advances the following critical idea,

> And so a turn inwards, to experience or subjectivity, didn't mean a turn to a self to be articulated, where this is understood as an alignment of nature and reason, or instinct and creative power on the contrary, the turn inward may take us beyond the self as usually understood, to a fragmentation of experience which calls our ordinary notions of identity into question … or beyond that to a new kind of unity, a new way of inhabiting time. (qtd. in Whitebrook 82-83)[59]

The turn inwards, as Taylor explains and as García comes to convey, is an absolute exploration and discovery of the self. It is through an internalized reflection that García's characters, especially characters with fractured selves, emerged to question their individual as well as collective identities. Hence, the use of dreams, memory, and imagination as the key magical concepts in the novel serve to fragment time and challenge reality with the embodiment of fresh experiences through a journey towards the inner self.

[59]- In Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, which is a recent philosophical work on the modern identity as a moral subject. Taylor has treated the issue of identity within its social frame. It is without a shadow of doubt that he has successfully managed to treat the problem of the self, which is in essence part of our moral values, through different sources that articulate and better explain the broader patterns of social life that would subsequently lead to the modelling of identity. For a good understanding of Taylor's Inwardness, check part II (111-199).

4.5.1 Lourdes' Traumatic Memories and the Sense of Belonging

When moving to Miami, the migrated Cubans wanted to preserve all what remind and connect them to their island. In fact, the sense of belonging was heightened and the major components of their identity were more stressed as they could only feel their Cubaness through constant use of the Spanish language, eating Cuban food, and staying abide to their beliefs and traditions. The sense of Cubaness in the novel is mostly promoted by Pilar who wants to return to Cuba that has not seen yet. In Miami, Pilar notices that: "All the streets in Coral Gables have Spanish names-Segovia, Ponce de Leon, Alhambra -as if they'd been expecting all the Cubans who would eventually live here… Now it's one of the ritzy neighbourhoods of Miami, with huge Spanish colonial houses and avenues of shade trees" (García, "Dreaming" 60). For her, Miami resembles her country to a good extent, the fact that makes it a good place to live in. In spite of her young age, she could draw accurate comparisons between the two places, the same architecture and the Spanish names that the venues of Miami took.

Besides those who longed for the reconstruction of their identities that were struggling the in-betweens of the two cultures, other Cubans were just trapped into exile and were convinced that they could never go back to Cuba. Álvarez Borderland appears in this context to clarify that, "Cubans who could not agree with the new demands of the Castro regime left Cuba for the United States and other continents, although they often did not realize that they were leaving their homeland for permanent exile" (05). As a matter of fact, this Cuban diaspora was either obliged to stay in the United States and to unwillingly adopt its mainstream culture, or to stay for good and to never return to Cuba because they are traumatised.

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As demonstrated in *Dreaming*, Celia's two daughters embody the typical Cubans who adapt to North America. It is certainly true that Felicia and Lourdes are a good representation of the second Cuban generation that, in general terms, left Cuba with a full conviction of the inconvenience and the impossibility of living in their homeland where they felt strange, unstable and disconnected to their roots. In this line, all of "Lourdes and Felicia and Javier are middle-aged now and desolate, deaf and blind to the world, to each other, to her. There is no solace among them, only a past infected with disillusion" (García, "Dreaming" 117). Yet, as the one could notice that, the two characters could not deploy imagination or dreams as psychological techniques for wishing for a better future in Cuba but only for escaping the traumatic past. Notwithstanding, magical realism is present in translating the characters' inner thoughts and wishes in a form of memories that helped bringing back the past experiences that were the essence of the Cuban reality, and are the mere elements that could be used to record history and its psychological outcomes.

Lourdes' memory, in this respect, is an essential tool for demonstrating the repercussions of hardships encountered from birth, as a way for García to underscore the negative side of the revolution and its consequences. In the absence of her mother's love, Lourdes appears as daddy's girl who was named and raised by him, he "named their daughter Lourdes for the miracle-working shrine of France"[60] (43). For Celia, however, Lourdes is the unwanted girl, because Celia longed for a boy who would "make his way in the world", she would consequently be free, and "leave Jorge and sail to Spain, to

[60]- In the Encyclopaedia of Politics and Religion (Volume two), Robert Wuthnow explains the miracles at Lourdes, "During the nineteenth century a series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary occurred in France, the most famous of which took place in the town of Lourdes in 1858. Although the apparitions and healing miracles at Lourdes bore no explicit political message, they nonetheless helped to link Catholic devotion to Mary with royalism, papal power, and French nationalism" (522).

Granada" (42). Her clear rejection was confirmed when, "In the final dialogue with her husband, before he took her to the asylum[61], Celia talked about how the baby had no shadow, how the earth in its hunger had consumed it. She held their child by one leg, handed her to Jorge, and said, "I will not remember her name" (García, "Dreaming" 43). At this level, we can notice that Celia is intentionally making up stories about her daughter just to ascertain her decision of abandoning her life and forgetting about Lourdes. Lourdes, in response, would never forget about that "brutal punishment" and would later "feel the grip of her mother's hand on her bare infant leg" and hears "I will not remember her name" (238).

Lourdes, ceaselessly, dreams of is her deceased father, Jorge Del Pino, who recurrently appears in his daughter's dreams. "Lourdes, I'm back," Jorge del Pino greets his daughter forty days after she buried him with his panama hat, his cigars, and a bouquet of violets in a cemetery on the border of Brooklyn and Queens" (García, 64). Apparently, ""He's back," Lourdes whispers hoarsely, peering under the love seats "He spoke to me tonight when I was walking home from the bakery. I heard Papi's voice. I smelled his Cigar. The street was empty, I swear it." Lourdes stops" (García, "Dreaming" 64). At the first glance, Lourdes seems holding some emotions but they are again emotions of recalling sad memories.

The recollection of Lourdes traumatic experiences, namely those of her unborn baby's death and her rape by the soldiers of the revolution (70-71), is basically to dissect her own perceptions of the revolutionary era in Cuba that brought her a significant amount of psychological and physical suffering. Subsequently, the articulation of her memories

[61]- It is evident that, Garcia wants to draw our attention to one important fact that the Cubans who stayed in Cuba whether died (Jorge), or lost their minds (Celia) and were ultimately taken to asylum. However, those who went into exile could save their minds, which by means helped them remembering or imagining Cuba.

is set in a logically chronological order but in a non-linear way, more of a memory like structure of recorded traumatic experiences that she could not escape and, at the same time, she is unable of dismissing due to the simple fact that those memories are part of her identity. Lourdes tries to display a moment of overwhelming feelings of memories intermingled with forgetfulness,

> Lourdes imagines her father, too, heading south, returning home to their beach, which is mined with sad memories. She tries to picture her first winter in Cuba. It was in 1936 and her mother was in an asylum. Lourdes and her father traversed the island in his automobile, big and black as a Sunday-night church. From the car window, Lourdes saw the island's wounded landscapes, its helices of palms. Fat men pressed their faces, snaked with purple veins, against her cheeks. They gave her cankered oranges, tasteless lollipops. Her mother's doleful rhythm followed them everywhere. (García, "Dreaming" 24)

Here, Lourdes exhibits a set of interrelated emotions, all of which are of remembrance and reminiscence. She imagines herself together with her father travelling southward to Cuba that is for her a place of sad memories. She further illustrates that the date of her birth in the island marked the beginning of her sad story that started with her mother's rejection as an infant. Lourdes goes on describing the journey with the least details and tries to depict Cuba as a wounded landscape with its helices of palms. The helix shape, however, with two blades run different directions, which could be interpreted as the main meeting point of the past and the present or memories and the possibilities that the future would provide. Lourdes seems so confused about Cuba that is definitely the place of all bad experiences and sad memories, yet the place where she could come into terms with her Self.

The perplexity that is embodied in the character of Lourdes could noticeably be traced in Lourdes' reaction when her father asks her to return to Cuba. She immediately refused the idea; firstly because she knew that immigration is a privilege for her because it "has redefined her" (García, 73). Secondly, and most importantly, because she is paralyzed as she holds on to memories of her rape both emotionally and physically as her body is mentally-coded to induce an alarm state of trauma that she could not even explain, "I can't go back. It's impossible. […] You don't understand, Lourdes cries and searches the breeze above her. She smells the brilliantined hair, feels the scraping blade, the web of scars it left on her stomach" (196). Actually, Lourdes talks about the experience through feelings; she cries as she could not find the right words that clarify her pain, the fact that took her breaths as she tries to search "the breeze above her. Hence, this scenario sums up her torturing thoughts about returning to the island.

Shortly after, Lourdes did not want her acquired feelings of and her gained beliefs about the revolution to be "absorbed quietly by earth". Ultimately, she acted accordingly by going back to the places of her child loss and her rape and openly expressed her fear of staying passive. She, subsequently, chose revenge that is political in essence. In this regard, Kali Tal states that, "the memories of traumatic events often involve cultural-political movements", which is so relative for Lourdes' case (qtd in. Edwards 133). At this point, we can notice that her first reaction to the revolution was escaping the traumatic experience that she underwent. Right after that, she recognized that facing her fears is inescapable. Thence, it is clear that Lourdes has engaged in politics to give a sense to her

aggression and repression by her rejection of Communism[62], "[s]he is convinced that she can fight Communism from behind her bakery counter" (136), and as an anti-socialist,

> "Every way Lourdes turns there is more destruction, more decay. *Socialismo o muerte*. The words pain her as if they were knitted into her skin with thick needles and yarn. She wants to change the "o" to "e" on every billboard with a bucket of red paint. *Socialismo es muerte*, she'd write over and over again until the people believed it, until they rose up and reclaimed their country from the tyrant" (García, "Dreaming" 222-223)

For her, socialism brought more bad then good to her, to her people and the country. She wants, in response, to advertise heavily for her anti-socialist belief in bold bloody red that socialism is death in order to convince the Cubans of the danger that the socialist ideology entails. For that matter, Lourdes wanted to achieve the American dream by establishing two capitalist enterprises as a clear response to her country newly adopted political ideology of communism.

Ultimately, García's novel closes with another Cuban experience that resulted in another exodus. This vital response of the Cubans to their government marked the social and political defeat of the Cuban government. Lourdes, in a well-scripted dream, recalls the first Cuban exile "of thousands of defectors feeling Cuba[63]" (García 238). In fact, this dream is a recall of not only individual memories but also of a collective memory. Consequently, and with the help of calling back memories, we could understand the

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[62]- In this context, we should refer to García's political position who was, like Lourdes, a pro-Capitalism. In an interview with Allan Vorda, García clarifies her point of view toward Cuban Communism, "I grew up in a very black-and-white situation. My parents were virulently anti-Communist, and yet my relatives in Cuba were tremendous supporters of Communism, including members of my family who belong to the Communist Party" (qtd. In Luis 204).

[63]- By reaching the end of the novel, we can say that García has successfully managed to include the main events concerning the Revolution up to the launching of Mariel boatlift in 1980 when Castro announces that all Cubans wishing to emigrate to the U.S. are free to board boats at the port of Mariel west of Havana, the Mariel Boatlift. This action was taken due to job shortages caused by the ailing Cuban economy.

magical realist representations of the slice of life that Lourdes comes to portray. Indeed, the recollection of traumatic events through dreams and imagination enables the reader to visualize the variant positions and reactions that follow episodes of history especially during the years of revolutionary government in Cuba.

4.5.2 The Importance of Dreams in Reconstructing a New Cuban Reality

It is quite clear that Celia, who is essentially a symbol of the Revolution, had betrayed her two daughters Lourdes and Felicia as it is mentioned in the previous section. However, she could hold dear and deep feelings to her granddaughter Pilar as a complicated depiction of interrelated generational relationships that is summarized in Del Pino family. It is quite essential to shed light on the Celia and Pilar's relationship that in spite of the geographical distance between Cuba and the United states is often time characterized as a magically constructed reality, in which the two characters could wonderfully connect to each other through imagination, dreams and telepathy. In this sense, Pilar is arguably the synthesis of the Cuban generational fragmentation and opposition.

The fact that makes the teenage Pilar Puente an essential character in *Dreaming*, is that she is in constant change due to her well matured personality that has been developed through her constant questioning of reality surrounding her. "Why don't I know anything about them? Who chooses what we would know or what's important? I know I have to decide these things for myself," then, she adds on the main sources of her knowledge, "most of what I have learned that's important I've learned on my own, or from my grandmother" (28). As shown, Pilar is so lucid about what she wants to know and how she would do so although she is only fourteen years old but she is autonomous and

independent enough to choose what she needs to know and who is responsible for her knowledge. Celia is eventually the only trustful reference for Pilar; she is the only person that she trusts fully, which proves their continuous magical communications.

Undoubtedly, there is a lack of communication between all other individuals in *Dreaming*. This could be explained as a failed language used and irreconcilable difference among the characters that could be compared to the failure of communication between the Cuban citizens and their revolutionary government. Pilar and Celia, conversely, are definitely not to be included to the above mentioned model. In the United States, Pilar recognized at a very early age that she differed from her mother and was more attracted and feels more attached to her grandmother in Cuba. From here, we can trace the use of magic that seems pertinent to the reality that García wants to underscore.

Significantly, the character of Pilar that crucially represents the third Cuban generation in the novel, is giving account to her story in first person, the narrative aspect that is missing in other characters' sections. Accordingly, the new generation is challenging the reasoning of their parents, which is described in the third-person narrative, and whose children were to primarily victims of, in addition to the lack of communication that is another essential reason for their separation and independency from their parents. Thence, the new generation wanted to construct a new reality by creating and imposing their thoughts in a different narrative voice, which highlights their position in society and their own perception of it. By doing so, García wants to show the growth of a mature voice that enables Pilar to speak up and to uncover her own discernment. Yet, the emergence of free individual voice, which symbolizes the future, is ascribed to the generational differences in the Cuban society.

Notwithstanding the age gap and the geographical dispersion, Pilar and Celia del Pino amazingly share their thoughts and stories through dreams that circulate and transfer their concerns and wishes. Correspondingly, García used dream space that allows such magical happenings to take shape in the novel[64]. This inexistent space, furthermore, creates a condition of possibility for Pilar who wants to know about Cuba, and for Celia to keep in touch with her granddaughter. This space has meanwhile connected two dissonant and incompatible realities as represented by the different exposed generational viewpoints of Pilar's family history that parallels that of Cuban.

Celia "imagines her granddaughter pale, gliding through planes, malnourished and cold without the food of scarlets and greens," then, "She closes her eyes and speaks to her granddaughter, imagines her words as silvers of light piercing the murky night" (07). In this very first instance, Celia could communicate with Pilar trough telepathic conversations that enable her to overcome all the physical boundaries to reach her granddaughter. Like all mothers, Celia feels her granddaughter and knows that her mother maltreats her, so that she is so concerned about her. It is also evident that Celia uses her imagination trying to envisage and visualize the physical state of Pilar and her words that are beautifully and magically described as they sound so dear and valuable to Celia.

For Pilar, Celia knows everything about her, "She seems to know everything that's happened to me and tells me not to mind my mother too much". Yet again, in many instances throughout the novel, Celia comes to Pilar to remind her of her love, "She tells me she loves me," to support and to encourage her, "My grandmother is the one who encouraged me to go to painting classes at Mitzi Kellner's". Eventually, all of Celia's

[64]- It is of a vital importance to state that the use of magical realism in the novel is not limited to the characters of Celia, Lourdes, and Pilar. Jorge for example appears to Celia from the lights and from the sea (García, "Dreaming" 05) in a magical way notwithstanding his death.

messages are presented through telepathy in a form of chatting, "I hear her speaking to me at night just before I fall asleep. She tells me stories about her life and what the sea was like that day" (García 29). As mentioned before, Celia is the primary source of knowledge and the only source of what was happening in Cuba in such an inviting way that indulges Pilar in daydreaming about returning to Cuba.

Pilar has an inherited mission of investigating and recording[65] the history of Del Pino family. Yet, her parents' decision of leaving Cuba impedes her from being accurate about the Cuban reality that has been distorted and negatively changed by the Cuban politicians. Pilar, clearly, puts the blame not on her parents but on policy makers, "I resent the hell out of the politicians and the generals who force events on us that structure our lives, that dictate the memories we'll have when we're old. Everyday Cuba fades a little more inside me, my grandmother fades a little more inside me. And there's only my imagination where our history should be" (137-138). However, Pilar would reach a point of dissatisfaction of what her imagination could provide her with. She would ultimately conclude that imagination and memories are not sufficient for a good understanding of the past, as the latter requires the present facts.

The accumulation of overwhelming feelings of nostalgia and sense of belonging urged Pilar to visit Cuba and Celia. Pilar confesses, "Most days Cuba is kind of dead to me. But every once in a while a wave of longing will hit me" (137). Unlike her mother, whose bad memories prevents her from doing so, Pilar's memories and her grandmother's stories instilled in her an alerting call for meeting her grandma and for figuring out about her Self. Pining for the past, hence, created an urgent call for Pilar to travel back to Cuba

[65]- In this respect, Celia is content about her granddaughter's diligence and persistence about recording everything back in the United States, "she knows that Pilar keeps a diary in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother's scouring eyes. In it, Pilar records everything. This pleases Celia" (07).

in attempt to recollect her family's memories and thereby to reconstruct her own identity. In agreement with Elena Machado Saez's study of the character Pilar,

> The critics articulate her identity as culturally in-between and, therefore, capable of moving physically and psychically between the locations of Cuba and the US. Underpinning all of these readings of García's novel is the interpretation of Pilar's journey to Cuba as a positive and recuperative move that facilitates communication across generational and geographical lines.[66] (130)

Indeed, the cultural, social, and political in-betweens make it possible for a sensory space to emerge. Subsequently Pilar was able to intersect with and thereby redefine the conceptions of exile and identity. Pilar goes to Cuba with a positive view of the Revolution, and her change is part of her own process of development (García 216).

However, when heading to her hometown, Pilar felt completely baffled, "I am not sure what to expect, only that I'll see Abuela Celia again," she adds, "I can hear fragments of people's thoughts, glimpse scraps of the future. It's nothing I can control. The perceptions come without warnings or explanations, erratic as lightning" (216). Eventually, Pilar returns home with a set of life changing questions and with a new sense of self on a trip of searching for the truth. More significantly, only with a journey to her motherland that she was capable of comprehending her past together with her present in order to draw conclusions for her future. In the last section of the novel, Pilar is "dreaming in Cuban" and talks about her life changing experience,

> I've started dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There's a magic here working its way through my veins. There's something about the vegetation, too, that I respond to

[66]- On this detail, Critics like Acosta Hess, Santiago-Stommes, Viera, and others interpret the journey of Pilar in *Dreaming* as the one that tries to give definition to different social subjects like the familial bonds, the exilic experience, and the national identification.

> instinctively— the stunning bougainvillea, the flamboyants and jacarandas, the orchids grow ing from the trunks of the mysterious ceiba trees. And I love Havana, its noise and decay and painted ladyness. I could happily sit on one of those wrought iron balconies for days, or keep my grandmother company on her porch, with its ringside view of the sea. I'm afraid to lose all this, to lose Abuela Celia again. But sooner or later I'd have to return to New York. I know now it' where I belong—not instead of here, but more than here. How can I tell my grandmother this? (Garcia, "Dreaming" 235-236)

In Cuba, Pilar gets to know more about her family's past and her background that she did not have a chance to know about as she was raised in the United States. As readers, we could understand that Pilar is no different from many Cubans whose exile was dictated on them. Nevertheless, as Pilar, they were certain drawn to Cuban society and Cuban culture. Ultimately, we can say that with the reconstruction of the past, the present of Cuba is no different from the one the protagonist comes to portray within *Dreaming*. Initially, Pilar rejects her mother's beliefs about Cuba and embraces those of her grandmother. In the end, however, Pilar concludes that she carries the Cuban culture within her, yet she should go back to the United States. Finally, Celia who symbolizes the Cuban revolution could not accept that even the third generation could not commit to the revolution and stay in Cuba, "Celia steps into the ocean and imagines she's a soldier on a mission—for the moon, or the palms , or El Lider" (243). She ultimately loses interest in life and commits suicide, an end that is similar to Castro's political outcome. Here, again, Celia imagines that she is on a mission of sacrificing her life for Castro.

4.6 Conclusion

Referring back to the arguments stated earlier, Cristina García challenges the reader with distortion of time and place, a multiplicity of characters and an uncanny reality that are all fused into a magical narrative. Throughout the novel, multiple supernatural events happen and help the protagonists to interact easily with each other. In this sense, magic opens doors to each character to circulate and traverse all the physical boundaries whether it be geographical, psychological, or ideological. All of the uncanny happenings paved the way for an easy communication that would bring the three Cuban generations of Del Pino women together and keeps them closer, even if there have been altercations between them in the past.

The familial relations that in essence transcend the political matters of the island are one of the key features of the novel. They shape the narration trough attachments and separations and allow the story to take form. Each female character holds a significant amount of memories and background stories, and thus, shares distinctive beliefs and feelings. The recollection of traumatic experiences for Lourdes enables us to get a clear vision of the different positions that follow episodes in the Cuban history namely the initiation of the Cuban revolutionary government. There is an obvious hatred shared in the mother daughter relations, between Celia and Lourdes as well as between Lourdes and Pilar, however, Celia is surprisingly attached to her granddaughter Pilar. For that matter, Pilar was in a continuous rejection to her mother's ideas, and believed in her grandmother's interpretation of Castro's policy during the years of the revolution. However, she took a new position that is essentially independent of both her mother and granddaughter.

Magic gave the character Pilar just a partial truth since memories and the connection to others through telepathy or by means other than the known senses were not satisfactory sufficient. It was not until Pilar moved physically to the island to get a clear and close look at both the negative and positive attributes of the Castro government, which shook the Cuban society for decades that we could understand that she was able of drawing conclusions for her future and the reconstruction of her identity.

Chapter Five

The Agüero Sisters and the Reshaping of a New Female Social Reality

5.1 Introduction

Dreaming in Cuban (1992) and *The Agüero Sisters* (1997) share similar narrative conventions as well as contextual backgrounds. In both novels, García delineates the troubled mother-daughter relationship that symbolically features the new generation's relationship with their Cuban motherland. By means of memories and nostalgia, *The Agüero Sisters* is full of binaries that are powerfully imagined and skilfully recounting the history of Cuba through the story of the Agüero family and its struggle for discovering the truth.

In her second highly acclaimed novel, García gives account to two stories as narrated by the two sisters Reina and Constancia Agüero, and the two differing perspectives that are mere depiction of two stories of the Cuban nation, which are dissimilar in essence. The stories are mediated from inside the island and from outside, namely the United States. The two sisters' narration of their personal issues and social experiences depends heavily on their past memories and nostalgic reflections that are quintessentially different. These images deserve critical attention, especially given that García underscores the notion of deculturalization of the past and relinquishing the national identity, which are portrayed in a generational projection that synthesises the history of the Cubans.

Through the novel's close reading, I intend to analyse García's racial pronounced description of the two main female characters including their bodies, cultures and identities that construct the fundamental distinction between the Cuban originality and Miamian hybridization. My examination of García's second rich and compelling narrative is going also to focus on the life-long investigations by the Agüero sisters of

their mother's murder in Cuba that reveals the truth of the Cuban history. With its unique allegorical tendency, García's work is also emphasizing the issue of identity reconstruction and formation that all characters were in the process of identification in relation to Cuba's history, the matter that should be considered so that we can analyse the national Cuban experience during the revolutionary Cuba. In this respect, the author intends to proceed the Cuban identity through what she calls an "excavation" of the Cuban origins that the present chapter aims at discovering.

In the second part of this chapter, I explore magical realism in García's second novel through which she tends to delineate definite boundaries between the actual or the real, and the magical. On this point, it is worth mentioning that the deployed magic in García's first novel is apparently different from the second novel as in the first the characters deal with the uncanny magic as part of their daily occurrences. In the second novel, however, the characters encounter magical events, which they respond to with disapproval, disbelief, and fear. In addition to tracing magical realism in the novel that this chapter is devoted to, we must give a prior importance to the social conditions that the Cuban citizens were forced to live under during the revolutionary Cuba and the same conditions that led the young generation to exile. Such unpleasing reality was primarily provoked by the initiation of the revolution's doctrine, which García wants to highlight with the use of magic.

The Agüero Sisters and the Reshaping of a New Female Social Reality

5.2 The Divided Sisters and the Divided Cuba

In *The Agüero Sisters*, Constancia and Reina Agüero together with their father Ignacio felt desperate and were separated after the life-altering event of their mother's disappearance. The watershed moment of the two sisters' childhood played a critical role in shaping their future that was marked predominantly by detachment for an exploration of loss. Essentially, a diary, memories, and daring avowals are the best ingredients for a fragmentary discourse that characterizes the nature of their stagnant progression throughout the literary work.

In the wake of the Castro revolution, Constancia abandoned her country at an early age to live as an exiled in Miami, where she successfully managed to create her own cosmetic business. The youngest sister Reina, who is the offspring of Blanca's affair with a mulatto, is a skilled electrician that chose to stay faithful to Cuba before being deceived by what the Cuban political system could afford her as a compensation for her revolutionary dedicated efforts. While her stay in the hospital after an electric accident, "Reina Agüero watches as the blind patients stumble down the corridors, their arms waving like frontal antennae, cursing the revolution and El Comandante himself. Ten years ago, Reina wouldn't have put up with their blaspheming. Now, she doesn't flink" (García, *The Agüero Sisters* 34). At the age of 48, Reina decides to meet her sister in Florida, where the two sisters revised and tries to restore their past by the secret revelation of their mother's death. Eventually, it was the flashbacks of the father that revealed the secret of a double-barrelled gun that chose to kill his wife Blanca Agüero instead of a bee hummingbird.

The Agüero Sisters and the Reshaping of a New Female Social Reality

The familial division is an emblem of a divided country as Constancia and Reina hold divided views over their mother who symbolizes the Cuban island. To illustrate this division and separateness, García utilizes multiple female voices who speak up their sufferings in Cuba. The different voices in the novel of both female and male, old and young, the past and the present give the narrative a multi-layered reality that in most of the time intertwined with magic. The novel, ultimately, predicts the reunion of the Cuban-American community and the Cuban citizens that is portrayed through the gathering of the two sisters and the union of their beliefs and viewpoints about Cuba and the Cuban revolution.

5.3 Binaries and the Portrayal of Multiple Realities

The Agüero Sisters is a work full of binaries that constructs an apparently unstable structure that keeps moving forwards and backwards in time from the island to the mainland in an intricate way. In light of this, García meticulously depicts the events that alter the Cuban society, yet this depiction is socio-political in essence, as she intends to draw her readers' attention towards the predominant political shifting points in the Cuban history, which forced the Cuban to leave the island to live in exile.

The constant shift in perspective is the consequent result of an omniscient narrator that emerges from three alternative standpoints. The father, who is a professor of biology at the University of Havana and a naturalist, seems to know everything about the virgin landscape of Cuba, which is an allegory of the vicious human nature that the Mother Nature hides. The Agüero sisters, moreover, are essential characters in the story as they have two different perceptions of truth surrounding both of them separately. They are in a constant search of reality by means of comparing the personal, social, and cultural status

of both Cuba and Miami in order to "identify the barely visible points and lines that form the epicentre of the "tropical disturbances" at work on both sides of the "Florida Straits" (Savin 63).

5.3.1 Divided Loyalties of an External and Internal Exile

It is without a shadow of doubt that the political perturbations that took shape all along the Cuban history are the main reason for the emergence of the Cuban American diaspora. The Cuban Americans, with no hyphen to mark their dual allegiances, live in a relative exclusion and non-belonging of the place of exile as they managed to create a new space, "Little Havana", which is a space of temporality, yet typically similar to the original one. Conversely, the bicultural Cuban-Americans who are the second generation of the exiled Cubans hold a quite different position than the one of their parents as they were born and raised in the United States, yet they are constantly reminded of Cuba. Through the experience of stacking in-between two different cultures, they were able to create a new space, a space of in-between that Gloria Anzaldua called a "borderland", where the hyphenated selves could successfully develop a "tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity," they learnt to "juggle cultures," operating "in a pluralistic mode," turning "ambivalence into something else" (Qtd. In Popescu 157).

The dilemma of belonging and longing for a better place is a crucial theme in García's narrative. The novel uncovers the affluent history of Cuba from two main different perceptions. There are, on the one hand, the exiled Cubans who hold certain firm beliefs and share views on the political and social upheavals that caused their abandoning of the island and those who chose to stay loyal to the land and to suffer an internal exile

that is the direct consequence of their political system on the other one. In this respect, Mica Garrett displays the key attributes of the Cuban identity,

> To define Cubanness inside and outside of Cuba is a difficult task. Many argue that there are two Cubas: the one that Castro would have us see, a romantic, idealized view of the Revolution, and the other side of Cuba that he and his followers deny. In addition, there is a very large Cuban constituency in the United States, including Mini Havana in Miami. There, Cubans have retained their language and culture, in part due to their resistance to assimilation and strong need to retain their identity as Cubans. (Cubanness Within and Outside of Cuba)

Cubans have long struggled with their identity, as the political predicament was the main source of the Cubans' division. The meaning of the Cuban identity is hence ambiguous, and triggers existential issues as well. Following the argument stated earlier, we can say that Cuba is divided into two 'an internal and external Cuba'. More significantly, Garrett clarifies that the internal exile is also divided into two types. She explains that the two models of the Cubanness that dwells the island could predominantly be ascribed to Castro's newly introduced regime that at the outset was too promising yet in reality was deceiving. In 'Mini Havana' as Garrett explains to, Miami is another Cuban place where Cubanness is again manifested freely without the political restrictions that they witnessed in their homeland, and without the frightening nightmare of cultural assimilation of the mainland.

Continuing on this line, García comments over the different existing identities of the Cubans, "As […] there are three concentric circles—The Cubans, the Miami-Cubans, and the other Cubans. I'm in the third ring three times removed" (García qtd in Kevane 71). García here talks of a binary in the Cuban identity that is of being either a Cuban or

a Cuban-American. However, this binary is thrown into confusion due to the third essential circle of the 'other Cuban' that seems to side neither with those who are pro Castro revolutionary system nor with those who chose to flee Cuban politics and the island altogether.

Before the death of the Agüero sisters' mother, Constancia and Reina share separated and dissimilar backgrounds that set their division from the outset of the story. They are half-sisters sharing the same biological mother, were born three years apart, and lived separately after their mother's death. However, they spent few years together in a boarding school, an experience that Constancia took advantage of by ignoring and avoiding her sister just as her mother did to her when Reina was born. All of the mentioned inconvenient familial issues helped disconnect the sisters for years ahead.

The process of self-discovery starts when the two sisters chose two intersectional destinies in the journey of discovering the truth of their mother's death. Within the two first years of Castro's regime, Constancia together with her second husband and their daughter moved to New York, a place that seems suitable for her. Constancia could find a convenient environment for demonstrating her unique "Puritan"-like attitudes that are characterized with seriousness and discipline that enable her to create a business of her own, "she is very correct in appearance and speech, she is very hard-working and precise, with 'a low threshold for disorder'." (Popescu 165). Her past, however, was a complete disorder, as she felt rejected by her mother, abandoned by her first husband, and betrayed by her country. Reina, on the other hand, was a charismatic and vibrant mulata who portrays the Cuban type that remained on the island whether for their support of the revolution or their indifference of what was happening in their country. Regardless of the decision taken by her sister, Reina stays in Cuba as a strong adherent of *El Comandante*

working as a government electrician. Nonetheless, she made up her mind about scarifying her time working for the revolution as she could eventually view the negative subsequent effects of it, and thus starts working for herself. It was not until the revolution consumed her that she decided to go to the United States.

The father Ignacia Agüero, however, is another essential character who portrays a very deep meaning that is related to the Cuban exilic experience. Ignacio is an expert in the Cuban wildlife with the skill of hunting and preserving different species of Cuban birds, "he'd been an excellent shot nonetheless, as effective on horseback as he was crouched low to the ground. Many of his specimens had found their way into the collections of the world's most prestigious museums" (García, *The Agüero* 13). The different kinds of animals that Ignacia collects resemble to a good extent the different Cuban types that García wants to exhibit throughout her narrative. Indeed, the novel displays the different Cubans' reactions to their politics and history during the revolutionary Cuba and even before it as Ignacio and Blanca Agüero died before the iconic event of modern Cuba. Emron Esplin comes to explain that García's inclusion of Ignacio and Blanca in the novel and the murder scene becomes the one event besides the revolution that affect each member of their posterity. This eventually show that the pre-Castro Cubans should not be ignored because of their choices, like the revolution that has changed the lives of several generations of Cubans and Cuban exiles.

In "A Siguapa Stygian", Ignacio talks about his life that is apparently attached to the history of Cuba, "My name is Ignacio and I was born in the late afternoon of October 4, 1904, the same day, my mother informed me later, that the first President of the Republic, Estrada Palma, arrived in Pinar del Rio… Cuba had gained its independence two years before" (García, *The Agüero* 28). It is safe to say that chaos and confusion that

marred the lives of the Agüero family members starts by the end of the Spanish-American War of 1898 that marked the birth of a new Cuba. Yet, Cuba was not completely liberated because of the subsequent economic and military presence of the United States with the introduction of "the Platt Amendment", which permitted the Americans to interfere in our country" (28).

Although the focus of the experience of exile is intentionally made on Constancia, Reina, and Ignacio as they are the central characters to the plot, there are other minor characters that are important for the display of the remaining types of the Cuban exile. Constancia's ex-husband, Heberto, represents the non-Miami exile who tried to make a living in the United States but he was eventually deceived. His brother Gonzalo, however, is a Miami Cuban who is an extreme opponent to Castro's regime as he was involved in a couple of anti-Castro activities. As far as the internal exile is concerned, Dulce, Reina's daughter, represents the Cubans who remained in Cuba and became *jineteros* and *jineteras*. Constancia's son, Silvestre, however, took part in "Operation Peter Pan"[68]. The last type that Pérez called the "Cuban-Bred Americans", however, is illustrated in Isabel's baby boy, Raku.

It is evident that Constancia and Reina are the two main stock characters of the Cuban exilic experience in the novel who struggle all along their lives to find a solution to their separateness that was basically caused by the mysterious secret of their mother's

[68]- "Operation Peter Pan" is an illegitimate operation that took shape between 1960 and 1962 with a mass exodus of Cuban kids without their parents to the United States. The operation had received much acceptance among the Cuban parents who were afraid of the newly established government's threat over their children. In his article *The Secret Cold War Program That Airlifted Cuban Kids to the U.S.—Without Their Parents* Erin Blakemore states, "Though begun for the children of Cuban dissidents being targeted by the Castro regime, the program was eventually opened up to cover all Cuban children whose parents wanted them to leave the island. During the Cold War, many thought it was worth any price to rescue children from indoctrination into Communism—even if it meant sending them to the U.S. without any chaperones".

death, Cuba, and their killer father, the revolution. For García, the solution to the Cuban dilemma of healing the fragmentation of exile, besides overcoming the murder and the revolution is in accepting the Cuban reality, its vicious torturing past and the temporary uncomfortable present. Seemingly, the narrator creates an already experienced soul healing solution to help the characters overcome their violent division that García herself had experienced.

5.3.2 Spatial Boundaries and Social Divisions

The characters in García's work manifest a clear detachment and disconnection from their culture of origins but this does not mean that they do not practice their daily life with some remnants of their original culture with the culture of the new environment. Constancia, as an illustrative case in this respect, could not relate to the culture of her country when she moved to the United States the fact that approves the argument of the disconnection of ones' cultural identity in order to fit into another different culture. Reina, however, is different from her sister, as she clearly portrays the Cuban girl type who shows quite enough connection to the Cuban roots. She was prudent when speaking or acting in any given situation in order to prevent any misunderstanding that might embarrass her.

Reina falls into the category of the Cubans who did not leave Cuba right after the years of the revolution because they believed in and were loyal to their country or they did not at least scrutinized it. As Reina's daughter explains "Mama isn't the most fervent revolutionary on the island, but she's basically tolerant of the system" (García, *The Agüero* 52). However, this belief has soon been changed as the revolution had consumed those who once tolerate the system. Reina's survival of an electric stroke is ironically a

survival from the revolution that she has given her energy and youth just to receive a deadly accident. At this point, the author gives an unbelievably detailed description to the effects of the accident on Reina's body and inner state,

> The doctors tell her that she is lucky to have survived a direct hit of lightning in the mahogany tree. Already they've scraped acres of cinereous flesh from her back, charred a foreign gray. The tools on her belt branded their silhouettes on her hips. Her hoop earrings burned holes in her neck. For weeks, her pores oozed water and blood, until Reina thought it might be better to die. (García, *The Agüero* 35)

The unbearable pain and the deep left scars on her body as well as in her mind awoke her from the sweet dream of staying faithful and obedient to the revolution that she kept giving "More, more, and more for more nothing". After this life-changing incident, Reina appears to disavow working for and serving the revolution, yet she does not know when her political orientation started to shift, she "cannot say when her discontent took root," (68) but she certainly knows that it is the best choice she could make.

When in the United States, unlike the majority of the Cubans who left the island with a great possibility of dropping their culture and traditions when they arrive to the US, Reina could only feel her best when she relates to her Cuban origins. This matter, consequently, irritates her Cuban-American counterparts who immediately prejudged her of faithful revolutionary ideas and attitudes. Reina continuous vernacular slip of the tongue causes her troubles as she mistakenly called the Winn-Dixie cashier *compañera* and "all hell broke loose on the checkout line, and a dozen people nearly came to blows!" (García, *The Agüero* 197). It seems like all who could get to the other side of the island was not satisfied with its government and relates all what is Cuban to politics. Even the

use of the language itself, is not expected to be used, as it is directly linked to the individuals' attachment to their culture. A great majority of the Cuban-Americans would subsequently interpret this attitude as a sign of obedience and loyalty to Cuba and hence a betrayal to the newly constructed community outside the boundaries of the island.

For Reina, who relatively decided to come to the United States late compared to her sister and the people whom she knew, was expected to curse the revolution and to revile its untrustworthy doctrine and leaders. The narrator says, "The minute anyone learns that Reina recently arrived from Cuba, they expect her to roundly denounce the revolution. It isn't enough for her to simply be in Miami, or even to remain silent. These pride-engorged Cubanos want her to crucify *El Comandante*, repudiate even the good things he's done for the country." (Garcia, "The Agüero 197). Following this shockingly outrageous recognition, Reina comes to believe that "El Exilio […] is the virulent flip side of communist intolerance". She ultimately could understand everyone's hatred of the Cuban communist system that is seemingly extremely harmful but she also knew that exile is not the optimal choice for her, as she did not choose to move for denouncing the revolution or to crucify its leader per se.

5.3.3 The Issue of Cultural Identity between Originality and Hybridity

As shown in the previous section, the denouncement of Castro's revolutionary government and its poisonous disseminating effects become a cultural marker of the Cuban-American community. The Cuban-Miamians grow, henceforth, against the grain of patriotism and created their own cultural and social ties that would bind them together again. They started embracing and adopting the western capitalist modern life and praising its consumer culture instead. In the *The Agüero Sisters*, moreover, the character

of Constancia together with her husband to a lesser extent are a model of the Cuban-American business owners. Constancia is demonstrated as a successful person, "she excels as a businesswoman, selling expensive cosmetics at a ritzy department store" (87), with an achieved financial freedom that every Cuban dreams of or envies.

During the Revolutionary era, however, the socio-economic status of the Cubans was getting worse, especially with the different inconveniences of the communist regime that affected not only the business owners and the upper class but also the middle class in Cuba. On this point, Constancia's sister who remained behind and witnessed that economic crisis describes it,

> Reina says it's sad to see the near empty baskets and shelves of the markets in Cuba, the withered vegetables, the chickens too scraggly even for soup. People trade anything they can, home-roasted coffee or their ration of cigarettes for a used brassiere or a gallon of gas. She's heard of brain surgeons baking birthday cakes on weekends to earn extra cash. No, Constancia thinks, she could not have been happy in Cuba after 1959. (Garcia, "The Agüero" 48)

The "nearly thirty years" exiled Constancia believes that she has survived the Cuban politico-economic dictated system that all Cuban citizens were obliged to live under. Even the new generation of Cubanos started noticing the miserable imposed life in Cuba versus the beautiful and comfortable life of their counterparts whose parents had chosen for them. For Reina's daughter, Dulce Fuerte, life is not easy in Cuba. She wonders, "how my life would've been different if Mama had left for the United States with her sister." And she keeps criticizing the Cuban government for what they reached, "The damn island ran out of gas, and then the government started importing these bulky black bikes from China and tried to convince everyone that it was good for their health.

Well, for once they were right" (55). For that, Miami turns into a dreamland where the Cubans could live a decent life far from the communist economy that for Cubans turned the country upside down. Therefore, a new set of cultural attributes marked the life of Cubans who sought change in the nearest place off the island's boundaries.

On the other side of the better economic conditions in Miami, the social life was significantly different from the exotic Caribbean lifestyle. Reina, who is described in the novel as a tall, dark, sensual, and an Amazonian who climbs coconut trees when she wants a rum and coconut milk, felt strange in the western society. When she arrived to Miami to live with her sister, Reina could not grasp the weird reality of the Miamians and Cuban-Miamians and characterized them as the "Other." When Reina went out with Constancia for the first time, she was astonished about the women's obsession with their outer appearance, García says, "Reina is perplexed by the obsession women in Miami have for the insignificant details of their bodies, by their self-defeating crusades. All those hipless, breastless mannequins, up to their scrawny necks in silk. Don't women understand that their peculiarities are what endear them to men? " (161).

In contrast to the Miamian women, Reina represents a female Cuban type that is higher in principles and beliefs, which, although logically true, are lower to the archetypal women in Miami. This female categorization, as we can notice, empowers Reina who believes that she has all the qualities of an attractive woman, without the extra use of makeup or the exaggeration of showing her body. Throughout the novel, Cristina depicts Reina as a woman full of femininity and body qualities that raise all men's seductions and attract their sexual desires. It is also important to shed some light on the nature of Cuban man in what concerns his sexual preferences, as sex attraction is related to the certain

cultural conventions of any given society[69]. Eventually, we can say that the over sexualized figure of Reina, compared to her sister's and the women in Miami, is the preferred model of a fiery sexual female that the Cuban men desire wherever they go, because it is an inherent preferred type.

As a result, Reina turned into a threatening woman, who wherever she goes "people watch her, whisper, point behind her back […] Constancia's female acquaintances have pleaded with her to keep Reina under lock and key. We have enough trouble keeping our husbands in line without your sister coming around like temptation incarnate" (172). According to women's confessions, a wave of nostalgia swept over men in Miami who were "mesmerized by the size and swing of her [Reina's] buttocks," that embody the lure of the Cuban female irresistible body, which seemingly did not bring Reina any worries.

Thence, we can see that the women in Miami, who are different from Constancia's sister, are jealous and took Reina's natural physical and sensual qualities for granted. Subsequently, some critics perceive Reina, who embodies the Afro-Cuban woman with the special natural qualities that the mulata enjoys, as a negative model that García as a Cuban-American with a more Western view wants to stress and drag the reader's attention to the primitive nature of the Cubana. For Pascha Stevenson, for instance, "García's depiction of Reina is largely sympathetic […] She is the classic exotic type, embodying the very heart of wild, untamed Cuba, something to which García's nostalgic Miami exiles are uncontrollably drawn" (147). However, this interpretation may not be valid

[69]- When talking about sexual preferences in what concerns the female body, I believe that society plays a crucial role in shaping certain sexual conventions. In her work *Body Image*, Sarah Grogan best explains this idea by stating that, "Social psychologists and sociologists have generally argued that sexual preferences in body shape and size are largely learned, and are affected by the value that a particular culture attaches to that kind of body shape. They have stressed the cultural relativity of body shape features that signal sexual attractiveness" (142).

since García gives a different description to the other Agüero sister, Constancia that is likely not Cuban, although she resembles the other women who have arrived much earlier to Miami than Reina.

When compared to Reina, Constancia is characterized as an almost asexual woman. In spite of her Cuban origins as her sister, but she is characterized as a white woman that shares the same treats of the desexualized "fair lady". In this sense, Stevenson brings forward a study by Claudette M. Williams on race and women that underscores some striking truths about white and dark-skinned women. The latter who is referred to as the mulata, of Afro-Cuban origins, is oftentimes categorized as a sexualized woman whose well-shaped body is an archetype of sensuality. The contrast in the body image of the white woman that García describes as "breastless and hipless", however, could be perceived as a desexualized promotion of the Western woman's body or an emphasis on the stilted body that with all efforts could not be sexually attractive. Williams states that, "Implied in this construction of race is the desexualisation of white women that Romantic literary discourse had engendered … the fiery sensuality of the 'dark woman' depended for its expression on the contrasting coldness of the 'fair lady" (qtd. In Stevenson 147). Although she is light-skinned, Constancia knows that she is not privileged with Afro-Cuban treats and body like her sister, which fascinates and mesmerizes her. She meanwhile tried to achieve that beauty by introducing new face and body products that she called *Cuerpo de Cuba* (García 129), which literally means body of Cuba.

Notwithstanding, Constancia is full of femininity as she tries to protect her young skin from aging with the use of natural masks and her continuous efforts of keeping her outer appearance to match her expectations. Again, unlike Reina who is more aligned with originality and all what is natural, Constancia is more rational and adheres more to

reason with careful and studied manners, the matter that ascribes her to a hybrid female character. This could be well explained through the success that Constancia achieved when she initiates a business of beauty products in Miami that correspond to the Cuban-Miamian women's needs and nostalgia for their Cuban origins and past besides being a good wife that takes care after her husband and herself. Eventually, Constancia did not integrate into the Miamian mainstream, and because she lived most of her life in New York, she sees herself as an outsider to the Miami women. Arguably, all of these binaries are not to juxtapose only the two sisters, but also their cultures and their seemingly different beliefs.

5.4 Strategies for Dealing with Memory in *The Agüero Sister*

The Agüero Sister provides a fictional setting of a preserved collection of Cuban experiences and their memories that resembles to a good extent the preserved birds of Ignacia Agüero. Eventually, the characters' memories are present in Cuba and in exile with a continuous trial of uncovering a familial hidden truth and resolving a mysterious issue of a country. It is safe to say that the pre-revolutionary collective memory plays a positive and powerful role in the Agüero family, yet after the revolution, things took another diversion as the characters chose to be separate from their past, their mother country and from their biological father, and thus, paved the way for distorted forms of memory to emerge.

The three alternate perspectives of the *The Agüero Sisters*' narrator and the erratic movement in time from one place to another would make things difficult to follow for the characters' different strategies of dealing with memory. Moreover, the novel is based on a third person narration, yet the focalization moves swiftly from the father to his two

daughters and granddaughter to give voice to three generations in a highly artistic way that successfully managed of giving room for personal and political secrets to be well articulated and ultimately revealed.

5.4.1 The Futuristic Vision of Pre-Revolutionary Memories

In "Tree Ducks", García gives a good account of the first generation that portrays the parents of Ignacio, Soledad Varela and Reinaldo Agüero. Soledad was thirty one when she decided to marry Reinaldo, the flutist father who, " […] arrived in Cuba with ten pesos in one pocket, a volume of verse by the great Romantic poets in another, and his handmade violin" (59). When Soledad and Reinaldo got older, they became more aware of the memories they left behind, and more concerned about whether there children would be able to remember them. As Reinaldo was dying, his wife promised him to safeguard their memories to the coming generation. "Go, if you must, *mi amor*," she told papa gently. "Your memory is safe with us." Then she held his hands in hers as they quivered with the last of his life" (151). Apparently, the only thing that seems to bring the dying Reinaldo solace was to hear that his wife and son, at least, will remember him and that they will memorise his music and his once imposed presence.

Luckily, their memories started being at display when Soledad gave birth to their son Ignacio Agüero whose first memory was the music of his parents playing duets, he says, "Music is my earliest memory, earlier than sight or smell or touch, earlier than consciousness itself" (61). Ignacio believes that music is the first physical sensation to perfectly hold past memories, for him music is like smell, touch, taste, or sight, yet music includes both auditory and visual memories that when combined are harder to forget. In line with the auditory memory, García uses other senses for evoking memories like smells

and tastes that are used in her novel for triggering nostalgic memories that I will be included in this section.

Food and its smell is another important cultural aspect that is related to the evocation of past nostalgic memories. Referring back to the first generation, when Ignacio's father feels nostalgic, he re-creates certain food that would bring back certain memories, "his eyes watered in happy relief" whenever he prepares his favourite dishes that remind him of the old days in Spain (Garcia, "The Agüero" 32). In this instance, neither food aroma nor its taste are mentioned but Reinaldo seem to remember his homeland just by cooking his favourite dishes. That is to say, the simple fact of cooking specific food could remind the one of a specific period in time, event, or a place, let alone the memories that are linked to the food scent or taste.

5.4.2 The Effect of Omen and Fate in Shaping Memories

As we move to the second generation, the one that is the most mysterious and ambiguous to the reader compared to the other generations, we may get perplexed with the death of the main protagonists' mother that had had no conflict with her husband who deliberately murdered her. Although as García puts it,

> "Ignacio and Blanca Agüero had traversed Cuba with a breadth and depth few others achieved over considerably smaller territories. They knew intimately every cleft of the island's limestone mountains, every swell of its plains and pine forests, every twist of its rivers and underground caves. Together they have spent years cataloguing the splendour of Cuba's flora and fauna". (García, "Dreaming" 04)

After reading this passage, we can notice that the husband and wife share great time together diving into Cuba's nature and embracing its virgin beauty while gathering fine

specimens of birds. Both seem in harmony with each other as they could find something that they do together, which apparently satisfies their instincts.

However, if we go back in time as Garcia is constantly doing throughout the novel, we can see that Ignacio puts the blame of killing his wife and the bad fortune that followed this horrible incident on the fate that chose him to do the crime. On this detail, Ignacio remembers more crystal than clear what his mother told him about what happened when his mother was giving birth to him. The mother, Soledad, sadly describes her frustration after seeing a black owl staring at her from a window on daytime when she felt the unexpected pain of labour. Soledad explains, "it was a bird of ill omen … it was doubly bad luck to see one during the day, since they were known to fly about late at night, stealing people's souls and striking them deaf" (29).

Unluckily, the situation worsened and the mother was more scared about her son's fate as the Siguapa Stygian robbed the placenta and flew out the window. Since then, the mother was blaming the black owl for whatever happen to her son. Ignacio says, "From the start, my mother blamed the Siguapa Stygian for my tin ear, although she was grateful it hadn't flown with my hearing altogether" (30). This incident and the mother's strong belief of what would happen to her son instilled in Ignacio a state of fear and readiness, although he does not believe in the superstition, but he believes that all what happened to him was inescapable and predetermined. Eventually, committing a murder and putting the blame on superstition that helped shape his own fate is an emphasis on the importance of memory that has an unstoppable and inescapable power on the individuals' present and future.

Not surprisingly, the second generation represented by Ignacio and Blanca shows no nostalgic feelings for their island and holds no memories from its past since the two characters died before the Cuban revolution that played a critical role in the lives of Cubans, especially the Cuban exiles, in both of García's narratives. The third generation, conversely, is the only generation that was the victim of the father's "bad fate", the mother's death secret, and Cuba's undetermined future. Reina and Constancia are trapped between a tormented past and an uncertain future that are manipulated by memories that keep reminding them of the necessity of searching for past truth in a preserved past, besides the need of an optimal approach for dealing with their distorted memories.

5.4.3 Memories between Nostalgia and Amnesia

The Agüero sisters were essentially separated not by the Cuban revolution, as it is the case for the grandmother Celia and the granddaughter Pilar in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Constancia and Reina, conversely, were separated by more than an ocean and have been estranged shortly after their mother's death. That is to say, the power of memories on the two sisters could haunt their minds and lives for so many years. Eventually, due to the fathers' secrets and lies, which resemble to a good extent the secrets and lies of the revolution that swept the island, the sisters were torn between two countries the fact that led to the emergence of two different perceived realities and distorted memories. On this point, "Reina remembers how, after her mother's death, everyone's vision splintered […] Reina recalls how the emptiness seemed to surround them, a sad bewilderment that has never lifted" (Garcia, "The Agüero" 67).

Despite her escape from the island of her childhood memories and captured past, Constancia's past has decisively overlaps her life in Miami in an extreme magical way.

The Agüero Sisters and the Reshaping of a New Female Social Reality

One day, Constancia wakes from a disturbing dream of a surgery where she could hear the breathing of the surgeon and could feel his crimson scissors and pressing fingers on her face "invent[ing] the architecture of her face" (García, "The Agüero" 104). After waking up from this nightmare, Constancia rushes to the mirror just to figure that she has a new face, "she rubs her eyes, pinches her cheeks. Her eyes seem rounder, a more deliberate green. Then it hits her with the force of a slap. This is her mother's face". The metamorphosis that erased Constancia's facial features seems to eradicate the sense of tranquillity that she was looking for since her decision to quit the place of all souvenirs. Constancia, eventually, spent most of her past and present time creating a physical, mental and emotional space between her and her mother, however, her efforts ended up in creating more space for her mother and established what Adrienne Rich calls "matrophobia", which refers to,

> [...] the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of becoming one's mother. Matrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree women, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery. (235-236)

Subsequently, Constancia was focusing more on her beauty and working more on herself and her flourishing business but she could not overcome memories that are resumed in her mother's death secret. It is important to highlight that Constancia's willingness to remember her mother was not similar to that of her sister. Constancia was more allied with her father because her mother left their house once when her daughter was five months old. Blanca threatened Constancia to leave once again when she figured

out that she tries to torture her newly born sister Reina. Consequently, the older daughter wanted to live in peace, although her mother's ghost constantly haunted her, she "remembers thinking that Mama may have died, but she'd be impossible to bury, that she'd remain in their lives forever, sulphurous as her absence" (García, "The Agüero" 80).

The different approaches that each sister follows in dealing with memories show up clearly in number of cases. During their first days together in Miami, the two sisters open a conversation at a small dinner about memories and amnesia. The dispute starts with Reina's confession, "You know what I miss most about Cuba?" [She] asks in a voice loud enough to make Constancia uncomfortable. The little plazas in every town. In Miami, there are no places to congregate" (147). Reina's question provoked Constancia who admits to forget them altogether and acknowledges her refusal of romanticising the past. Reina did not stop reminding her sister of their shared memories, she continues, "I think we remember things differently." In spite of Reina's irritating and upsetting manoeuvrable ways of asking about the past, Constancia was certain that "her memories of Mama are altogether different from her sister's, hardly benign".

The following passage would uncover Constancia's failed ways of forgetting the past that "If only she could forget. But certain memories are fixed inside her, like facts many centuries old. No amount of reconsideration can change them". Again, Reina wants her sister to come into terms with her memories, "[she] stares at her, as if trying to see through the intoxication of their mother's face. "Sometimes we become what we try to forget most." The astonished Constancia asks, "What are you telling me? ... [t]hat I am Mama?" and Reina replies, "No, mi amor, you're just worn out by mirrors" (García, "The Agüero" 175). Eventually, we can say that the differences in the sisters approaching the

past, as the conversation suggest, lay in the fact that neither sisters agree on the way each other deals with the past, although both of them cannot forget about the traumatic experience of their mother's death.

Reina's constant presence of nostalgic thoughts about her dead mother is a conceit for the mother country Cuba. When Reina had a chance to see the body of her mother, she saw her mother's throat shattered, García describes the mother as "[lying] on a rusting pedestal her throat an estuary of color and disorder, as if a bloody war had taken place beneath her chin" (68). However, the father Ignacio told Reina that Blanca had drowned while in the swamp. Reina has never believed what her father had told her and sustained the secret of how possibly her mother died with a continuous attempt of coping with the unforgettable image of her mother's throat.

Eventually, it is safe to say that unlike Constancia, Reina was trying hard not to forget about the past by remembering Cuba and romanticizing its distorted past instead of her mother. Her significant efforts on remembering the past and keeping it remembered are because she believes that the final real death is the death of memories (García, "The Agüero" 96). Constancia, on the other hand, does not want to remember her mother because she holds only negative memories about her, the matter that led to an intentional amnesia of Cuba. Her efforts of deleting the past installed a state of stress and fear that was apparent in her life and on her face that was replaced with her mother's for well.

Ultimately, Reina obliges her sister to face their family's unacknowledged truth in order to reconcile their memories of their mother's murder. Eventually, the sisters decides to go to Cuba where they could figure out how their mother was murdered and consequently manage to deal with the past in different manners as they both failed to find

a solution to their distorted memories and recovered amnesia. "We travel in the family," Constancia declares. "We travel in the family," Reina repeats (270-271). Constancia and Reina finally agreed to follow the santero Oscar Pinango's instructions and travelled in Herberto's motorboat that took the sisters on a journey of remembering and discovery (García, "The Agüero" 273).

Throughout this journey, Constancia was able to think about the past and started questioning her mother's murder but she could not victimize her father to whom she feels allegiant. She upholds her father and concedes, "Mama didn't drown … [she] shot herself. Papi told me not to tell you, Reina, that it would only make things worse" (274). The conversation heightened as Reina could not believe their father's lies that he tried to convince them with and admits in a firm tone, "Papa killed her […] he shot her like one of his birds, and then he watched her die. Mami fell into the swamp, and he watched her die" (275). The sisters' argument ultimately ended up with a critical fight, as Constancia could not accept the truth of her father's murder picks up an oar and crushes it against Reina's head. Reina drowns in water, "[she] Tumbles underwater for an immortal moment […] A moment later, Reina resurfaces among the silvering waves. She is shaking hard … [whispering] It's all a mock history" (276). For a moment, Constancia was eager to push her sister's head underwater but she surrenders to the truth that kept her hostage of the past, and screams, "I needed to believe him!" Thence, Constancia concludes that, "Knowledge is a kind of mirage" and the truth can conquer what regret has left behind" (277).

The final decisive dialogue marks the novel's dénouement with the Agüero sisters' resolution of dealing with the past and healing their memories that haunt their present. By accepting to go to Cuba, the sisters accepted essentially to travel into time to uncover the

dark truth of Ignacio's bad omen that dictated their fate and imposed an overwhelming state of nostalgia and amnesia over both of them.

Following the previous dispute, Constancia felt an urge for the past verification for truth so that she wanted to go to Cuba, although she was able of discovering the whole reality by Reina but she wanted to immerse fully into truth. In fact, Constancia goes to her uncle's house where she could find her father's papers and the revealed secret. "Constancia reads Papi's words carefully, reads and reads them again, until only the stars are left to clarify the sky" (García, "The Agüero" 298). The father's eminent documents record everything, including his secret of shooting his daughters' mother. In fact, the papers were the non-negotiable proof of the father's guilt, where he literally explained his crime. After visiting Cuba and her father's words, Constancia came into terms with her forgotten memories. She becomes more aware of the past that by trying to forget its details, her life worsened.

Once Constancia discovered all the reality about her family that kept hidden for a long time, she consequently had a full image of the past memories that she purposefully tried to delete but could not until she decided to face her amnesia. In spite of her hatred for her mother and her sister, which she tried helplessly to suppress, however, this went against the grain of her intentions. It was not until reading the father's recorded reality that the past clarified in Constancia's mind who could finally understand that she has to accept her past with its positives and negatives, and that she must remember the good and bad facets of the Agüero family.

Reina's healing process of memories is clearly different from her sister's. As soon as she uncovered the family secret to her sister, she felt no necessity for romanticizing the

past that could be resumed in her father's omen, the image of her mother's corpus, and Cuba's fate. With the epiphany, however, Reina could adjust her present by dealing directly with her memories that would doom to forgetfulness, the fact that she did not want to happen.

It is also due to romanticizing the past of her parents that Reina spent more time in Cuba serving the revolution, to whom she felt allegiant. Nonetheless, once Reina saw her mother's distorted body, she has immediately made up her mind about Cuba and about the revolution that brought her more harm than good. Indeed, when moving to Florida, Reina felt of a total misfit. After the revolution, she was able to reconcile her Cuban past with her present life in Miami because she recognized that her dedication to the Cuban revolution was in many ways a reflection of a romanticized version of her parents that has ultimately been shattered by distance and time. Reina, eventually, could built a new and strong relationship with her country of origin by accepting the positives and negatives of the revolution besides the past and the present of her country, exactly as she did with relationship of her deceased parents.

5.4.4 A Negative Response to the Past

To the three critical generation, García adds a fourth one to the social Cuba spectrum. Dulce, Isabel, and Silvestre have their share of memories that vary from one character to another. It is safe to say that Reina's daughter, Dulce, whose prominent and recurrent ideas of the island's history and her family's past, portrays the whole generation, as she is the most concerned with and affected by memories. Throughout the novel, Dulce Fuerte has three parts where she records all of her past. At first glance, Dulce seems to be the only character to give a detailed description of the socio-political spectacle of Cuba

and the extent to which things have changed after the revolution. Dulce believes that Cuba is a charming country, but life is becoming impossible, thus she leaves Cuba for Spain.

When in Spain, Dulce starts remembering her family's past, notwithstanding her decision of burning all the things that might remind her of her motherland. However, Dulce concluded that, "[M]emory […] is the worst of traitors" (141). With this in mind, Dulce has finally realized that the abundant flow of memories could not be interrupted. On this point, we can interpret her deep consideration of memories and the revisit of the past to Dulce's new and strange feeling of being an exile who loves her country but political factor worked against her wishes. Moreover, Exile did not help her soothing her pain that seems to carve her thoughts.

In contrast to Dulce's perception and approach of memories, Silvestre and Isabel have a different way of dealing with the past to that of cousin, and similar one to that of their mother. Unlike Dulce who left Cuba as a grown woman, Silvester and Isabel left Cuba at a younger age, hence lived longer in the United States and were more distanced to Cuba. Subsequently, they were detached to all memories. And like their mother, they intentionally tended to forget all what remind them of their past. Although they did not live much in Cuba, but the brief experience in Cuba became a source of threat.

For Silvestre, an extreme state of amnesia is what characterizes his way of treating the past. Silvestre torturing past starts with his relationship to his father Gonzalo Crus, who is Constancia's first husband. The father and son could never meet each other, the matter that bothered the mother a lot, as she was "[wondering] what Gonzalo would think of their son today. How long it would take for them to get to know each other. A month? Six months? Another thirty-three years? There is no substitutes for the quiet culture of a

life together, the endless days commemorating nothing, amassing history bit by bit" (García, "The Agüero" 178). This grew resentment and hatred in Silvester's heart who ultimately chose to kill his father when he was lying on his deathbed in one of Miami's hospital (246). As soon as Silvestre had a chance to make an end to his only source of discomfort, he quickly seized it by suffocating his own father with a pillow as an automatic reaction to an unwanted memory.

Silvestre's sister had also a past that is no different from her brother's, but Isabel faced it with a total denial and forgetfulness as she came back home pregnant copying her mother's past, "Now poor Isabel is suffering the way Constancia once suffered" (177). Isabel was abandoned by her lover, Austin, for another woman. However, after giving birth to Raku, Isabel started forgetting about the past that caused her pain and misery, although she receives a check from him, she immediately sheds it with no single word (251).

The fourth generation's abrupt way of dealing with the past memories to a significant extent the ways both mothers, Constancia and Reina, had adopted to escape Cuba's reality and their familial secret. However, the two sisters have eventually decided to rethink their past of nostalgia and amnesia by contemplating their mothers' suspicious death and the dismal certainty of Cuba that led to an ultimate reconciliation between the Cuban past and the North-American present. Unlike their mothers', Dulce, Silvestre and Isabel chose not to revisit and heal the past that changed the course of their lives but rather make a sharp cut between the present and the past aiming at living a tranquil future.

The Agüero Sisters and the Reshaping of a New Female Social Reality

5.5 The Depiction of Revolutionary Cuba between Reality and Magic

For García, the second-generation of the Cuban immigrants is in the best position to manifest the personal as well as political realities artistically. In an interview published in the Phoenix Gazette, García comes to explain that, "they are very close to these roots but not scarred by them, or at least not directly scarred". This is exactly true if we take the example of the Agüero's second-generation immigrant Dulce Fuerte who fits into this category. Dulce was never afraid of the alternatives in her life although she has experienced living in and outside of Cuba.

Dulce's chapters were the most interesting sections in the narrative, which gives voice to the new Cuban generation and the way they perceived and responded to the politics of their country. Dulce, the little rebellious girl who underscores what was happening in Cuba during the revolutionary days was able to give a clear vision in the three chapters on what the coming of age Cubans have witnessed. Dulce Fuerte starts her story with a depiction of how the social life in Havana was, confirming that everything could be ration but sex that was becoming as valuable as the dollar (51). The matter that worked against and at the same time contradicts one of *El Comandante's* campaigns of having no AIDS in Cuba, the thing that Dulce believes to be one of Castro's most successful propaganda campaign yet. Dulce is not victimizing the *jineteros* for what was happening in Cuba, on the contrary, she sympathises with them as they were trying hard to make a living by hustling, putting the whole blame on their government that caused misery to its people.

Noticeably, the first and the second generations of the Cuban immigrants had, at some point, different views about the political mores of the nation and about what the

revolution could bring to the Cubans before experiencing exile. In this regard, Dulce explains the difference between her generation and her parents' about their perception of the Cuban revolutionary agenda, "Mama isn't the most fervent revolutionary on the island, but she's basically tolerant of the system. She and Papin say that young people today are spoiled and don't appreciate all we have, that we should've seen how things were before the revolution to understand deprivation" (52). At this point, the parents and their children hold dissimilar viewpoints about the revolution as the parents had witnessed worst social conditions in pre-Castro Cuba as Dulce's parents clarify. They think that their children don not value the enormous efforts of the revolutionary government and hence are spoiled and ignorant of the newly initiated government, however, this belief did not last for a long time, as the mother would eventually join her daughter's position.

Dulce is seemingly a smart girl who could rationally evaluate and interpret life in Cuba. Unlike her mother and aunt, Dulce was able to scrutinise the Cuban social conditions that is featured by abysmal poverty under which her counterparts are suffering on a daily basis. She contends,

> Everybody I know is sick of these arguments, sick of picking potatoes and building dormitories, only to find no meaningful work in the careers we trained for. Sick of not washing our hands after we shit because there isn't any soap. Sick of blackouts and dry faucets. Sick of having nothing to do, period. At minimum, it can make a person permanently irritable. (García, "the Agüero" 52)

It is apparent that Dulce is not the only one who witnesses all kinds of misery and suffer on the island, but all the people she knows. Their shared suffer extends the ability of finding an adequate job that would literally match their interests and talents to their government's disability of insuring basic energy sources the fact that "unravel[s] the

revolution" (86) and caused an unconcealed frustration to the Cuban people. The latter become more aware of what their incompetent government is trying to ensure, and were finally convinced that the revolution came about for change, which would never serve the nation.

In Dulce's description of the social status in Havana, there is no interruption of magic as she gives account to the factual circumstances that the Cubans, especially the new generation, are obliged to endure. However, she chooses to use an allegorical language that is full of political messages as she claims,

> [Y]ou can never work hard enough here, either. Cuba is like an evil stepmother, abusive and unrewarding of efforts. More, more, and more for more nothing … come here. Look at this view, this harbour, this gorgeous curve of coast. Men from all over the world tell me that Havana is the most beautiful city they've ever seen. So when will we get it back? When will it be truly ours again? Cono, El Caballo has four broken legs, and no one has the courage to put him out of his misery. (García, "the Agüero" 52-53)

Here, again, Dulce is attesting the abusive and unrewarding Cuba that she compares it to an evil stepmother who would do more bad than good to her husbands' children regardless of their efforts. The social status, as Dulce describes, is contrastively different from the pristine nature of the island that she laments its lost splendour. Her critical reflection about the fauna and flora of the island that is significantly recognized world widely is so deep and sincere. Moreover, it is safe to say that Dulce talks openly about the social, political and natural reality of her country that, symbolically, is like a beautiful horse with four broken legs.

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Although she is a daughter of a revolutionary hero, José Luis Fuerte, who "[…] was one of the original revolutionaries [and] was at Moncada and in Sierra Maestra side by side with you-know-who" (53), yet that did not stop Dulce from criticizing the Cuban regime and repudiating the revolution and its proponents. In the same regard, Dulce remembers a high school friend who is Che Guevara's son that was opposing his father's political thoughts and all what the revolutionaries were promising. Dulce and her friend "used to joke about [their] respective revolutionary burdens". Her friend ended up piercing everywhere as a heavy metal musician and trying to abandon the island altogether (54). This is to say that the young generation in Cuba hold rebellious thoughts due to the failure of the regime to deliver its promises.

Eventually, unlike their parents, Dulce, her friends and her cousins as an example of the second-generation of immigrant Cubans, were not hindered by the impossibility of crossing the borders of a place that is essentially characterized by determinate socio-political realities. In accordance to what Henri Lefebvre confirms in *The Critique of Everyday Life*, "Human actions always define themselves as choices, as a means of access to what is possible and as an option between those various possibilities [...] Without possibility there can be no activity, no reality" (195). This Cuban entity strove to create their own Cuban reality that their government failed to provide, a new possibility for being active and productive. They ultimately chose to exile.

When in Madrid, as the second chapter is entitled, the first thing that Dulce is so intentional about is to forget the past and to burn all her memories. Regardless of the recurrent thoughts about how life used to be in the revolutionary Cuba, Dulce could successfully confront her past as well as ignoring her present, she affirms , "I've reached the point where I can finally ignore my reflection, even when cleaning a mirror head-on.

Believe me, it's a relief to be this invisible" (142). Dulce finally reached the point of ignoring her present and presence.

Dulce talks about another crucial issue that plays an essential role in the Cubans' national identity, which is religion. Religion in Cuba, which is an inoperable aspect of the historical and social experience of the Cubans, knew a significant changes throughout the history of Cuba. For Dulce, however, religion is a mere escape for "the weak and the ignorant" (144). Dulce also admits her atheism, together with her mother, who "puts her faith in electricity and sex", and her father whose "anticlerical slogan for the revolution _ 'make them grow palm nuts' _ is still exhorted in Cuba today". In the same regard, Dulce could even remember her maternal grandparents "who were scientists and dismissed organized religion out of hand" (144). On this point, it is so important to talk about religion in Cuba during Fidel Castro's revolution that left a deep impact on the Cuban citizens as well as the exiles who are essentially described as non-believers.

At the onset of the revolution, religion in Cuba took a new diversion with Castro's announcement of an "atheist", the matter that affirmed the futility of the Catholic Church in Cuba. From 1959 until about 1961, the counterrevolutionary churches that were institutionalised in Cuba were forced to shut down as Christianity was standing against the negative teachings of the socialist revolution. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crash of the Cuban economy, Castro appealed the church for help. In her article *Cuba: Religion and Revolutionary Institutionalization*, Margaret E. Crahan explains that, "the Catholic Church in Cuba entered the 1970s with limited theological and pastoral resources to meet the challenge of a consolidated Marxist/Leninist revolution. As an institution, the Catholic Church in Cuba is, as it was in 1959, the weakest in all of Latin America" (319). Consequently, the importance of religion for the Cubans has never been

stable, the fact that added an unsettled past and uncertain future for the Cuban people, which is reflected in their historical and social experience as García comes to portray in her novel.

As any immigrant, Dulce is on a journey of a self-discovery that is noticeably inseparable from the past memories. It is easy to see the generational differences in terms of the historical, social and personal aspects in García's narrative. Yet concerning Dulce's experience of exile that is provoked by the revolutionary Cuban regime, which by means helped shape her thoughts about Cuba and form a better vision of herself. It is also worth mentioning that her experience is essentially dissimilar to that of her mother and aunt who have undergone a border experience. It is imperative, in this respect, to shed some light on the different forms of exiles that the main characters accentuate as ideological strategies that were supposed to break them free from the political confinements. Back to Dulce's experience, whose experience of exile could be referred to as a redemptive journey that is predominantly a form of a socio-political resistance. Unlike Reina and Constancia, who chose to move to the closest place to their homeland, Dulce wanted to leave the whole continent to Spain as a total rejection of the worsening conditions at home but the consequent results were no better than the border experience. In Madrid, Dulce expresses an overwhelming feeling of regret and guild, she declares:

> I have no home, no job, no friends or family here. Only a stubborn fear. I'ye been wondering lately whether fear is necessary for survival, whether it sharpens the senses during storms of uncertainty. Or is it, as I suspect, merely another variant of weakness? Back in Cuba, the uncertainly wad dismal, but it was still a certainty. It was hard to fall between the cracks, to starve outright. I haven't decided yet where I'm the poorer. (García, "The Agüero" 204)

Eventually, with the decision of moving far away from Cuba, Dulce was more troubled with the uncertainty that she was obliged to deal with, which is essentially more frightening than the uncertainty of her motherland. At this point, Dulce is, as records in this excerpt, regretting at the same time afraid of the dubious present and the doubtful future as she compares them to the past that was hard to cope with but it was more or less certain. Referring back to the idea of choosing the possible over the actual and real, Dulce ventured for the possible that was unclear but for her it was comforting. Contrastively, the unsure possible erased all the positives dwelling the real. As Lefebvre says, "The possible is seen as abstract and vague, while the real is seen as think and weighty, as 'being' or 'existing'. But the possible enters the real. It appears there, it announces and invokes its presence within it, and then sets about destroying it and negating it" (195). We can say that the Cuban younger generation that doubtfully opted for exile were challenged with more hardships that in Cuba could have dealt with; hence, they go for the virtual instead of the actual that are dialectical in essence (Lefebvre 195).

5.6 Conclusion

In *The Agüero Sisters*, García's focal point is to uncover the difficulties that arise when confronting the truth. Letting go of an old reality in favour of a newer truth was the main concern of the two sisters as a main target for revealing the secret of their mother's murder in Cuba. As several mysterious scenes in the novel, Ignacio murder of his wife, their daughters' eventual reconciliation and the unravelling of the enigma surrounding their mother's death could have different interpretations and could imply a set of possibilities. Notwithstanding, we can assert that all the possible interpretations can possibly envelope the idea of a national reconciliation that has been for years distorted by

the Cuban politics as much of the novel emphasizes the idea of family divisiveness and the bitter schism that exists in a generation chain of the same family.

The intentionality of deploying multi-narration of using several voice and perspectives is of a significant importance to the encapsulation of historical, political and socio-cultural relevant details of Cuban generations. Eventually, García's three-dimensional characters technique was successful in the depicting life in Cuba as well as capturing the angst of the Cuban diaspora namely the exile community in Florida. Subsequently, Cuba's social deep problems, which were compounded by a chaotic and corrupt political history, were the key determining factors for the Cubans divisiveness and the deconstruction and distortion of the their national identity.

In what concerns magic being used in the novel, it is safe to argue that the novel's conventions of magical realism could effectively amplify certain magically pronounced scenes and give them resonance. However, compared to García's first novel *Dreaming in Cuban* where magic is used as an inseparable reality of the characters' daily life, The *Agüero Sisters* elements of magic are fundamentally different. The component of magic in the second novel gives a sense of a fragmented narrative due to the introduction of segments of magic that seem strange and surreal to the characters, the matter that drain the clarity of the plot. However, García's compelling and complex work could embody both extremes of amplifying reality and reducing its possibility to uncertainty.

An exploration of the nature of memory in the narrative is another crucial point that could clarify the characters' different adopted strategies for dealing with reality that is interpreted by revisited memories, nostalgic thoughts and amnesia. For the Cuban exile, as a case in point, amnesia and nostalgia are the main dialectical components of their

hybrid identities. For the few Cubans who chose to stay loyal to their Cubaness whether in the island or in exile, however, they were in a continuous search for the Cuban reality through the reconsideration and the re-examination of their past and memories that seem to be an indivisible part of their national identity.

Instead of forgetting about the past memories and the intentional detachment from Cuba, the Cubans ultimately recognize that they have to fully re-immerse themselves into Cuban life and come to terms with their past in order to reconcile their past with their present. The younger generation, however, seem to be less tolerant to the social and economic conditions in Cuba during the years of the revolution, unlike the older generations who were loyal to their country and the Cuban regime. The Cuban young generation announced their unconcealed frustration about the disappointing agenda of the revolution that failed in delivering its promises. This generation, eventually chose exile.

General Conclusion

It is fundamental to note that one of the main concerns of Cristina García, as a preeminent Cuban fictional writer, is to highlight the dilemma of the Cubans and Cuban exiles' shattered selves and the political reality behind. Interestingly, the presence of magical realism in such literary narratives promotes the ability of intertwining imaginary fiction with the factual reality. In fact, both of *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero sisters* could successfully manifest a significant positive consolidation between history and aesthetical fiction that resorts to different kinds of knowledge as imaginative interventions, dreaming as an escapist method, and the use of memory[1] for the simple fact of articulating the Cuban sociological reality.

The social program of the revolution that includes the proponents of Castroite nationalism and the Cubans who support the idea of a civic republic brought with it a set of socio-political values and the consolidation of certain beliefs and attitudes[2] that the Cubans adopted in interpreting and understanding their new reality. In the long run, this construction of a modern tendency towards patriotism led to the creation of a highly politicized society as politics penetrates into family life and ultimately administers it. Consequently, Cuban politics became a subsequent cause of family polarization, the emergence of a sense of detachment, and familial division.

In this thesis, I have argued that the thematic study of political culture is inevitable in discussing the Cuban socio-political issue. Due to the existing correlation between

[1]- Interviewing García on the recurrent themes of memory and imagination, Irizarry admits that memory plays an unprecedented role in thinking about our own lives, adding that the most repeated idea in *Dreaming* is, "And there's only my imagination where our history should be" (138). For deep understanding of memory used by García in her works, check *An Interview with Cristina García* (175-183).

[2]- By way of illustration, it is safe to say that Cubans could manifest a strong sense of intra group solidarity especially during and after their triumphant revolution. This attitude, for instance, is attributed to the Cuban citizens' socio-political success in demonstrating a national assertion of integrity and fidelity. The phenomena of migration is yet a vital peaceful Cuban acquired attitude for encountering totalitarianism and achieving nationhood.

political culture, political participation, and social psychology, it is of a paramount importance to examine and contextualize the main social notions that are fundamentally ascribable to political transformations, which bound the Cuban citizens together. In fact, the demarcation and formation of common social values and a homogeneous national culture were the essential result of collective consciousness that contributed to the evolution of Cuban political culture. The latter, however, went through different political disturbances starting with the Spanish colonial era, moving to the U.S imperialist and capitalist ideology, ending up with Fidel Castro's Revolution. One might say that undergoing such huge political transformations helped construct a national identity and a collective mind-set that is based on highly politicised social relations. Notwithstanding, the Cuban family has never been depoliticized, and that was due many parts to the ongoing metamorphosis of their government.

The phenomenon of migration to the United States, which gained an intense political connotation, is one of the crucial socio-political subjects that García successfully manages to deal with thoroughly in her two novels *Dreaming in Cuban* and *the Agüero Sisters*. The Cuban diaspora to the U.S. was about 700.000 Cubans throughout the years of the revolution[3]. It was between January 1959 and October 1962 that 250.000 people left the island among which García's family, Del Pino's Lourdes and Pilar, as well as The Agüero's Isabel and Constancia took the decision of looking for a better and stable life beyond the island's borders. On this point, Isabel Alvarez-Borland identifies García's works, which make room for examining the Cuban exilic experience from 1959 onwards, as "Ethnic Cuban American". For Alvarez-Borland, "the themes of exile and displacement seem to be a constant in the literature of the various generations", she

[3]- Alvarez-Borland, Isabel. *Cuban-American Literature of Exile: From Person to Persona* (Charlottesville, Va: The University Press of Virginia, 1998), p. 5.

notices that, "the perspective from which the story of diaspora is conceived and told varies considerably among the groups" (06). And that exactly what I have observed in García's novels, as she tries to reflect the different realities of the different Cuban generations during the Cuban diasporic era.

Since García is the daughter of the first generation exile, she noticeably emphasises on this acquainted generation that manifests notable differences in the perception of their Cuban island and the US. Interviewing García on that particular point, she declares that, "For me, growing up in an exile home with very anti-communist parents meant that I had a very limited notion of what Cuba and Cuban history meant. Everything revolved around the revolution; it was the big B.C. and A.D. of our lives" (Irizarry 178).

Despite the prevailing cultural, social, and political circumstances in both places, and regardless of whether they were born in the U.S. or they had left Cuba as infants, those ethnic American Cubans that are, again, portrayed in the characters of Lourdes, Pilar, Isabel, and Constancia faced differing crises. This young generation was forced to negotiate their past Cuban and present American and to recognize the major identity-defining shifts, as well as being able to reconstruct an identity that has been categorized as hyphenated with no direct knowledge of their Cuban life and experience.

To highlight the main lines of my argumentation, I have made every effort to examine one of the most critical era in the Cuban history through a literary analysis of a fictionalized Cuban politics that is intertwined with some magical elements targeting certain political issues. In a very unusual discourse, García projects three generations of women that spent years enduring the Cuban revolutionary regime. For her, the writing of Cuban reality becomes a matter of personal confessions that aims at building resilience

by recording the story of her people. In another interview, García asserts that her novels are, fundamentally, autobiographical; she clarifies,

> I wanted to examine very closely the personal cost of what happened in Cuba after 1959. And I wanted to very specifically examine how women have responded and adapted to what happened to their families after 1959. I also was very interested in examining the emotional and political alliances that form within families. There is a larger backdrop of it all, but in the writing itself I just stayed very close to the women. (qtd. in Bados Ciria, 510)

Through a process of analytical reading, I believe that in García's *Dreaming* and *The Agüero* the political connotations are exceedingly present as she constantly reminds her readers of the importance of pronouncing the different political systems' boundaries in Cuba and in the United States. For García, women are the ones under scope for understanding both their positive as well as negative responses to the revolution. In this sense, Garcia wants to model even the female body into a set of political concerns as one of the main issues for identification, approval and disapproval. In both narratives, the two female characters Lourdes Del Pino and Reina Agüero attempt at raising the debate of race and magic being described as charming mulatto beauty that highlights the prominent negotiations of their subjectivity through their physical attractive bodies. However, the two female characters, as I have argued, do not validate self-approval the same way. The same thing could also be said about Constancia Agüero, whose western beauty was rejected, like the mulatto Lourdes Del Pino the fact that interprets a direct result of personal and social analysis of the different racial appearances, which by means led to the rejection of the essentially exaggerated 'whiteness' beauty and the bad connotations associated with the mulatta beauty. Hence, we can clearly observe that the white female

body of the capitalist United States and the mulatto female body of the Communist Cuba are being subjected to derogation and abuse.

At this point, we came to the conclusion that the disintegration of the Cuban female identity within the place of birth or of exile, of either white or mulatto, is also the result of the insurmountable social and cultural values that are set in each society. This is to say that all of García's female characters that are predominant both in *Dreaming* and in *The Agüero* are eventually subdued and submitted to the governments and the cultures in attempt to conform to the dominant mores of their respective societies. Correspondingly, the formation of their subjectivities as well as the framing of their morals, emotions and psychology of individuals intersect with the political polarization that determines the social more and norms in the novels.

The political effects of both systems, Communism and Capitalism, were able to extend the personal to the familial issues that were doomed to division and separation. In both novels, the Cuban families of Del Pino and the Agüero were forced to division due to political visions that were dependent of political motivation, a calamity that led to consequent struggle and disunion. Such interfamilial tensions and interpersonal conflicts generated what we can name a cracked society that altered the Cuban national identity into shattered individual selves.

In this respect, García suggests that in order to heal the wounds of the Cuban division, the Cubanas could eventually take advantage of their memories that represent the past and dreams that represent the future, which would ultimately lead to a better present. In her work *Ex/Isle: Separation, Memory and Desire in Caribbean Women's Writing*, Elaine Savory affirms that exiled individuals could hold themselves accountable to the factors that reshaped or distorted their identities when "[…] examining the past,

working through memory and the desire for reconciliation of old and new versions of the self" (173).

By way of illustration from García's first novel, separation is an important theme. The familial relations in the novel transcend the Cuban perception of the revolutionary politics that was the main reason for the increasing feelings of attachment. In fact, the grandmother Celia, the mother Lourdes, and the granddaughter Pilar hold a significant amount of memories that differ respectively depending on the various opinions about their revolutionary experiences. Unlike the mother, Lourdes, who hopelessly chose to immigrate in attempt to forget her traumatic experiences on the island, her daughter, Pilar, seems to be the victim of her mother's decision that was in return based on her rejection of Celia's revolutionary ideas. In a consequence to her parents' decision, Pilar was in a continuous search for truth that nobody could provide her with just her grandmother through imagination and dreams.

Within *Dreaming*, magic is the one crucial literary element that best accentuates and amplifies the Cuban experience and history. This fictional component is meant to recreate an alternative microcosmic history that parallels the real history of Cuba. Therefore, the psychological and mental states of the main female characters play a vital role in accentuating the magic that could ultimately bridge the binary contradictions of reality and uncertainty. Ultimately, the female characters resort to various magical ways for the reconciliation with their past, which embodies the displacement and estrangement caused by exile, trying to redeem a past that is marginal to their present.

In *the Agüero Sisters*, both sisters strive for finding the adequate ways that would allow them to deal with the reality that remains for years unrevealed. For that matter, both Constancia and Reina hold different opinions and, eventually, different reactions to their

island's socio-politics that altered their familial as well as their personal lives. Referring back to my argument, the Agüero sisters ultimately understand that in order to let go of their past haunting souvenirs of their parents and their mother's murder, they must think again of their past by adopting new strategies for dealing with their memories. They, finally, accepted re-evaluating their pasts and abandoning the nostalgia for Cuba by visiting it, an experience that would allow them to uncover their parents' truth and accepting it. This crucial solution, metaphorically, means the acceptance of Cuba's truth, as the sisters' return to Cuba attest and confirm a family murder instead of a mere rehearse of affirmations that aim at forgetting the painful past.

By way of finally summing up, I believe that García successfully manoeuvres providing her stock characters, who portray the Cuban exile experience, an ultimate solution for their estrangement, separation, and their growing nostalgic feelings about their island. For this reason, García could finally heal the fragmentation of exile by the simple fact of accepting their present and coming to terms with their past.

In discussing the major meeting points in comparing *Dreaming* and *The Agüero*, I have found that the main female characters differ significantly. This difference, nevertheless, helps the reader to have a clear and full vision of the Cuban political culture scene regarding the revolution. One of the most important differences is Celia Del Pino's role in *Dreaming*. She is the only actively pro-Castro figure in both novels. In *The Agüero*, however, the two sisters did not accept Castro's revolution and decided definitely to leave Cuba sooner like Constancia or later like Reina. In *dreaming*, conversely, Pilar Puente was obliged to leave the island with her parents at a very young age, yet throughout the novel she was eager to know about the magic of the island. On the question of truth, as described in the second novel, the Agüero sisters constantly reflect openly on the

questions of truth, past, and memory, unlike Celia and Pilar in *Dreaming*, where they use telepathy, imagination, and dreams in attempt to articulate truth. It is, hence, clear that the different representations of reality depend primarily on the author's use of variant magical elements that suit the divergent exilic experiences of the Cuban women and the manifold mystifications of the Cuban past events.

Following the reasoning of García's deployment of the dissimilar elements of magic in her works, I support the idea that García was persisting on the avoidance of delivering any univocal political messages. By doing so, her works are not going to be read as mere doctrinal or ideological texts but as an aesthetically appealing literature that intend to uncover present social realities in a mold of magical realism. Notwithstanding, the co-existence of the various overlaps of the acceptance and resistance strategies against the mores of the Cuban politics set the scene for the 'magical events' as a collective socio-political unconscious to occur in the fictitious works of Garcia. However, the magical realist literary form of expression has proved elusive and limited in its ability to delineating the empirically political scene in a personal manner through a subjective literary response.

Therefore, García's writings are, literally, fuelled not by transferring straightforward political reports or recordings of what was happening in Cuba during the revolution, but rather by highlighting the personal, psychological, and socio-political experiences of the Cuban women. In other words, she wants to inspect and accentuate the history that does involve all of the experiences stated earlier for defining hers and her people's Cubanidad. She declares, "I set out to explore Cuban history for myself in all its interesting permutations, in all its curious contributions from the far flung corners of the

world… So I guess the [novels were] a chance to amplify my own sense of Cuban history" (Irizarry 178).

With this in mind, it is quite clear that the organic nature of magical realist writings in general deal more or less with the historical issues that target the social status quo of a given people including its culture, politics, personal experiences, and the societal set of beliefs. Evidently, the stated matters take into account the essential features of this literary mode that tends, predominantly, to pronounce topics that are essentially controversial and could held various interpretations. In consonance with what Zamora and Faris have discussed about the violation of the social, political or historical reality boundaries through the use of magical elements, it is undeniable that the mode is featured by its 'transgressive and subversive' treats that can be traced whence the described reality starts to be doubted and hence vulnerable and unreliable.

The blur that occurs between fiction and fact in literary narration could not possibly occur without intertwining what is factual with what is real using imagination, dreams, besides the distortion of certain crucial concepts as space and time. With its ability to go back and forth in time and its possibility of traversing the logic and the extraordinary worlds, magical realism with its distinguishing duality that merged could ultimately create a convenient atmosphere for alternative representations of history, politics and society.

There is no doubt that through the readings and analyses of García's works I have discovered that the author stylistically tries to sustain her own way of using magical realism and imagery that proved to be aesthetical, peculiar and marvellous. The use of this literary mode also proved its ability to carry a wealth of ironies and mystical significance as well as a diverse range of interpretations and meanings. The changes in

narration, however, among the novels' characters gave the scrutinized reality a new breadth as Garcia tries to depict different opinions and views that existed in both locals, which by means assumes the author's acquaintance with life in the two places. Hence, we can say that the main binding agent in the two narratives is the magical, which could therefore prove its verity in demarcating the boundaries by relating the various generational realities projected by beliefs and practices of the different characters with the mystification of past and the uncertainty of the present.

The reached results and the drawn conclusions in the present thesis, I believe, are excellent initial steps for constituting other preeminent researches that relate to Cuban sociological or political matters like the exodus of the US from Cuba, the Cuban Revolution, and the crisis of the Cuban identity formation. It is noteworthy that this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the political cultural theory in the light of studying the Cuban case as described in the initial literary works of Cristina García. I admit, however, that my work had have some limitations; nevertheless, it could be a springboard for interesting further studies. Cultural politics of the Cuban revolution is a fundamental issue for future research as culture and its different artistic forms in contemporary Cuban society plays a crucial role in advertising the revolution and its manifold causes and results. For that matter, Cristina García's recent works like Monkey Hunting (2003), I Wanna Be Your Shoebox (2008), The Lady Matador's Hotel (2010), or King of Cuba (2013) are combination of realistic and magical realist works that still attempt at treating the social status of the Cubans and Cuban exiles.

Glossary

Glossary

abuela. The Spanish term abuela orabuelita, which literally means the grandmother, plays a crucial role in the Hispanic societies and traditions. The abuelas are considered the most respected member of the family and have a crucial position in shaping the children's identity.

¡Azúcar para crecer…! "Sugar to grow" is a slogan of one of the most important products in the Cuban economy. During the years of the revolution, Castro called for a new sugar strategy by mobilizing the country's workforce under this slogan for the goal of reaching ten million tons of sugar.

Comités de Defensa da la Revolución. Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, CDRs are committees in all around Cuba that worked as defenders of the revolution by the promotion for social welfare and a spy on the counter-revolutionary activities. The committees are described as the "eyes and ears of the Revolution".

El Hombre Nuevo. The 'New Man' is a socio-political idea that Che Guevara came up with contrasting the western idea of individualism. In essence, the New Man is a socialist ideology that is based on the role of the new individual within the Cuban society.

El Lider. During the years of the Cuban Revolution, the political leader Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz was given many surnames like *El Lider, El Lider Maximo,* and *El Comandante.*

Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria. (Schools for Revolutionary Instruction) by the start of the 1959 revolution, preparing Cuban militants of the Communist party was of primary concern for the Cuban revolutionary leaders. Education was the most important sector to spread socialist and communist ideas, hence, they launched a Cuban literacy campaign that aimed at disseminating revolutionary ideas.

fidelistas. The supporters of Fidel Castro are those who were backing the leader and were in a total agreement with the revolutionary doctrine.

Gusanos. Gusanos are the first anti-Castro regime exiles who were white former landowners who fled Cuba to the United States after the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista. Castro called the Gusanos, or worms as an insulting calling for their betrayal of the country and the revolution. The Gusanos were also the ones who took part in the different military operations against Cuba like the Bay of Pigs.

¡independencia o muerte!, (**libertad o muerte, patria o muerte, socialismo o muerto)** is one of the many other slogans of the Cuban Revolution.

jinetero. The word literally means jockey, they are the Cuban youth that became involved in prostitution with tourists, as a creative new way of gaining money.

la cubanidad. Cubaness is the full experience of being Cuban including identity, history, society and its culture.

La Federación de Mujeres Cubanas. The Federation of Cuban Women is an organization, which was called "the revolution within the revolution", dealt primarily with women issues with the goal of mobilizing them. The FCW was founded by the leader in 1960, and headed by Vilma Espín.

la madrina. Is a Spanish word for the godmother that has a respectful and honourable mission of raising and educating other people's children. The title implies a special and life long relationship.

Lo Real Maravilloso y Realismo Mágico. The marvellous real and Magical Realism.

macho. The traditional type of the Cuban male who is believed to be masculine in an overly assertive or aggressive way.

Movimiento 26 de Julio. The 26th of July Movement was a militant Cuban revolutionary organization and later a political party led by Fidel Castro. The movement's name commemorates its 26th July 1953 attack on the army barracks on Santiago de Cuba in an attempt to start the overthrowing of the dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Revolución and Noticias de Hoy. The Revolution and Today's News in an independent media coverage of the revolutionary news in Cuba.

testimonio. Testimonial discourse is a narrative trend that gives account to the historical events that are interwoven with fictitious elements. The Cuban testimonio, by way of illustration, reflects life as it really was during the revolution.

vanguardia. A Latin American movement of the avant-garde that appeared in Latin American literature as a response to mundane conventions of Modernismo during the 20th century. The Vanguardia established a radical change in various genres that focused predominantly on daring and confrontational matters.

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Résumé

Le travail actuel examine les projections thématiques des transformations sociopolitiques cubaines qui ont affecté l'île et réparti leur familles cubaines durant la révolution de Fidel Castro. Dans cette étude, nous essayons d'étudier les résultats sociaux cubains de la révolution à travers une observation minutieuse des personnages féminins de *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) et *The Agüero Sisters* (1997) de l'écrivaine Cubaine Américaine Cristina García pour une compréhension extra- et intra-textuelle de la culture politique cubaine. Dans ses deux romans, l'auteur essaie de projeter la culture politique de son peuple et de sa nation divisée tout en utilisant des rêves, de l'imagination, et de souvenirs de femmes qui pourraient finalement créer des passerelles de communication entre les différentes générations cubaines. Tout au long notre analyse textuelle qui dépendait essentiellement des approches psychologiques et sociologiques, nous avons pu constater que García a envisagé l'effet substantiel des visions politiques par des événements magiques, combinant une représentation réaliste avec des éléments magiques pour produire des images puissantes qui déterminent la réalité et accentuent l'inséparabilité du personnel et du politique. Enfin, on peut dire que les éléments magiques de *Dreaming in Cuban* doivent décrire un état psychologique d'échapper à une réalité imposée sur la jeune génération cubaine d'exilés forcés. Dans *The Agüero Sisters*, cependant, la représentation de la magie n'est qu'une simple manifestation de souvenirs rejetés.

ملخص

يعمل هذا البحث على تسليط الضوء على أهم الإسقاطات الموضوعية للتحولات الاجتماعية والسياسية التي مرت بها الجزيرة الكوبية وقسمت العائلات الكوبية خلال سنوات ثورة فيدال كاسترو. في هذه الدراسة، يتم التحقق من الوقائع الاجتماعية للثورة الكوبية من أجل فهم أبرز الطرق المنتهجة لفحص والتعامل مع الثقافة السياسية في كوبا من خلال فحص الشخصيات *The Agüero Sisters(1997)* و *Dreaming in Cuban (1992)*. النسائية في روايتي الكاتبة الكوبية كريستينا غارسيا تحاول الأديبة التي تعتمد في كتاباتها على تبنيها لتقنية الأدبية التي تعرف بالواقعية السحرية أن تسلط الضوء على معاناة الشعب الكوبي المنقسم من خلال توظيف عنصر الخيال، الأحلام و استرجاع الذكريات لنساء كوبيات، والتي ستبني في نهاية المطاف جسور التواصل بين الأجيال الكوبية. يمكن القول بأن الشخصيات النسائية في الروايتين تمكنت من بناء علاقة صحية بين ماضيهم الكوبي وحاضرهم في المهجر وذلك من خلال إعادة النظر لماضيهم المؤلم عبر توظيف عناصر الخيال واللاواقعية والتي يمكن بدورها إعطاء مفاهيم مختلفة للرؤى السياسية بالجمع بين التمثيل الواقعي والعناصر السحرية لإنتاج صور قوية تحدد الواقع. في النهاية المطاف يمكننا القول أن التمثيل الحتمي لوجهة نظر متعددة الرؤى من خلال تعاقب الأجيال عبر التاريخ الكوبي في الروايتين المختارتين هو تناسخ ظاهري يزود القارئ بجملة من الاختلافات في فهم المجتمع الكوبي وتعدد ردود الأفعال تجاه الثورة الكوبية والعقيدة الثورية للزعيم فيدال كاسترو.