Global Migrations in Cuban and Cuban American Literature: What is Carried, What is Lost, and What is Left Behind

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To my family:

Mom and Dad
Megan, Julia, Jessica
and
Hazel

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Introduction: Migration, Cultural Inheritance, and Marginalized Voices

> "Born on the threshold of a revolution, bound up in the bloody caul of a dying order, I inherited a world built upon the shifting sands of nostalgia—a phantom world without scapulars and monuments—without ruins and sacred stones"[1]
>
> —Andrea O'Reilly Herrera

This dissertation examines the effects and consequences of migration in the literature of Cuban and Cuban American women writers. In the following four chapters, I consider the migrant's adaptation to a new community and what the migrant gains, preserves, and loses during this process. With this investigation, I contribute to ongoing conversations surrounding cultural change and global movement. More specifically, my research explores spectral representations of cultural inheritance, hybrid spiritual practices, and historically marginalized voices.

Contemporary Cuban and Cuban American literature published between 1993 and 2006 provides a foundation for this study. The selected works depict the island's unique history of migration, as Cuba was both a destination for 19th century Chinese indentured servants and a place of departure for 20th century exiles fleeing Castro's Cuba. Fernando Ortiz's metaphor of the ever-transitioning *ajiaco*, or stew, describes Cuba's reception of diverse peoples from around the world. During the colonial period, the principal groups contributing to Cuban culture arrived from different parts of Africa, Spain, and China. Both of the novels studied—Daína Chaviano's *La isla de los amores infinitos* (2006) and Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting* (2003)—depict Cuba's multicultural past by interweaving different traditional practices and texts into their portrayals of island history. They specifically highlight the Chinese Cuban population, which

[1] (O'Reilly Herrera, *Politics* 176)

appeared on the island from 1847 to 1874 with the arrival of 120,000 indentured laborers (Okihiro 43). In doing so, Chaviano's and García's novels depict contributions of a population that has frequently been sidelined in Cuban history (López 210).[2] In hopes of working toward this same goal, I include historical data in the footnotes of chapters two and three.

Cuba's historical trajectory of immigration shifted with the Cuban Revolution of 1959, when thousands of Cubans left the island in subsequent waves of emigration.[3] Migration and adaptation continued to define Cuban identity in the second half of the twentieth century, as Cubans on the island dealt with the loss of loved ones and those who left Cuba recognized their island's culture and maintained traditions in exile.[4] A substantial number of these emigrants fled to the United States, where many came together to form a community off the island. In the 2010 US Census, nearly 1.8 million people claimed Cuban origin.[5]

[2] See chapter three, footnote 140.

[3] Notably, during the 19th century, many people emigrated from the island during the conflicts that lead to Cuba's independence from Spain. These conflicts include the Guerra de los Diez Años and the Guerra de Independencia, the former of resulted in the deportation of José Martí to Spain.

[4] The terms "refugee," "exile," and "migrant" refer to different conditions. Although I do not exactly follow the International Rescue Center's definitions, I would like to note that they differentiate between refugees and migrants: "Refugees are forced to flee their homes and seek safety in another country, often times without warning. Migrants are people who make a conscious decision to leave their countries to seek a better life elsewhere." [https://www.rescue.org/frequently-asked-questions-about-refugees-and-resettlement] For the purposes of this dissertation, I do not use "refugee," but rather refer to any character who moves to another country for any reason as a migrant. "Exile" specifically refers to any character who has left Castro's Communist Cuba.
The Cambridge Dictionary defines an exile as a someone "sen[t] or ke[pt] … away from his or her own country or home, esp. for political reasons." [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/exile]

[5] Census records show 1,785,547 people living in the United States claimed Cuban origin in 2010. [https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf]

Loss of heritage and endurance of tradition are issues central to the migrant's negotiation of identity, in the texts selected for this dissertation. The first three chapters consider spectral elements that inform individual's different relationships with a left-behind home country. The limits of time and space define the exile experience—an exile is geographically displaced from her home country, past, and heritage. For these exiles, Cuba is a home restricted to memory and closed off by political borders. Exiles cannot return home. Specters transcend these limits, moving freely from here to there, from then to now. In this way, the ghostly can overcome the very boundaries that confine the exile. This allows spectral elements to make present a Cuban heritage from which the exile is forcibly separated. Hauntings keep the past in the present and prevent the exile from forgetting her Cuban heritage.

In my first chapter, I seek to understand how four writers draw upon spectral presences to discuss Cuban identity in exile. I read the spectral elements of four poems: Nancy Morejón's "Ante un espejo" (1993); Nilda Cepero's "Burialground" (1997) and "Tropical Flavor" (1998); Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's "Inhabited Woman" (1999); and one novel: the aforementioned *La isla de los amores infinitos* by Daína Chaviano (2006). Each writer depicts exile from a different perspective. Morejón writes as a Cuban woman who stayed on the island as friends and family entered exile, Cepero immigrated to the US as a child, O'Reilly Herrera was born in the US to a Cuban mother, and Chaviano left Cuba for Miami as an adult. From my study of these texts, written by women writers of progressive generations of exile, I propose a transformation of the specter: as subsequent generations become more removed from the experience of trauma itself, the spectral presences shift in nature from being terrifying phantoms to nostalgic haunters to, finally, welcomed spirits of the past. This transition in the spirits' affective nature concurs with an inward movement of the specter. Whereas the frightening ghosts haunt exterior spaces, the

benevolent spirits remain present within the bodies of the exile's descendants. Throughout the generations and the healing process they present, the specter represents the trauma of exile and keeps an inherited history present.

This first chapter adds a spectral reading of Cuban exile to the growing corpus of work on spectrality studies. It addresses fears that Cuban identity and heritage will be lost in exile and how this culture is maintained off the island. While more recent academic research focuses on the figure of the ghost as evidence of unresolved trauma, my readings align with Kathleen Brogan's assertion that "stories of cultural haunting are drawn together [. . .] by their tendency to organize plots as a movement from negative to positive forms of haunting" (17). In agreement with her claim, I emphasize the healing process represented by the change in the nature of the texts' spiritual presences.

My discussion of exile emphasizes the specter's capacity for representing both trauma and healing. As Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen write: "the ghost allows for the possibility of a transgenerational ethics, as it reveals an obligation to victims whose presence has been excluded from the historical record and hegemonic discourse" (3). The ghost allows for painful histories to linger so that future generations may acknowledge past tragedies and find healing that might not have previously been available. In this way, the spectral also makes present trauma that has been lost, ignored, or brushed aside. The ghost refuses to completely disappear, but instead insists on remaining. This resistive quality makes the spectral a powerful tool for remembering unhealed cultural traumas that have been historically left unresolved or cast aside by dominant discourse.

In chapter two, I align *Monkey Hunting*'s portrayal of migrant experiences with elements of rites of transition. My investigation offers a message of social criticism presented in Cristina

García's novel. Chen Pan and Domingo Chen, two of the novel's protagonists, both leave their home countries as young men. Yet the outcomes of their migrations differ significantly. Chen Pan sails to Cuba in 1857 as an indentured servant. He soon escapes from the sugar plantation where he was contracted and successfully establishes a life in Havana's Chinatown. Generations later, Chen Pan's great-grandson, Domingo Chen, enters exile in New York City after the Cuban Revolution. Not long after this, he joins US military forces in the Vietnam War. Chen Pan adapts and achieves fulfillment in Cuba, but exile propels Domingo Chen into a state of aimless wandering. I focus on the novel's rhetoric of death and rebirth to compare their stories and suggest why Chen Pan is able to transition to life abroad, but Domingo is not: Domingo is unable to "re-root" in the damaged earth around him. He cannot experience a "rebirth" after the death of a past life because the same human corruption that forces migration also poisons the environment and creates an increasingly inhabitable world.

My reading of García's text in chapter two emphasizes migration as both a physical and a spiritual journey. In *Monkey Hunting*'s appendix, Cristina García includes an interview in which she states: "I thought it would be interesting to explore [. . .] What do we inherit, not just physically but emotionally, psychologically, temperamentally? Does the past suffuse the present like a kind of water table?" (*Monkey* 260-1). Aspects of each character's story relate to these questions and arise throughout the novel. Their presence within the text shape my discussion of intangible elements that are passed down through generations of families as I consider the elements of Chen Pan's Chinese identity that survive the process of adaption to Cuban society. This study leads into chapter three, in which I read *Monkey Hunting* alongside *La isla de los*

amores infinitos. I investigate aspects of culture that survive tests of time and global movement to finally suggest that intangible presences and beliefs can foster community.[6]

Chapter three discusses the spiritual presences and practices represented in *La isla de los amores infinitos* and *Monkey Hunting* to propose their unique role in the migrants' transition to a new society. I read the novels' depictions of migration through Doris Sommer's concept of "wiggle room." Wiggle room is the space that emerges between restrictive, oppressive social structures and allows for creative cultural agency.[7] In both novels, spirits and spiritual traditions inhabit wiggle room. From this position, they simultaneously facilitate the migrants' preservation of their home heritage and their adaptation to a new community. As the novels' characters demonstrate flexibility and openness to spiritual presences and practices, they create and accept hybrid belief systems. Their representation of spiritual syncretism and adaptation speaks to both novels' depiction of Cuban society as multicultural and continually transforming.

However, the texts' similar portrayals of specters, migration, and adaptation diverge as they ultimately come to different conclusions regarding the threat of exile to Cuban culture and

[6] Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen point out that Derrida "drove the theoretical focus away from questions of existence or non-existence and the afterlife [. . .] and brought the focus to its spectral quality" of the immaterial or intangible (2).

[7] In looking at the spiritual, my intention is not to conflate spirituality, religion, and ghosts/spirits/the spectral. I base my discussions of "the spiritual" on how the texts translate belief in spiritual presences into the everyday life of their characters. Chaviano's novel, as a work filled with fantastical elements, presents a "real" world where ghosts exist alongside humans. Only characters with privileged insight recognize these presences. These beings go unseen by the majority of humans, but help those who recognize and believe in them. Regarding spiritual beliefs, I investigate how traditions and practices exist culturally in the characters' everyday lives. Kathleen Brogan sets a precedence for this approach in her study of cultural hauntings in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1993). Brogan discusses the role of Santería in the novel, highlighting the religion's syncretic practices and "the centrality of spirit possession" as key to understanding the ghostly in this earlier novel by García.

identity. Chaviano's ghosts teach the exile that home and heritage can be preserved within an individual. Furthermore, the narrative calls for the preservation of Cuban culture, which, in Chaviano's view, is being forgotten on the island as the current regime dismisses Cuban history and tradition. García's novel, on the other hand, follows Domingo Chen on his journey from Cuba to the United States to Vietnam. While spiritual practices aided his great-grandfather's transition to Cuba, Domingo Chen is unable to find a home off the island. He wanders without a sense of purpose, longing for a place to which he cannot return. Domingo Chen's story suggests that continual uprooting results in displacement and the loss of a sense of self.

Chapter four departs from the focus on inherited culture and spectral elements, but similarly discusses effects of migration that can go unseen. This final chapter investigates the role of Chen Fang in *Monkey Hunting*. Chen Fang's story, told in just three chapters of the novel, represents comparatively little text in a work that focuses on Chen Pan and Domingo Chen. Furthermore, these men migrate around the world and an omniscient narrator recounts their stories. Chen Fang, however, is a woman who lives in China during the first half of the 20th century. She voices the only first-person narration of the novel. I propose that her narrative represents her subaltern status—and the reality of women who are left behind when men migrate—by allotting her significantly less textual space. However, the novel also privileges her limited account by granting Chen Fang the novel's sole first-person voice. Chen Fang represents herself, and in doing so, resurrects her own story and gives it presence within a novel that otherwise tells the cross-continental journeys of men.

Furthermore, Chen Fang's text invites us to consider the quiet or silenced roles of women who appear as minimal characters in the other sections of the novel. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes of alternative discourse: "If, in the contest of colonial production the subaltern has no

history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 524). In the male-centered novel, Chen Fang's narrative brings other subaltern female histories out of the shadows. Likewise, my research purposefully focuses on works written by women as a means of helping to illuminate these traditionally "shadowed" stories.

Chen Fang's character reminds us of the voices that have been lost in dominant discourse. In this way, the last chapter returns to the first chapter's discussion of the possibilities of alternative discourse and the recuperation of untold histories. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock discusses the underlying histories that linger through spectral presences, stating that the spectral allows for an alternative reading of history because of "the usefulness of the ghost in the revisioning of history from alternate, competing perspectives" (5). Just as Chen Fang's story asks us to remember the stories forgotten from official narratives, the ghost's presence insists on remaining, even when official narratives deny its existence. Weinstock continues, "haunting indicates that, beneath the surface of received history, there lurks another narrative, an untold story that calls into question the veracity of the authorized version of events" (5).[8] The specter's persistence through time keeps present these untold, lost, or repressed narratives so that they may be acknowledged, recovered, and/or addressed in future generations.

The selected texts gesture to the role of women as transmitters of culture and heritage. As Trinh Minh-ha argues, "The world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. [. . .] Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and of transmission" (121). Historically considered

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[8] Furthermore, "Spectrality or haunting rises as an aesthetic opposed to conditions or moods generated by military, political, or economic violence in the context of modernity. It is an aesthetic that seeks ways to counteract erasure, silencing, and forgetting that eschews melancholic attachment to loss" (Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen 6).

purveyors of cultural tradition, women frequently fulfill this role in the selected texts as they provide connection to their homelands. In García's novel, the secondary women characters live closely linked to their homes, tied to the places around them. For the migrating male characters, they offer a connection to their community's social fabric. Throughout the migration experience, women transfer or keep culture and tradition.

Spectral presences, spiritual beliefs, and traditional practices inform the women's role of maintaining this tradition.[9] Cuban specters haunt the texts of Cepero, Chaviano, García, Morejón, and O'Reilly Herrera to insist upon the presence of the past in their exiles' lives. Through these presences, women safeguard culture or create new spiritual practices. They stay behind or transition to new homes. They live haunted by spirits or as ghosts themselves. In all of the texts, their specters shed light on stories of migration.

[9] In her study of cultural hauntings, Brogan similarly focuses upon works by three women authors and notes that women write ghosts stories more often than their male counterparts (24-6).

Chapter One:

Haunting Pasts: Ghosts of Exile in the Poetry and Prose of Cuban and Cuban American Women

"Behind every woman writer flutters the ghost of her mother"
–Nancy Morejón quoting Virginia Woolf[10]

Barack Obama and Fidel Castro announced a warming of Cold War-era diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba in December 2014. In July of the following year, the leaders of both nations promised to reopen embassies on either side of the Florida Straits. During this time of pending change, the *Miami New Times* published an article titled "The Ghost of a Beautiful One-Legged Cuban Woman Haunts Miami's Old Cuban Consulate." In it, Jess Swanson writes, "Amidst all the news today about the U.S. and Cuba officially reopening diplomatic ties, it's easy to forget how close the nations once were. In fact, Miami itself was once a hotbed of diplomacy with Havana, thanks to a Cuban consulate located right in town on North Miami Avenue." She continues to tell the tale of Paula, a Cuban Consul's beautiful wife from Havana who, after moving to Miami in 1926, suffered a leg amputation, died a mysterious death, and may or may not have been buried in the backyard of the consulate. Present day visitors may catch a glimpse of a long-haired, one-footed beauty roaming the halls of the building, hear the phantom music of an old time piano, smell Cuban coffee brewing, and find flowers placed upon an outside grave.

A half-century of disaccord separates Cuba from its exiled generation, this generation's children, and their grandchildren. Yet a ghost story reminds us of a not-so-distant past when Cuba and the US enjoyed a more harmonious political relationship. The story recalls a

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[10] Quoted in Ruth Behar's *Bridges to Cuba* (133-4).

connection to the island that existed before the Cuban Revolution, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and the Mariel boatlift.[11] Official dealings between the two governments have dictated and continue to influence important aspects of the lives of Cubans and Cuban Americans alike. Exiled Cubans and their descendants comprise more than a third of Miami's population and steep the city in a distinctly Cuban heritage. Much like the continued presence of the Consulate's ghost, Cuban culture persists in spite of political differences. On both the island and abroad, shared cultural roots tie together the geographically separated and politically divided communities.

In this chapter, I examine how spectral presences manifest the trauma of exile and, in progressive generations, transform in presence and tone to represent a changing relationship with Cuban exile identity. The selected poems describe the Cuban and Cuban American exile experience: Nancy Morejón's "Ante un espejo" (1993), Nilda Cepero's "Burialground" (1997) and "Tropical Flavor" (1998), and Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's "Inhabited Woman" (1999). In these texts, ghosts of exile haunt to remind the poetic voices of their Cuban roots. Through spectral presences, the past lingers in the lives of exiles and their descendants. I highlight a shift in the nature of the specter that corresponds with the poets' exile generation: as time grants new generations of Cuban Americans distance from their parents' experience of exile, the specter changes from horrific to melancholic and, finally, becomes a comforting reminder of heritage. This affective shift also aligns with a transformation in the specter's physical presence. With time, the specters move inward. They haunt the exterior spaces surrounding the exile, but, as

[11] The dates of these events are: the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959); the Bay of Pigs Invasion (April 15, 1961); the Mariel boatlift (1981). Today the Cuban American population includes almost 2 million people, with 60% living in southern Florida. While geography and economic relations established immigration patterns centuries ago, waves of immigrants came from the island as political exiles after Fidel Castro's assent to power (M. C. García 146, 149-155).

their nature changes, they settle within the body of the new generation.[12] I propose that this inward movement coincides with a loss of the specter's "uncanny" nature, as it becomes "re-homed" in the descendant's body. From this change, I recognize the specter's ability to facilitate individual healing and safeguard Cuban culture off the island. While many contemporary spectrality studies focus on the ghost as a means of making present unresolved trauma, I emphasize the power of the specter to reconcile inherited pain. After reading the selected poems, I switch genres to study how ghosts similarly appear in Daína Chaviano's fantasy novel, *La isla de los amores infinitos* (2006). I include her novel to discuss a text that is very different from the poems, but similarly employs spectral presences to aid the main character's process of reconciliation with exile.

This investigation adds Cuban exile literature to the growing body of work stemming from spectral theory. While spectral studies have touched upon US Latinx writing, to my knowledge no other work has researched exile and spectrality in Cuban poetry, Cuban American poetry or in Chaviano's novel.[13]

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[12] Brogan describes the limitations of a strictly three-generation model proposed by Freud: "an assimilationist second generation rears children nostalgic for the lost culture of the emigrant grandparents. One generation's parental rejection succeeds another: proximity produces fear of ethnic difference, while greater distance (and the powerful desire to revise parental choices) yields reverence for ancestors" (21). She goes on to write that Freud's noted shift from the frightful to the honored "could be aligned with the familiar three-stage model of immigrant generational succession", but warns that Freud's conception of mourning is limited and the "three-generations" model is "simplistic" (21). She continues to discuss this idea and other options for viewing generations of migration and exile. Studies of exile and, more broadly, trauma should resist grand labeling brushstrokes as they risk losing the diversity of individual experiences. Such diversity within a community can be lost in all-encompassing, sweeping statements. (Although some, like Avery F. Gordon, argue that haunting is a "generalizable haunting phenomenon" (106)).

[13] I read the spectral elements of the selected works to note a correlation between their ghostly presences and the processing of trauma. However, I do not wish to suggest that a study of five

I. Introduction[14]

The selected texts evince a striking pattern in the works of Cuban Americans: the poetic voices and narrators are, it seems, haunted by the past. The inability to return to a homeland permeates a community and creates issues unlike those confronted by other immigrant communities.[15] Although often grouped together, Latinx communities in the United States have histories that vary significantly and the literatures they produce differ in important ways.[16] Nostalgia, loss, and heritage inform the works of many immigrant writers, but an exile's experience differs from other types of migrants in that the exile does not leave her country by choice (Kunz 130).

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texts might represent the experiences of thousands of people. I focus on the prominent inclusion of specters and spirits in an effort to explore how exiles negotiate heritage and identity.

[14] We cannot assume any of the works to be completely autobiographical as the writers do not expressly say so. However, it is valuable to understand the poet's personal relationship with exile and how this might affect how Cuba and Cuban heritage take shape in each poem. For this reason, I include a brief introduction to the life of each writer along with a presentation of the texts.

[15] These themes are frequent concerns in US Latinx writing and, specifically considering canonical Caribbean/Caribbean-American works, are prevalent in novels such as Julia Álvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) and Esmeralda Santiago's autobiography *When I was Puerto Rican* (1993).

[16] Latinx writers often dialogue with the past and tradition. But while Cub*and* writers of the past few decades predominantly respond to the experience of exile, *Chicano*/a writers, for instance, seem more inclined toward expressing identity in terms of creating something new and hybrid (take Gloria Anzaldúa and the "New Mestiza" identity or Michele Serros and her self-proclaimed identity as a "chicana falsa"). As we will see, descendants of exiles tend to be more forward looking, but inherit the strained relationship with the island of their ancestors in a way that is distinct from other groups.

Cuban Americans' history sets them apart from other Latinx populations who have immigrated and established communities within the United States.[17] Scholars note this difference: Héctor Romero underscores a distinction in his discussion of Latinx literatures when he emphasizes the overall trend of Cuban American writers to respond to exile, and Gustavo Pérez Firmat concludes that Cuban American literature (unlike Chicanx writing, for example) conceives of culture as appositional instead of oppositional (Romero 7; Pérez Firmat 6).[18] Cuban exiles write the memories of a place to which they are unable to return, and many Cuban Americans tell of a home they know only through the stories of others.[19] Thus, a grappling with the implications of displacement, exile, and the loss of a homeland weighs especially heavily in the work of Cuban exiles and Cuban Americans.

Within the selected works, ghosts of exile manifest in accordance with "communal memory, cultural transmission and group inheritance," which are all characteristics of what Brogan terms "cultural haunting" (6). Within "stories of cultural haunting," specters often act as a "go-between, an enigmatic transitional figure moving between the past and the present, death

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[17] Arturo Arias also emphasizes the need to recognize difference within the US Latinx community in his discussion of Central American literature, warning against the "homogenizing what is, in reality, a very heterogeneous community" (190).

[18] Pérez Firmat uses this term to discuss what he identifies as the Cuban American community's focus on tradition, translation, and accommodation. "Appositional" emphasizes the ability of Cuban and US cultures to exist side by side rather than opposing each other in conflict.

[19] O'Reilly Herrera writes, "As many critics have observed, [. . .] the idea of Cuba that most Cuban exiles nurture and seek to preserve gives itself out as a refracted, shadowy image of a lost world, a fragmented void, an appropriated recollection partially "re-membered" [. . .] through the blue cloud of nostalgia or reconstructed through the vicarious imagination of those who either have never been to the Island, or were not old enough to remember when they left" (*ReMembering* xxix).

and life, one culture and another" (Brogan 6).[20] I draw upon the idea of the ghostly as an intermediary to examine how each writer employs the spectral to "culturally haunt" and how such presences represent Cuban and Cuban American exile experiences.[21] Furthermore, Brogan asserts that "stories of cultural haunting are drawn together [. . .] by their tendency to organize plots as a movement from negative to positive forms of haunting" (17). My reading of the texts' Cuban cultural hauntings and their shift in nature aligns with and builds upon her claim.

Exile uniquely forms part of this diverse community's identity and acts as a sort of shared foundation for much of Cuban American population. However, we cannot make generalizations about the Cuban exile community based on the predominantly middle class immigrants of 1959 through the 1960s. Subsequent waves of Cuban immigrants to the United States—including the Mariel Boatlift and the third wave of Cuban immigration—greatly altered the US public's previously amiable perception of the exile community, as they brought criminals and other "undesirables" into the country, which increased political and social tension (M. C. García 158-66). As Silvia Pedraza points out, the exiles came from various socio-economic backgrounds,

> Over thirty years of political migration brought close to a million Cuban immigrants to American soil, harboring distinct waves of immigrants as well as distinct refugee "vintages," alike only in their final rejection of Cuba. Each of the

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[20] Brogan's foundational study specifically investigates ghost stories and female story telling in contemporary African American, Cuban American, and Native American literature.

[21] Although my investigation focuses on spectrality in 20th century Cuban exile literature, theories of the ghostly as a means of investigating departure, memory, and separation can be a insightful tool for other literatures dealing with trauma and displacement. In considering Puerto Rican immigration for example, see Arnaldo Manuel Cruz-Malavé on exile and spectrality in the work of Giannina Braschi or Betsy A. Sandlin on haunting and the haunted in Rane Arroyo's poetry.

> major waves of migration has been characterized by a very different social composition. To understand the changing characteristics of the exiles over time, we need to pay attention to the changing phases of the Cuban revolution. (263)[22]

In this chapter, I strive to represent one aspect of this diversity by presenting writers of different generations of exile identity.

Chronologically, Nancy Morejón, Nilda Cepero, Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, and Daína Chaviano are contemporaries, but their proximity to the experience of exile acts as a marker of generation, and they write of exile from different perspectives. Together they represent progressing Cub*and* generations.[23] Because claims to Cuban identity have been subject to debate, I employ O'Reilly Herrera's encompassing term, "Cub*and*," as it includes all who identify as Cuban Americans in some way, whether as Cuban exiles, ABCs (American Born Cubans), ARCs (American Raised Cubans), or descendants of Cuban immigrants. Although these are notable distinctions, considering a group of people as a whole can prove useful for recognizing shared and dissimilar characteristics. Doing so advances a deeper understanding of diverse experiences

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[22] She continues, quoting Peter Rose, "refugees do not live in a vacuum. They are part of an intricate sociopolitical web that must be seen as the background against which any portrait of their travails must be painted and any dissection of their innermost thoughts and feelings must be pinned" (11).

[23] This follows Rubén G. Rumbaut's proposal of the "1.5 generation," later expanded upon in Gustavo Pérez Firmat's foundational examination of Cuban American culture, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (1994). Pérez Firmat uses this term to refer to those who "belong to an intermediate immigrant generation whose members spent their childhood or adolescence abroad but grew into adults in America" (4). As O'Reilly Herrera notes, labels such as these have been argued to be "meaningless," "reductive," and "simplistic" (*ReMembering* xxviii). In spite of these pitfalls, this terminology proves useful for broadly delineating "generations" to indicate the amount of time an exile has been spent in Cuba and/or off the island. These generational differences between the writers significantly influence their view and depiction of exile.

within a community. The term Cub*and* facilitates a discussion of how exile affects Cubans of differing backgrounds (*ReMembering* xxviii-xxx). These writers published the selected texts within a span of thirteen years, from 1993 to 2006, although Nancy Morejón wrote her poem in the early 1980s.

Nancy Morejón (b. 1944) is not an exile; she writes from Castro's Cuba, where she has chosen to stay.[24] Her poem "Ante un espejo," published in the collection *Paisaje célebre* (1993), describes how she imagines exile to be. The haunting of exile pervades her poem as Morejón projects fear on to the Cuban community abroad. The poem's title indicates an individual contemplation and loneliness, as standing before a mirror provides a solitary moment of self-reflection. In forty-nine verses composed in free form, the poetic voice addresses *tú*, her words both a warning and a melancholic proclamation that a left home can never be forgotten nor replaced.[25] Notably, Morejón's potential exile has no voice of her own within the poem; rather, she is addressed by a poetic voice that speaks from the island.

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[24] Morejón has navigated limitations on free speech and publishing in Cuba to become an internationally renowned poet, in addition to a distinguished essayist, critic, editor, journalist, and translator whose work is available in more than ten languages. She has been invited to speak by the Smithsonian Institution and at universities across the United States, all of which testifies to the power of her work to transgress geographical, national, cultural, and ideological borders (Cordones-Cook, *Looking* 21). Perhaps lending to this success are Morejón's roots and multicultural upbringing. Born to working-class parents—her mother was a tobacco-worker and a dress maker; her father a sailor in the merchant marine—the poet spent her early childhood and much of her life until the mid-1980s in the Los Sitios district of Habana, a zone of cultural intersections where streets are filled with Afro-Cuban music and dancing (Cordones-Cook, *Looking* 33).

[25] I refer to this *tú* as a female for this analysis, although as Luis and Cordones-Cook point out, the identity of *tú* has many logical possibilities, including Sonia Rivera Valdés, her fellow Cubans who remain on the island, or to her own reflection in the mirror ("Umbrales"). For the remainder of the essay, I refer to all of the poetic voices as feminine to avoid complicating the analysis, although it should be noted that none of the poems indicate any gender identity other than "Inhabited Woman."

Morejón wrote "Ante un espejo" during a time of continued emigration from the island. Composed soon after the Mariel boatlift of 1980 and published during the *período especial*, "Ante un espejo" warns fellow Cubans that leaving the island will only result in more profound suffering.[26] The poem may be read as a rewriting of Nicolás Guillén's poem "Responde tú." In Guillén's poem, the poetic voice demands a response from the exile about her decision to leave her home: "Responde tú" the poem repeats eight times between accusations of abandonment and interrogating questions.[27] She also addresses her warning to *tú*. Her words are just as harsh and *tú* is similarly held accountable for her hypothetical decision to abandon the island. However, the accusatory tone of Guillén's verses differs from that of the poetic voice in Morejón's poem. As we will see, Morejón's poetic voice also understands the loss of identity *tú* will suffer abroad. This adds a woeful feel to the terrifying haunting that the poem describes. This underlying sadness aligns with Alan West's suggestion that the text of "Ante un espejo" dialogues with Lourdes Casal's "For Ana Velford." Casal's poem, published in 1981, describes the struggle of a Cuban exile to settle into a New England home. Casal describes the marginalization that the exile confronts in her new community (31). Similarly, Morejón's poem warns of the loneliness expressed in Casal's verses.

Morejón's position as a Cuban who writes and publishes in Cuba distinguishes her context from that of the other writers included in this chapter. In 2016, photojournalist Lee

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[26] The *período especial* (Special Period) began after the fall of the Soviet Union, upon which Cuba's economy had previously relied for goods and imports (Pérez 311). Pérez writes that the 1990 announcement of the implementation of the Special Period was "a series of contingency plans conceived originally as a response to conditions of war" but resulted in economic crisis (305). See Elzbieta Sklodowska for more information regarding cultural production on the island during this period of extreme scarcity.

[27] "Responde tú" appears in verses 2, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20 of the poem.

Lockwood reissued a series of interviews with Fidel Castro conducted between 1959 and 1969. Their conversation regarding the production of literature in the years following the Cuban Revolution illuminates the climate in which Morejón writes. At one point during the interviews, Castro claims that there is no control over art in Cuba, after which Lockwood comments that literature is afforded less creative freedom than other forms of expression. Castro responds that this difference is due to the limited resources available for book printing, "That is, we cannot waste paper. That is one of the limiting factors. This doesn't mean that the political factor doesn't have its influence, too. A book that we did not believe to be of some value wouldn't have a chance of being published" (Lockwood 112).[28] Lockwood pushes the point as the interview continues,

> [Lockwood]: In other words, an author who wrote a novel that contained counterrevolutionary sentiments couldn't possibly get published?
>
> Castro: At the present, no. The day will come when all the resources will be available, that is, when such a book would not be published to the detriment of a textbook or of a book having universal value in world literature. Then there will be resources to publish books on the basis of a broader criterion, and one will be

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[28] These interviews were conducted in English and Spanish with the aid of a translator. Lockwood describes this process, "it was necessary, for the sake of absolute clarity, that [René] Vallejo translate both my questions into Spanish and Castro's answers into English a sentence at a time. This cumbersome machinery at first irked Castro, who has the declamatory habit of many years of public speaking and tends to unfold his thoughts in long, repetitious, convoluted sentences of baroque syntax whose meaning is carried forward almost as much by the cadence of the phrases as by the connotations of the words. However, after a somewhat stilted beginning, Vallejo's translations gradually integrated themselves, Castro's impatience diminished, and the conversation began to develop its own rhythm" (Lockwood 68). Published in English, tapes and a transcript of the original interview is available at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University.

> able to argue whatever one wishes about any theme. I, especially, am a partisan of the widest possible discussion in the intellectual realm. […]
>
> [Lockwood]: But such an atmosphere is not possible at the present time?
>
> Castro: It would be an illusion to think so. (Lockwood 112-3)

These statements highlight the reality of censorship in post-Revolutionary Cuba. While Castro proclaims an openness to criticism, he also acknowledges discriminatory publishing. He claims that, in a time following political upheaval, he prioritizes printed work that supports his vision of Cuban society; this allows dissenting voices to fall silent. While Castro indicates an openness to ending censorship in the future, the country's press continues to be heavily monitored decades later. Independent watchdog groups such as *Freedom House* sharply criticize today's lack of freedom of speech in Cuba.[29] In 2016, *Freedom House* assigned the country a score of 91 on a scale of 0-100 grading freedom of speech (100 being the most restrictive), stating: "Cuba has the most restrictive laws on freedom of expression and the press in the Americas" (*Freedom House*).[30]

Perhaps Leonardo Padura, a Cuban novelist who has also achieved international acclaim, describes the complicated position of being a writer in Cuba best:

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[29] [https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/cuba]

[30] The report continues, "The constitution prohibits private ownership of media outlets and allows free speech and journalism only if they 'conform to the aims of a socialist society.' Article 91 of the penal code prescribes lengthy prison sentences or death for those who act against 'the independence or the territorial integrity of the state,' and Law 88 for the Protection of Cuba's National Independence and Economy imposes up to 20 years in prison for acts 'aimed at subverting the internal order of the nation and destroying its political, economic, and social system'" (*Freedom House*).

> fui descubriendo cómo debía enfrentar la literatura alguien que pretendiera ser aquello en lo que me estaba convirtiendo: un escritor cubano que vive en Cuba. Para comenzar, alguien con tal condición era un compañero que necesariamente debía tener un trabajo (como periodista, asesor literario, profesor, funcionario) [. . .] Y un escritor cubano debía ser, además, un ser social con suficiente conciencia de clase, del momento histórico—siempre hemos vivido en un momento histórico—y de la responsabilidad del intelectual en la sociedad, como para escribir solo lo que se suponía—o le hacían suponer—que debía escribir. En dos palabras: alguien capaz de manejar con tino el arte castrante de la autocensura para evitar el agravio de la censura. (70)

Padura underscores the difficulty that Cuban writers in Cuba, like Morejón, find themselves. They must carefully produce their work under the watchful eye of the Cuban government, which also controls publishing on the island.

Linda S. Howe suggests that some of these tensions are evident in Morejón's writing,

> Since the 1960s Morejón has sought to publish her works and has conformed to the highly politicized climate of official literary production. At the same time, she has attempted to call into question the objective representation of symbolic systems promoted by cultural institutions. Perhaps Morejón's fluctuating illustrations of the Cuban spirit also symbolize a gap between imposed aesthetic norms about revolutionary consciousness and some semblance of lived reality. (119)

Furthermore, William Luis argues that Morejón's poems must be read alongside the events unfolding in Cuba and outlines the expectations of the regime under which Morejón publishes.

He examines her work over time and identifies a movement away from overtly including the Revolution's ideology in her texts, stating that the absence of a revolutionary voice begins in 1987 with *Piedra púlida* and continues with *Paisaje célebre* (44).

Published during this later period in her career, "Ante un espejo" treats exile from the island. Morejón's poem reminds us that the Cubans who remain on the island suffer the absence of loved ones and the fracturing of their community. She dedicates "Ante un espejo" to her friend Sonia Rivera Valdés, a Cuban writer and academic living in New York City at the time. As Juanamaría Cordones-Cook writes in the introduction to *Looking Within/Mirar adentro*, a bilingual, encompassing collection of her poetry, "Morejón [. . .] opted to remain, an option that did not mean alienation from those who left. Indeed, the problem of the separation of Cuban families, although it never directly affected her, did become her personal preoccupation" (43). Cordones-Cook describes the poet's friendships with many Cuban émigrés and the profound impact these relationships had upon her work, which "poeticizes" the displacement of identity that results from the postcolonial experience (45).

The fracturing of the Cuban community and its long-term consequences weighs heavily upon the minds of Cuban Americans. Over two decades ago (1991), Pedraza worried that future generations would lose touch with their Cuban heritage, a concern that stems from the same fear that underscores Morejón's warning in "Ante un espejo." Pedraza, who self-identifies as a member of the 1.5 generation, notes the transforming face of the Cuban American community and writes, "it is my hope that the second generation that has now rooted in the United States will not be so American that they will lose touch with their history and culture, with their

cubanía. But as a sociologist I have to recognize that such may well be the price to be paid for shedding the pain of exile" (278-9).[31]

The late 1990s mark the coming of age of the children of the 1.5 generation and the earliest generation of children born to Cuban exiles in the United States. As Pedraza expresses, exiles feel uncertain about how their Cuban identity will contribute to their children's lives. The poems of Nilda Cepero and Andrea O'Reilly Herrera utilize spectral aspects to respond to these concerns. As these next generations come to cherish the ghosts of their families' pasts, they welcome and assert their Cuban identity.

Like Silvia Pedraza, Nilda Cepero is a member of the "1.5 generation." Born in Havana, Cuba in 1953, Nilda Cepero immigrated to the United States eight years later.[32] Perez Firmat writes that this generation is uniquely positioned between the cultures of their childhoods and their adulthoods so that while they may never feel entirely a part of one nor the other, "he or she may actually find it possible to circulate within and through both the old and the new cultures" (4). He stresses the benefits of this position and claims that this generation has resources of both the first and the second generation available to them (4).

Cepero's perspective of exile stems from her experience of losing her childhood home and growing up in the United States. "Burialground" and "Tropical Flavor" are published,

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[31] Furthermore, "Although quite young still, a second generation is now in our midst that was raised under American institutions and socialized in American schools, the great transmitters of tradition, culture, and values. Although these young Cubans' assimilation may be delayed by their growing up in the Cuban enclave in Miami, like any people, they are the soil in which they rooted and grew. Moreover, they lack the felt sense of a Cuba they did not know" Pedraza (278).

[32] She spent her early childhood on the island and came of age in Boston, Massachusetts. In addition to writing, she is also a photographer, editor, and musician. Her work has been published in literary journals and anthologies in the United States and Europe and includes a collection of short stories in Spanish.

respectively, in *Sugar Cane Blues* (1997) and *Lil' Havana Blues* (1998) as part of "The Blues Series." I have chosen both of these poems because each presents a distinct, yet not mutually exclusive relationship between the poetic voice and the home country. They speak to the complexity of resettling and building a new life without letting a part of the past be lost or taken away.

With seventeen lines of free verse, "Burialground" describes an exile's contemplation of a photograph of her grandmother and her longing to better understand her ancestry. Ghosts do not make as pronounced an appearance in this poem as they do in Morejón's, but the poetic voice employs certain spectral elements to represent a past that exists around and within her, appears in her reflection, and reminds us that death always lingers. Separated from the land of her ancestor, the poetic voice struggles to understand how this history influences her identity.

The second selected poem, "Tropical Flavor," expresses a connection with the lost homeland very differently. Here, the poetic voice finds escape in a Cuban café. Nineteen free verses describe the joy that the space brings to the poetic voice as it fills her with warm, familiar reminders of her heritage. She feels comfort in the brief reconnection to her roots found in the restaurant.

In comparison to Morejón and O'Reilly Herrera, Cepero has a direct experience with exile, which offers a more complicated relationship with the homeland. The different tones of these poems express that exile is painful, but also enriching to who she is. Together, these poems form a link between the dominant themes of Morejón's and O'Reilly Herrera's texts.

Andrea O'Reilly Herrera directly responds to Pedraza's concern that descendants of exiled Cubans might lose or dismiss their heritage in her poem, "Inhabited Woman." She is the

daughter of a Cuban mother, born in 1959 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[33] While she did not grow up in Cuba nor is she an exile herself, O'Reilly Herrera's poem honors her Cuban heritage and expresses the ability of US-born generations to maintain a Cuban identity. First published in the Spring 1999 edition of *Masthead, Literary Arts Magazine*, the poem discusses a woman who, like O'Reilly Herrera, is born off of the island and inherits her Cuban identity from her mother. Within twenty-seven lines of free verse, the poetic voice embraces and honors her matrilineal heritage as she describes how her female ancestors' spirits move within her. Like "Tropical Flavor," O'Reilly Herrera's verses exhibit a pride taken in an inherited culture. Her verses intimately depict the poetic voice's relationship with her Cuban ancestry and assert that this identity is not lost by Cubans born off the island.

All of these poets' texts incorporate spectral presences as a response to the exile condition. In different ways, these works engage with what Carolina Hospital deems a "consciousness of exile" that spans generations, both on and off the island (103-14). They mark a transition in haunting that defines Chaviano's novel.

A native of Havana, Chaviano immigrated to Miami in 1991 at the age of thirty-four.[34] Her novel, *La isla de los amores infinitos* (2006) was the Gold Medal Winner in the Florida

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[33] O'Reilly Herrera is currently the director of the Women and Ethnic Studies program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. She has published numerous books, essays, and journal articles as a creative writer and a literary critic, and her work frequently discusses her Cuban American identity. She is the editor of *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced* and the anthology *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of Diaspora*. To the latter, she contributes a personal introduction in which she describes the topic as very close to her heart.

[34] Daína Chaviano is one of the most important contemporary authors of fantasy and science fiction and is especially well known in the Spanish-speaking world. In Miami, she worked as a translator and journalist for *El Nuevo Herald.* Years earlier, her writing career jump-started when

Book Awards for Best Spanish Language Book (United States, 2006) and a finalist for the Prix Relay du Roman d'Évasion (France, 2008). It has been translated into twenty-five languages, making it the most widely translated Cuban novel of all time (Fuentes 1).

Chaviano lived over half of her life in Cuba before choosing to enter exile. Her experiences lend a deep understanding of life on the island and the United States. According to the author, she incorporates autobiographic elements within her work.[35] These aspects are easy to identify, especially in the novel's main character, Cecilia, whose work as a journalist, age, and location all reflect Chaviano's own experiences. Cecilia's story provides an introspective, detailed account of struggling to find a home in exile.

The chapters of *La isla de los amores infinitos* appear in six sections and alternate between Cecilia, a Cuban exile in late 1990's Miami, and the lives of secondary characters who immigrated to Cuba years before.[36] The novel tells of Cecilia's pain of losing her homeland and

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she won the Premio David de Ciencia Ficción in 1979 while she was a student at la Universidad de La Habana. She spent the following few decades in Cuba, where she wrote for radio and television, organized writing workshops, and continued publishing. Her work has received a great deal of recognition, including the Anna Seghers-Preis (Berlin, 1990), the Premio Azorín de Novela (Spain, 1998), Premio Internacional de Fantasía Goliardos (Mexico, 2003), and the Malinalli National Award for Promotion of Arts, Human Rights and Cultural Diversity (Mexico, 2014). Additionally, in 2004 she was the first author who writes in Spanish to be invited as the guest of honor at the 25th International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts (United States).

[35] Only a privileged few are able to engage with and recognize these presences in Chaviano's novel. Some of her characters dismiss the spectral, but the omniscient narrator relates human interactions with ghosts as factual, without any question to their validity. For example, a mermaid appears to Angela in Spain, Kui-fa's meditation under the supernatural halo of the moon transports her temporarily from China to Cuba, Onun's spell overpowers Caridad and her daughter Mercedes, and the curse of an impish *duende* befalls a Spanish family.

[36] The novel shares some protagonists with three previously written works by the author: *Gata encerrada, Casa de juegos,* and *El hombre la hembra y el hambre* (Chaviano, "dinosaurios" 200).

her struggle to understand what it means to be a Cuban living off the island. The story concludes happily when the text reveals that the main ghost of the novel, Amalia, is a friend of Cecilia's grandmother. Amalia secures Cecilia's future when she leads Cecilia to her grandson, the man Cecilia is destined to marry. Chaviano writes her world as filled with spectral beings.[37] Some of her characters dismiss the spectral, but the omniscient narrator relates human interactions with ghosts as an accepted, unquestioned reality.

Ghost stories and terror movies often depict feelings of fright and horror provoked by the unknown. However, with the exception of Morejón's ghost, the specters of the selected works are far from frightening. Furthermore, the haunted are encouraged to rid themselves of spiritual nuisances. Blanco and Peeren incorporate this idea into their writing of spectrality and trauma "consider[ing] intergenerational trauma as a haunting force, [. . .] its resolution is described as the phantom being 'successfully exorcised'" ("Introduction" 8).[38] However, the haunting spirits in the poems of the 1.5 and US-born generations are of a completely different nature.

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[37] Chaviano refers to her writing as "hybrid fantasy," but also states that this reflects her vision of reality that may differ from that of others, "Llevo muchos años investigando y experimentando con situaciones aparentemente mágicas y paranormales. Ese mundo es parte de mi realidad cotidiana. Por eso muchos episodios de carácter mágico, fantástico, mitológico o de ciencia ficción que aparecen en mis novelas son completamente autobiográficos" ("dinosaurios" 200). In a 2011 interview published in *miNatura* Chaviano states, "Muchas escenas "fantásticas" o "paranormales" de mis libros son autobiográficas. Por ejemplo, lo que se narra en el capítulo "Tú mi delirio", de *La isla de los amores infinitos,* me ocurrió realmente" ("extraterrestre" 3).

[38] Here, Blanco and Peeren are discussing Theodor Adorno's "Theses against Occultism" in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life,* trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (1951; London and New York: Verso, 2005), 238.

Freud's theory of the uncanny is intriguing in regard to exiles and their separation from the homeland. Freud roots his analysis in the German word *unheimlich*—literally "unhomely" (256-9).[39] As John Wylie notes,

> Lack of roots, displacement is un-homely, unheimlich or uncanny in the literal sense. If the spectral is of the essence of place, insofar as place happens (is *dis-placed*) in haunting, then the uncanny, a compound of strangeness and familiarity, might be conceived as a particular form of displacement from which devolves the figure of the *exile* (doubly spectral: a ghost *out of place*). (177)

Morejón's poem exudes an uncanny, unsettling type of haunting. What stalks the exile in her verses, however, is not the unknown, but the place she knows best—her home city. The phantoms remind her of what she left behind and can never recuperate, a part of herself. These specters are terrible, but they are not simply a tool of fright. The ghosts of *tú*'s home are also mournful and deeply depressing.

The spirits in the other texts haunt in ways that are the opposite of the "un-home" description of the uncanny. For the women in these works, specters of home provoke feelings of inspiration, longing, pride, or a sense of place or loss, but never of fear. These exiles do not work to escape the specter's haunting. Instead, they wish to better connect and understand their ghosts and embrace the specter's presence in their lives. As the exile learns to live abroad and embrace her Cubanness off the island, the un-bodied presence of the ghost obtains form by "re-homing" itself within the body of the exile.

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[39] For an in-depth discussion, see David Meagher's "The Uncanniness of Spectrality."

The last section of each of the following textual analyses examines how the texts present the exiles' relationships with death, home, and the body. The ghosts move from the exterior (haunting the surrounding space and draining the soul of the exile) to the interior (haunting from within and enriching the soul with heritage). The specters move inward to find a home within the exile's body. This movement represents an acceptance of the past and, with it, an embracement of Cuban heritage.

In all of the selected works, spectral aspects make present a Cuban identity. In her study of cultural hauntings, Brogan similarly focuses upon works by three women authors. She notes that women write ghost stories more often than their male counterparts (24-26). Ghosts more often appear in women's writing because they represent the transmission of memory, tradition, and heritage. As Trinh Minh-ha argues, the female body acts as a cultural repository for inheritance: "The world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. [. . .] Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and of transmission" (121). Historically considered purveyors of cultural tradition, women of post-exile generations fulfill this role. As the ghost settles into the body of the exile's descendant, it conserves history. The woman's body of "Inhabited Woman" allows the past to take physical form in the present.

II. What is a Ghost?

Before turning to the selected texts, I outline two features of what constitutes a ghost or a specter. Ghosts, in some sense or another, appear across cultures and throughout time.[40]

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[40] Blanco and Peeren trace the social position of ghosts and the development of the spectral theoretical approach in the introduction to their critical anthology *The Spectralities Reader*. They

Certainly, they possess contemporary imagination. In popular culture and the intellectual community alike, ghosts loom everywhere from melodramatic blockbuster romances and Hollywood comedies to bestselling novels and academic anthologies.[41] Such a plentitude of apparitions propels spectrality studies to exert a strong presence in the social sciences and the humanities. Analyses that employ this approach can be found in the areas of media, cinema, psychoanalysis, gender, sexuality, race, indigenous studies, trauma studies, and art history, among others.[42]

The undefined nature of the specter lends a means of exploring the in-betweens of social thought and structure. As Emilie Cameron writes,

> Haunting is a compelling metaphor for those engaged in studies of the emergent and immaterial, for those interested in identifying unnamed influences in

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begin with the timeless and cross-cultural presence of specters, "Ghosts, spirits, and specters have played vital roles in oral and written narratives throughout history [. . .] Their representational and socio-cultural functions, meanings, and effects have been at least as manifold as their shapes—or non-shapes, as the case may be—and extend far beyond the rituals, traditions, ghost stories, folktales, and urban legends they populate" ("Introduction" 1).

[41] Examples include (among many others): *Ghost* (1990); *Ghost Town* (2008) and *Casper the Friendly Ghost* (multiple versions, including 1995, 1998, 2006); *The Silent Girls* (2014); *The Spectralities Reader* (2013).

[42] See *The Spectralities Reader*. Perhaps due to this prominence, there exists lively debate regarding the nuances of spectrality theory. Some critics, such as Blanco and Peeren have argued against applications of spectrality theory that are too encompassing and too liberally assigned to melancholic art or are "spread thin" to include any instance of repetition of something passed ("Introduction" 16-8). For this chapter, I identify key aspects of what I consider ghostly to use in my examination of the literature. They are outlined in the section titled, "What is a Ghost?" In the selected texts, I argue, the spirits of the past are not solely uncanny or scary. Furthermore, the spectral can include spiritual resonances of people and places. However, my purpose is not to insert into the debate my own understanding of ghosts as a tool of literary analysis, but rather to examine how the spectral is working within the texts. Although I draw upon spectrality theory, here I am more interested in why and how ghosts are part of this literature and what their presence can tell us about the exile experience.

> contemporary thought, for studies into the textures of place and memory, and for general references to a present constituted by the non-linear enfolding of multiple, conflicting pasts. (Cameron 384)[43]

Specters, it would seem, are haunting both popular and intellectual worlds.[44] Amidst this plethora of phantoms, ghosts emerge in late twentieth and early twenty-first century literature with striking abundance. Kathleen Brogan investigates the "curious proliferation of ghosts" in

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[43] The uncertain and vague qualities of a ghost allow for a versatility that propels the ghost's popularity in critical thought. Conversely, this intangibility coupled with the plethora of academic work following this vein of theory appearing during the 1990s and 2000s have led some to question the substance of such production. To address these questions, Blanco and Peeren review the social position of specters and how their role within critical thinking methodology has changed during the past few centuries. They recognize how a boom in the popularity of any approach may be problematic. In light of Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg's questioning of the usage of "turn" to describe increased interest in a theoretical method, Blanco and Peeren assert that spectrality framework is not a moment initiated by a singular voice that exists temporarily in a sequence of approaches—one fading to give "turn" to the next—but a "conceptual metaphor" that has gained merited appreciation in an "extended cultural moment" and holds permanent value for analytical thought ("Introduction" 3-10; Derrida and Stiegler 31-5). They do not altogether reject a "spectral turn" but rather discuss how a seemingly sudden proliferation of work in the area of spectral studies actually falls in line with an enduring framework of research surrounding the spiritual and occult. They follow interest in the ghostly to a heightened popularity in Romantic literature and Gothism, after which these ideas were largely rebuffed as intangible or absurd. Hence, they were rejected in favor of the dominant mode of scientific thought of the late 19th century, in particular that of Sigmund Freud and Theodor Adorno. Blanco and Peeren follow this fall from wide appeal to a renewed interest in the occult during the late 20th century. Within the past few decades, increased investigation of trauma studies intersected with the rise of spectral theory, which subsequently resulted in many insightful studies. Nevertheless, Blanco and Peeren provide an example of an instance in which they consider spectrality to have been too thinly drawn upon and consequently stripped of contributing any meaningful conclusions. They also caution against employing the spectral in any way that may generalize trauma, histories, or haunted experiences ("Introduction" 16).

[44] As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock writes, "Indeed, the figure of the specter in literary and cultural criticism has become so common that one may refer to contemporary academic discourse as, in some respects, 'haunted'" (5). He goes on to explore why this is so, suggesting that "the current fascination with ghosts arises out of a general postmodern suspicion of meta-narratives accentuated by millennial anxiety" (5).

Cultural Hauntings (1998). She notes the use of ghosts as a means of exposing the unresolved historic trauma of slavery in contemporary African-American texts. Brogan lists numerous specters in significant works that emerge across traditions, concluding that "the contemporary American ghost story is [. . .] a pan-ethnic phenomenon, registering a widespread concern with questions of ethnic identity and cultural transmission" (1-4). The vast application and amplitude of spectral studies that have appeared in the past two decades speak to the cross-disciplinary possibilities of the spectral.

I focus on two aspects of the ghost to structure my readings of the texts' spectral presences. First, they are immaterial beings completely uninhibited by time and space and, second, they need a reason to haunt.[45] To define these features, I draw upon Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (10). In it, he asks "What is a ghost?" Published in 1993, this work explores the spirit of Marxist philosophy and sparked what some have deemed a "spectral turn" in contemporary cultural theory (Blanco and Peeren, "Introduction" 2; Weinstock 6).[46] I do not completely follow all of his ideas, but rather look to his work as a source for outlining the specific characteristics that are most useful for the following analysis. After reading the texts through these two aspects of the spectral, I conclude each section with a discussion of where

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[45] I identify characteristics shared by very different specters because, as Jo Labanyi writes, "there are many kinds of ghosts" and "there are various ways of dealing with them" (65).

[46] I highlight Derrida's *Specters of Marx* as a seminal work of hauntology and spectrality, yet Blanco and Peeren remind us that all thought processes are built upon the work of others and that Derrida's ideas stem from a long history of ghost's changing position in society and analytical thought ("Introduction" 3-10). Furthermore, I agree that to deem a surge of interest in a theory a "turn" or to identify one work as an initiation of the approach can be rather limiting, this does not take away from the fact that Derrida's essay is fundamental as a "catalyst" of spectrality theory (Blanco and Peeren, "Introduction" 2).

each work's specters haunt in relation to the poetic voice/narrator's body. This underscores the ghost's movement from the exterior into the body of the haunted.

A. The Ghost is "Disjointed" from Time and Space

The specter is able to pass through walls and materialize anywhere and at any moment. In this sense, ghosts are "disjointed."[47] Their ability to transgress the boundaries of time and space particularly intrigues me when comparing these qualities to the condition of the exile. The exile is, by definition, displaced from one location to another and separated from a past that becomes encapsulated and unchanging in memory, "transnational diasporic identities as defined by Bhabha "replace" their claim to a "purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription," for they are "located" in a "contingent 'in between' space," which is on a continuum with the past and the present" (O'Reilly Herrera, *Politics* 185). The inability to easily return to her country prohibits the exile from fully knowing how her homeland changes with time. In the texts, the home culture stays constant in the life of the exile, even though the place and the person remain physically isolated from one another. In this way, the separation freezes the exile's direct personal history and experience with the home country.

Although away from her home, the exile always carries the memories of the people and the place they have left behind. This recalls Derrida's claim that ghosts reappear by remembering, an act that repeatedly brings them into the present moment. Derrida draws upon

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[47] Derrida works with this idea, quoting Hamlet's line in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "time is out of joint" (Act 1, scene V). Describing this aspect of the ghost, Ribas-Casasayas and Petersen state, "Spectral theory is concerned with the notion of a present that is out of joint, divided from itself by a rift that makes room for the conflictive overlap of the present, the future, and the past, and alternative presents, pasts, and futures. In short, specters produce disjointed times" (13).

the similarities between ghosts and the act of recalling the past within a present moment, "Memories no longer recognize such borders; by definition they pass through walls, these *revenants*, day and night, they trick consciousness and skip generations" (36). A figure of what has been, ghosts exist beyond the constraints of life as they appear in the present and will, if left unexorcised, haunt the future. Furthermore, they are not just apparitions of the past, but rather forms whose timeless nature provokes both memory and foresight, "the ghosts in stories of cultural haunting are agents of both cultural memory *and* cultural renewal: the shape-shifting ghost who transmits erased or threatened group memory represents the creative, ongoing process of ethnic redefinition" (Brogan 12). Viewed in this light, cultural haunting is inherently optimistic as a ghost remains with an implicit hope that its lingering presence holds purpose.[48] As Cameron underscores, ghosts and hauntings intertwine us and the undefined other (383).[49] They are transient apparitions of the past unbound by the future. Time and space mix and blur in each of these works as the writers engage the ghostly to contemplate the loss and inheritance of exile identity.

B. Why and How Specters of Exile Haunt

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[48] Blanco and Peeren write, "The danger is marking all remembering with the affective registers of melancholia is that we may come to understand memory as working solely on the basis of repetition and negativity, rather than on its progressive (future) productivity" ("Introduction" 12-3).

[49] Cameron states that these ghostly characteristics yield a particularly insightful approach to colonial and postcolonial studies, citing Baucom, Clayton, Gordon, Gupta, and Spivak, among others.

The second characteristic of the ghost that I highlight in my readings of the texts is that a ghost needs a reason to linger, a purpose for haunting, a cause for "coming back" (Derrida 4, 11).[50] A phantom exists in-between the physical and spiritual worlds, because, as Alberto Ribas-Casasayas and Amanda L. Petersen write, "The ghost is neither dead nor alive, neither absent nor present, neither effective nor inoperant, neither actual nor virtual; it is both past and current, perceptible and imperceptible" (2).[51] Often, they haunt because of some unfinished purpose or a task left incomplete that denies them a restful afterlife. The intention of the ghost greatly determines how it haunts, what reaction it produces in the haunted, and in accordance with this, the tone of their presences.

The ghosts of the works studied in this chapter haunt for different reasons and in distinct ways, but all exist because of exile. They are spirits whose pull into the present results from a painful tear in the past. Painful memories often provoke feelings of loss and remind us of irretrievable parts of a distant life, a sentiment that pervades the lines of Morejón's poem. If mourning is an attempt to give presence to the remains of something gone, the melancholic can be tied to the exile experience (Socolovsky 263, footnote). Yet mourning is different for the children of exiles, as they may long for a country they have never seen. Marianne Hirsch considers the descendants of victims of the Holocaust when she introduces the term

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[50] Colin Davis agrees, "The ghost of fiction generally return to haunt us because something is amiss. A crime has gone undetected, an offense has escaped punishment, Once the wrong has been righted, the ghost can return to its proper domain and leave the earth to the living. While the ghost still haunts us, something remains unsettled" ("Charlotte" 9).

[51] Hélène Cixous affirms, "What is intolerable is that the Ghost erases the limit which exists between the two states, neither alive nor dead; passing through the dead man returns in the manner of the Repressed. It is his coming back which makes the ghost what he is" ("Fiction" 543).

"postmemory" to describe how the children and grandchildren of those who experienced collective or cultural trauma inherit memories and knowledge of the suffering of their families, "They 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (5). O'Reilly Herrera examines questions transferring the sorrow of Cuban exile through generations,

> Though we account for our Cuban "inheritance" in different ways, our relationship to our pasts and our cultural heritage (both collective and individual) is nevertheless permanently informed by our second-hand experience of loss and displacement. To put it another way, though we are not exiles ourselves, we all suffer from symptoms that manifest themselves as a result of a larger diasporic consciousness and, according to some, a "West Indian condition," which finds its source in the trauma and sense of displacement that has been communicated to us by our families and our communities across oceans and generations. (*Politics* 179)

Time passes as the exile remembers and re-remembers the homeland. Ghosts linger, as does the pain of exile, yet the role of the ghost transforms as time and distance from the departure increases. Displaced from the homeland, postmemory shapes the lives of those who have never seen or do not remember the island.

Because ghosts can represent inherited trauma, understanding why and how the specters haunt and how the haunted react to these presences illuminates the generational arc of exile's healing process represented by these texts. Brogan notes a similar shift in American haunted narratives when she writes that "frightening ghosts" can transform into valuable memories. She recalls Sigmund Freud's "Thoughts for the Time on War and Death" and his *Totem and Taboo* to elucidate the progression of mourning, the invention of the ghost as an evasion and denial of

death, and the convergence of the dead/demonic with mourning to ultimately transform the specter into a revered kindly spirit (19-20).

III. Nancy Morejón's "Ante un espejo"

A. Time and Space in "Ante un espejo"

Morejón's "Ante un espejo," is a foreboding prophecy of what may come. The poem draws a grim future close as it imagines an exile's ghostly existence. Time mixes and overlaps as we read a warning issued in the present of a potential future haunted by a would-be past. Cordones-Cook notes the prevalence of these elements across Morejón's work, "Through her poetry, Morejón seeks to resist the passage of time and the inevitability of oblivion, constructing memory in order to retain, concretize, and perpetuate the transitory and the ephemeral of her world and her personal experience" (*Looking* 31). Time rejects conventional linearity as a sort of suspended state is described, "Cuando haya amanecer, no habrá crepúsculo" (18). Here, the city buries time:

> nuestra ciudad sepultará,
>
> bajo un aroma extraño,
>
> los años transcurridos
>
> antes y después de Cristo (13-15)[52]

With time tucked underground, the city's linear history stalls. Yet concurrently, the poetic voice creates an almost tangible impending future through action and descriptions of smell, which give animation and shape to the hypothetical place that haunts. Luis suggests that the fifteenth verse's

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[52] Notably, here the city becomes "nuestra," revealing that it is a shared home of both the poetic voice and *tú*.

differentiation of time between before and after Christ is similar to recognizing Cuban history as pre- and post-Castro, thus relentlessly reminding the reader of the underlying political tensions (48). Within this blurred feeling of time, the choice of *sepultará* adds to an eerie, mournful mood as this verb immediately offers an association with *sepultura* and *sepulcro*. With the years dead and buried, *tú*'s past is free to plague her wherever she goes and for as long as it wishes.

The city's spectral nature also permits a movement of space as home stalks the exile through her new setting. Just as ghosts appear whenever and wherever they wish, the personification of this cityscape yields movement to a fixed location. We can recognize the home city as Cuban through the exile-following vapors of "los Jardines de la Reina" as they identify a particular archipelago of the island (26). Despite this detail and the mention of ports and bays, the poet chooses to never specifically name Cuba. This purposeful ambiguity enables a universal identification by exiles with the described city—all who are pushed from their home carry a void within them, haunted by what has been lost.[53] The city haunts *tú* through memories of what she has left behind. Writing the city as a ghost grants this place spectral qualities, which enable it to become eerily unrooted. The poet frees a geographically pinpointed place so that *tú*'s roots unearth to haunt her.

B. How and Why the City Haunts

The first ghost of "Ante un espejo" appears at the end of the introductory statement. A consequence, the poetic voice warns, of *tú* deciding to leave the city in search of new horizons and fortune, is that the city itself will follow her:

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[53] Similarly, in verses 11 and 12, *tú* is on the bridges of a city purposefully left unidentified by the use of "algún," "(tú sobre los puentes / de algún río caudaloso pero ajeno)".

> la ciudad, esta ciudad,
>
> aún inconsciente de sus ruinas,
>
> emprenderá tu acecho
>
> siguiéndote los pasos. (6-9)

Tú will never be able to leave behind where she comes from and, as Alan West concludes, "the phantasmic presence is more real than all the shapes and cities that surround you" (30). *Tú*'s city is unaware of its ruins. With this detail, the city becomes ghostlier, as if the place's spirit has left its decaying structure. Envisioning a city of ruin and decay may also call to mind the beautiful images of Cuba most often seen by the outside world—colorful facades of colonial architecture and rows of classic cars that distract from and disguise the city's crumbling buildings.

In Morejón's verses, *tú* has the option to stay on the island or to leave her home and wander aimlessly. Life will be numbing as *tú*'s life will be restricted, "y hasta los mismos cuartos de tu casa sellada / te cercarán con la angustiosa cadencia del engaño" (32-33). In these verses, Luis reads a lack of choice, "[These] two lines show that the *tú* is not leaving on her own but is being forced to depart; her house has been closed and placed off limits by the revolutionary authorities" (49). However, this idea makes it difficult to explain the decision the poetic voice puts before *tú* nine lines earlier, "si decidieras irte" (1). *Tú*'s pending indecision underpins the poem from the very first verse. Furthermore, this opening verse not only sets the tone for the entire poem, but is also the only line that is repeated in the text, emphasizing the unresolved crossroads at which *tú* finds herself (1, 24). The closed house from which Luis understands *tú*'s forced departure could represent her home in Cuba to which she cannot return, but it may also symbolize her limited existence, isolation, and the self-imposed imprisonment that she will

experience in exile. The poetic voice addresses *tú*'s at a pivotal time in which she is confronted with a life changing decision.

Melancholy pervades the hypothetical exile of *tú* and, as she emptily wanders toward nowhere, the poem becomes increasingly disturbing. The city looms, always present as a shadowy version of itself. It can never be reconstructed as a home. Nor can it be, paradoxically, completely left behind. This sense of loss couples with the impossibility of *tú* establishing a new life abroad to cast a phantom city imbued with both sadness and fear, one that haunts the exile because she abandoned it. It follows her with purpose, the gerund "siguiendote" emphasizing that the presence of the city-ghost is not one that passively appears every now and then, but rather actively follows you (9). Loved ones join the haunting of *tú* in verses 21-23 as their scents linger on the streets of the new home. Their presence indicates that when *tú* chooses to leave home behind, the most cherished parts of that place, including her own family, become part of the city's unnerving essence. Words like "sepultará" "muertos" and "extraño" add to a strange and mournful mood.

Separated from the home country, the exile experiences a "dislocation of identity but does not cut off the roots that remain anchored in the conscious and unconscious layers of the individual" (Cordones-Cook, *Looking* 43). *Tú* is stuck between places, far from where she emigrated, isolated in the new land, and carrying these ghosts with her. For Morejón's exile, memories will fill the surrounding space, precluding *tú* from creating a new home in the foreign country. The ghost city creates a mood of creepy hopelessness and grief.

C. The Uncanny Ghost City

Not only does *tú*'s city-ghost haunt externally, but the it creates a melancholy so intense that it relegates *tú* to a death-like presence.[54] The poem describes the city-ghost's hypothetical invasion of *tú*'s senses, telling us that in exile, she will grow deadened to the rest of the world. Her past not only haunts her, but drains her to into an empty, lifeless being.[55] *Tú* is not a ghost by definition. Rather than a spirit without a body, the city-ghost's haunting wanes *tú* to a body without a soul. In this poem, exile means the loss of self. The poetic voice emphasizes *tú*'s utter solitude as it proclaims that no other country, no other possible city exists for *tú* (17). The warning condemns *tú* to a relentless haunting and emptiness as it claims that she will never find the part of herself that has been lost.

Exile's haunting drains *tú* of her own spirit and as the presences of her lost homeland plague her senses, the poem stresses sensory language. In doing so, the poetic voice draws our focus to *tú*'s haunted physical surroundings, giving the would-be city-ghost an almost physical presence that emphasizes *tú*'s corresponding inner emptiness. Descriptions of smell, sight, and touch relate the sensations of the city-ghost's haunting. Ghostly sounds reach *tú* as she hears the same *pregón* every morning, a sound that is reminiscent of a funeral toll that proclaims the end of life. Perhaps most disturbing of all, Morejón describes the lingering smells of the past, "Alguna tarde cálida", we are told, our city will bury "bajo un aroma extraño / los años

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[54] Although I might consider *tú*'s state more zombie-like than ghostly, invisibility and the ghost have often been adapted as a metaphor for social obscurity. Brogan recognizes this as spectrality in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988) and one may also immediately recall Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1989).

[55] Cordones-Cook identifies this feeling of placelessness with Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*, in which those who are within societies that are not their own also may come to feel a sense of being an outsider to their own self ("Umbrales").

transcurridos" (10, 14-15). This strange aroma seems to fester in the hot afternoon sun and weaves into verses 19-23:

> Si los parques florecen
> cundidos de tulipanes firmes,
> entonces el bulevar trae los olores
> de tus seres queridos
> y, sobre todo, de tus muertos.

The scent of the foreign flowers—tulips do not grow in Cuba—cannot overpower or replace the aroma that reminds *tú* of those far away. *Tú* will not just smell scents of the past, but the odors of the dead will so overwhelm her that they will ruin any pleasant scent of flowering tulips. The scent of death is stronger than the parks filled with blossoms and will permeate the air with the stench of decomposition. These smells linger as part of the city's phantom.

The Jardines de la Reina's escort of "vapores" continue the personification of the lost city,

> Si decidieras irte,
> el puerto y las bahías
> y los Jardines de la Reina
> te escoltarán con sus vapores. (24-27)

"Vapores" can be translated both as "vapors" and "boats" (Gabriel Abudu chooses the latter in his translation).[56] Thus the places of *tú*'s past will accompany her, either spectrally with the vapors of the port and bays—perhaps drawing upon our senses like the aromas introduced

[56] This translation appears in Cordones-Cook's *Looking Within/Mirar Adentro.*

previously—or physically as a boat convoy that follows her to the foreign land. Abudu's preferred translation of "vapores" as boats coupled with a boat's presence in a later verse, "te llevará el mismo barco andando por la misma ruta / de los perennes emigrantes" evoke both historical and mythical allusions. This type of departure, Luis notes, "recalls the events associated with the Mariel Boatlift, in which those wanting to leave the island were subjected to acts of repudiation and were escorted out of the city to ensure they did not return" (49). Additionally, the exile's journey to a soul-shriveling place of ghosts and sadness, may evoke the image of Charon taking *tú* across the waters to her torment (36-37).

Morejón's ghost is a creepily stalking city, tormenting *tú*'s soul until it withers the exile into a spectral state.[57] Facing endless torture, *tú* will take the same boat along the same route no matter where she goes, which will remind her over and over again of her decision to leave her island behind. She will endlessly wander as one of the homeless, eternal emigrants, as if caught in a circle of hell (34-37).[58] A loss of her home will create an emptiness that resides inside of her, the absence of which will never be far behind, "Nada podrá despositarte en ningún sitio." (38).

[57] Describing *tú*'s half-dead presence as ghostly reminds us of Achille Mbembe's "Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola," which employs what Blanco and Peeren identify as a non-Western form of spectrality that "confronts a political present that, particularly in previously colonized parts of the world, establishes '*extreme forms of human life, death-worlds*, forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead (ghosts)' [and thus] is thought to require a departure from dualistic western modes of thought grounded in the separation of the rational and the irrational, and all the other oppositions tied to these binaries, including that of the real and the spectral" (Blanco and Peeren, "Spectropolitics" 94-5; Achille Mbembe, "Sovereignty" 131-50). Also see Mbembe's article *Necropolitics* (2003).

[58] I read "los perennes emigrantes" as referring to people who are without a homeland and therefore condemned to wander forever. Slightly differently, Luis reads this line as a specific nod to the Cuban people and their long history of exile (49).

Tú will be forever lost, unsettled, and homeless. Culminating with this idea of perpetual displacement and the roaming, exiled soul, the poem reads:

> Aunque hayas monteado el mundo entero,
>
> de castillo en castillo,
>
> de mercado en mercado,
>
> ésta será la ciudad de todos tus fantasmas. (39-42)

As an exile, *tú* will never be able to escape her homeland. No matter where she searches for a new life, the city will never allow her to forget her past and she will never be able to forgive herself for leaving.

The poem concludes with an imagined future moment of self-reflection. The poetic voice claims that the unsettled, unfulfilled, exiled soul will reach old age only to realize that she has wasted her life somewhat in vain. The mirror into which she peers is like Cinderella's, a reference that alludes to the story of a woman who successfully left her past behind.[59] In her mirror, *tú* will never see a happily-ever-after ending. Unlike Cinderella, *tú*'s past will never allow her to move beyond her decision to leave the island. In her mirror, *tú* sees the reflection of herself smiling sadly through dry pupils, two "rocas fieles / y una esquina sonora de tu ciudad" (48-49).

Seeing the city in her own image, *tú*'s identity blends with place. But unlike the spirits embodied in "Inhabited Woman," *tú*'s city overwhelms her from outside, stealing her identity away until little remains but rocks and a memory of the home she left behind. The city ghost draws out her soul, reminding us that she left behind a part of herself and without it, *tú* can never

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[59] Curiously, a mirror does not figure prominently in the fairy tale of Cinderella. A magical mirror is more often associated with the tale of Snow White. The inclusion of Cinderella emphasizes the empty image of cinders and the reversal of the rags-to-riches story.

be whole. *Tú* sees everything through "rocas fieles" which recalls the entrance of the Havana harbor, as the stone structures of El Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro and El Castillo de San Salvador de la Punta sit on either side of the canal. With this image, the poem concludes with *tú*'s pending decision as the harbor represents a space of both entry and departure, guarded by the loyal rocks that will never leave their island.

In Morejón's poem, the exile's identity will all but disappear in the foreign country. As she gazes upon herself in the mirror, she will have to face the choice that she made, the choice to leave behind her home. The presence that follows *tú* will be a result of her decision, and will stalk her through her new surroundings while it hollows her out from within. Memories isolate *tú* and her ghosts confine her to displacement, her body physically located in a place where her past will not let her soul attain peace.

IV. Nilda Cepero's "Burialground"

A. Time and Space in "Burialground"

Nilda Cepero's "Burialground" portrays an unhinging of time and space through a photograph upon which the poetic voice meditates. We begin in the present, as the poetic voice contemplates her appearance. She confirms her likeness to her grandmother in the second stanza when she remembers the photograph from Cuba, "I saw a photograph they sent from Cuba / the likeness is remarkable" (3-5). The poetic voice then describes a more recent past, in which the photograph goes with her from place to place (6-11). "Now" indicates a return to the present in the fourth stanza (12-16). The last line, consisting of only one final phrase in which she contemplates her "unavoidable destiny," draws us into the future (17). In this way, the poetic voice draws the reader into her thoughts as the experiences of the living and the dead overlap.

The snapshot becomes a link to the past, as it makes permanent a fleeting instance by recording one moment in time.[60] The space pictured in the photograph will inevitably change as years pass, yet within the printed image, it remains the same.[61] Thinking of the photograph, the poetic voice recalls her family's path of immigration in the new land. Maya Socolovsky beautifully describes the transcendence of time that a photo evokes in Oscar Hijuelos' novel *The Fourteen Sisters of Emilio Montez O'Brien*,[62]

> When photographs [. . .] invoke a past and future absence (loss), they do so by their presentation of the past as representation. Even though they apparently bridge past and present, they also show the displacement from one time and place into another and retain the past as a trace in the present moment. For the immigrant characters and their children, the past, lost in the passing of time and in migrations of place, seems authentically available in the present through photographs. (253)

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[60] Meditating upon a photograph, family, and death may remind us of Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1981). Casasayas and Petersen discuss the spectral nature of photography and Barthes' work, "Roland Barthes describes a connection between photography and death when posing that the living subject in the frame undergoes a 'micro-version of death' and spectralizes herself when contemplating the observer through the portrait. As a future spectator, the observer recognizes her own mortality in the subject's absence; the portrait becomes 'imperious sign of my [the observer's] future death.' Additionally, for Barthes, photography underscores the tenuousness of experience of others, because the photographic subject, according to Barthes, is a sum of multiple frozen instants, 'a thousand shifting photographs'" (14; 97; 12, 110).

[61] Reina María Rodríguez's collection *La foto del invierno* (1998) also considers the relationship between photographs and the past.

[62] Oscar Hijuelos (1951-2013), born in New York City, New York to Cuban parents, won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction for *The Mambo Kings*, becoming the was the first US Latino to win the award.

For Cepero, the memory of the photograph and her appearance provoke a superimposition of the past, present, and future as they come together in these five stanzas, which is emphasized by the lack of any periods or punctuation. The photographs act, following Marianne Hirsch, as "points of memory" as they are "points of intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall" (61).[63]

The photograph provides a physical reminder of a home that shapes the exile's identity throughout her life, while also emphasizing that her conception of that faraway place remains unrealistically static. She knows her homeland and ancestors only through memories, either her own or those of others. The verses describe how the poetic voice's family carries the photograph with them as they travel between places until finally settling in Miami. The family keeps this snapshot as a piece of the past that remains within the present to create a means of maintaining connection to their roots. The verses that describe the photo's journey highlight the exile's feeling of displacement through repeated enjambment that emphasizes movement without pause,

> It traveled from place to place
> and like all good Cubans
> on their constant Diaspora
> it settled in Miami" (7-10)

In addition to the enjambment, a lack of complete phrases emphasizes the poem's feeling of unregulated time.

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[63] Susana S. Martínez provides an insightful analysis of this idea as she examines photography in Tanya María Barriento's *Family Resemblance.*

After the family establishes a home in Miami, they lose the photograph to humidity. The loss of the photograph, therefore, leaves the poetic voice with only her reflection in the mirror as a reminder of her grandmother. Like a ghost, the snapshot exists as a remnant of a lost past, staying exactly as it once was until it disappears.

B. Why and How the Past Haunts

The tone of despondent gloom in “Ante un espejo” is tempered in “Burialground”, but a mournful undertone also colors Cepero’s poem. “Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight, / make me a child again, just for to-night” reads the epigraph.[64] These words are taken from the poem “Rock Me to Sleep” by Elizabeth Akers Allen in which the poetic voice longs for her mother to “come back from the echoless shore” and hold her as she once did. Introducing the poem in this way immediately presents the text’s feeling of nostalgic longing for something lost. Eva Hoffman describes the inheritance of pain and indirect knowledge,[65]

> The paradoxes of indirect knowledge haunt many of us who came after. The formative events of the twentieth century have crucially informed our biographies, threatening sometimes to overshadow and overwhelm our own lives. But we did not see them, suffer through them, experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been denied by our very ‘post-ness’ and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it. (25)

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[64] Akers Allen’s poem can be found in *She Wields a Pen: American Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (University of Iowa Press, 1997).

[65] Eva Hoffman specifically considers the descendants of Holocaust survivors.

In this poem, Cepero's ghosts haunt because the poetic voice longs to fully understand a history with which she identifies. Her "post-ness" shapes her ghosts' haunting because the experiences represented by the photograph exist in memories that are not her own. The poetic voice laments the disappearance of her past as she confronts death, writing of "the last remains" and concluding the fourth stanza with a promise of death: "The stranger I learned to love / through a photograph / vanished into foreign soil" (5; 14-16). Intriguingly, the poetic voice has learned to love someone she has never known. She creates an apparition to fulfill a void in her life, loving a presence she knows only through the words of others.

Furthermore, the title of Allen Aker's poem in conjunction with Cepero's choice to call her work "Burialground" enhances the underlying presence of death in the poem. Death most melancholically appears in the concluding line, as the poetic voice reminds us that she too will die in this foreign place (17). She recognizes that material decomposes and she accepts the fragile impermanence of her existence. Indirect knowledge haunts the poetic voice as she feels pulled between two places, neither of which she recognizes as fully her own. Tension between two times—an obscured past and a future in which she fades like the photograph—informs her present.

The ghost of "Burialground" subtly lingers as an intimate reminder of how exile physically divides a family. Although still mournful and filled with reminders of death, the poem constructs a different kind of spectral presence from that of Morejón. Cepero's poetic voice forms a relationship with an ancestor based on nothing but a photograph, her own reflection, and inherited memories.[66]

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[66] The poem does not explicitly state that other people tell her of her grandmother. However, the poetic voice does make clear that "They say" she resembles her grandmother, indicating she has spoken with people who once knew this relative.

C. A Spectral Reflection

Immateriality, the body, and manifestations of the past within the present underpin the verses of "Burialground." In this poem, the exile's mourning may remind us of Morejón's threatening emptiness. However, in this poem, the scariness of *tú*'s city-ghost vanishes. Some sadness remains as Cepero's poetic voice laments never having known her grandmother, but her ancestor's likeness manifests physically upon her body. Rather than denying the exile identity, this presence provides a visible reminder of the past by influencing the poetic voice's appearance.

The poetic voice tells us that she bears a strong likeness to her grandmother, "They say I look / like my grandmother on my father's side" (1-2). The likeness of her dead ancestor haunts the poetic voice and perhaps her similarity to her grandmother haunts others too, as her face stirs their memories of another person. In the first verse, "They say" introduces the physical likeness with an impersonal "they." We are never made aware of who mentions this resemblance. This purposeful vagueness both emphasizes the poetic voice's separation from her grandmother and maintains our separation as readers from any direct contact with the past.

While the poetic voice only knows of her resemblance to her grandmother through the claims of other people, her reflection reminds her of this ancestor. Her physical traits present the image of her grandmother, yet she has never known this ancestor and thus cannot understand exactly how her grandmother contributes to who she is. Looking at a photograph, the poetic voice acknowledges the remarkable likeness and that it is "The only reminder, the last remains" (5). The poet does not specify what these last remains are. The photograph may be the last

material treasure kept from the homeland, but the physical features of the poetic voice also represent traces of the past that will disappear when she dies.

The poem concludes with a lamenting parallel drawn between the experiences of the grandmother, the photograph, and the poetic voice: all are destined to vanish into foreign soil. Without photographic evidence of her life, the limited presence of the grandmother begins to wane. The photo is lost in the distant land of exile and the grandmother is lost on an island that is foreign to her granddaughter. The granddaughter declares this fate of disappearance as her destiny too. In the closing verses, the poetic voice acknowledges the brevity of life. She reveals that she, like the photograph, feels carried from place to place only to wither with time in a foreign land.

Descended from exiles and unable to fully understand her past, the poetic voice struggles to comprehend herself. Spectral presences engage with the body of the exile very differently than they do with Morejón's *tú*, as traces of the past manifest physically in the features of the poetic voice. The poetic voice's experience of exile reminds us of *tú*'s hypothetical experience in some ways, as she feels isolated from her heritage. However, in Cepero's poem the spectral presences help the poetic voice to identify with her ancestor in the photograph.

V. Nancy Cepero's "Tropical Flavor"

A. Time and Space in "Tropical Flavor"

"Tropical Flavor" begins with the verses "I've developed a taste for escargot… / but sometimes I go to Cuban restaurants / to sense aromas from my past" (1-3). The poem's introduction announces its central theme: the poetic voice is a woman who enjoys worldly foods such as escargot—which reveals a certain embracing of non-Cuban cultures—yet who still

maintains a closeness to her Cuban roots. At the end of the first line an ellipsis separates the escargot, and with it everything foreign that exists outside of the Cuban restaurant, from the rest of the poem. After this pause, the poetic voice describes the scene taking place within this homey restaurant. There, she reconnects with her heritage through familiarity of the environment.

This place provokes the past and in turn, the poetic voice's memories fill this space. The present moment in which the poetic voice is visiting this place blurs together with the restaurant's reminders of a distant homeland. To emphasize the mixing of time, the poem repeats the verse, "Sometimes I go to Cuban restaurants" four times, weaving it in and out of her memories and the current moment (2, 6, 13, 18). In the restaurant, the poetic voice's heritage is not something vanished years before, but an integral aspect of who she is. This place awakens a part of her heritage that lives inside of her,

> Sometimes I go to Cuban restaurants
> and caramel and lemon peels
> wake my senses, stir me inside
> fragrances that reach my heart
> bearing reflections of who I am" (15-17)

The Cuban restaurant is a Cuban space, a bubble of culture made outside of the island. In this way, parts of Cuba are transported and reconstructed on foreign soil. This place offers the comfort of home and reminders of a past that make the poetic voice feel "cheerful and safe" (5). The poetic voice is an observer in the restaurant. She takes in her surroundings and allows the atmosphere to engulf her. Her memories intermingle with familiar sights and sounds to briefly breathe life into her past. She feels Cuba around her, and momentarily nourishes her Cuban roots. Aside from a single comma and an ellipsis, the poem contains no punctuation and this lack

of visible separation adds to the unifying feeling offered by the restaurant space. However Other-ed, obscured, or marginalized the exile's culture may be in the outside world, inside these walls, everything else temporarily fades away.

B. How and Why the Spirits Stir

Unlike "Ante un espejo," and "Burialground," the presences haunting the verses of "Tropical Flavor" are not of sorrow and longing, but rather are spirits of comfort and pride. They offer warm reminders of home evoked by food, language, and music. The poem also differs in the overall feeling it creates—instead of horrific, melancholic undertones or a looming sense of loss and death, the poetic voice writes with celebratory cheer to express gratitude for the culture she identifies as her own. As the poetic voice sits in the restaurant, she recognizes elements of her heritage in the aromas of the food she smells and in the sounds of the restaurant: people speaking Spanish and *bolero* music. Notably, the relationship between Cuba and the poetic voice of "Tropical Flavor" is not entirely clear—she may be a Cuban who was exiled as a child, exiled as an adult, or she may speak as the descendant of Cuban immigrants. Whatever her connection to the island, the ghosts of this poem come from within the poetic voice herself. They do not take a visible human form. Instead the verses refer to the poetic voice's Cubanness as her "other soul" and tell us that something "stirs" inside of her in the restaurant. These lines emphasize her connection with her heritage as spiritual (19, 15).

C. Spirits Within

The ghosts of this poem bind themselves physically to the exile. Unlike the spectral traces in "Burialground," they do not linger on the surface of the body, but haunt from within the

poetic voice. They fill her soul with life instead of emptying it or leaving it feeling unfulfilled. As in Cepero's "Burialground," the body of the poetic voice acts as a link to spirits of the past. Yet in this poem, Cepero's spirits do not remain on the outside of the body, but rather they stir within the soul of the poetic voice as her body and soul connect with a heritage sensed through the surrounding environment.

The spectral presences of "Tropical Flavor" materialize as the poetic voice's senses recall tastes, sights, smells, and sounds of her past. The language provokes our senses in a way similar to Morejón's poem, but to a completely different effect. Through her descriptions, we smell black beans and fried plantains, listen to the famed queen of *bolero*, Olga Guillot, and taste caramel and lemon peel. The poetic voice perceives the spirits of her past, connects with her Cuban identity, and she nourishes her soul with these elements of her heritage. Her inherited Cubanness persists within her and makes up a part of who she is. Its staying presence comes to the surface in the restaurant and, because of the comfort this stirring soul inside of her brings, it can be viewed as welcome haunting.

VI. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's "Inhabited Woman"

A. Haunting through Time and Space

The boundaries of time and space blur in "Inhabited Woman." The poetic voice speaks of a past that remains alive in the present through the ancestors who exist within her. Two verses aligned to the right of the page commence the text, "three women reside within me / grandmot*her*greatgrandmot*her*mot*her*." Set apart, these lines form two separate stanzas, clearly marking the thesis of the poem. Purposefully, the poet italicizes "her" within the verse three times to emphasize a shared female identity and link four generations of women. The line

contains no spaces between words. This symbolic elimination of distance between the women textually represents their coming together as one being. Moreover, these women are not named in chronological order, which stresses that they exist together, not in a sequence determined by time. The lack of capital letters further supports this construction of continuity, as do the use of verbs appearing only in the present tense and the gerund form.

The structure of the poem contributes to these women's shared sense of connection, which exists across space and histories. After the first two verses, the reader's eye moves from right to left and then down the page. When we reach the concluding lines, the eye moves across empty space as it follows the text's continually growing indentations to the right. The textual body of the poem creates a visual movement that, when laid on the page, is somewhat reminiscent of two shores of the Atlantic, a large land mass to the West, and a smaller island group of words to the South. The distance between the stanzas represents the space traversed during the lives of the ancestors, who all come together in their descendant. The image appearing at the end of the second stanza supports this idea: the connecting waves of hair juxtaposed to the endless seas that physically divide the lives of the women create a beautiful vision of both the unity and separation expressed in the final verse of this stanza. As the poem progresses to this image, O'Reilly Herrera uses enjambment to continue thoughts and ideas across verses. Yet within these connected verses, she creates some separations within the text with commas. In this way, she reminds us that these are separate women who act individually, although they exist within a single body. The poem denies a more regulated structure to emphasize the concurrence of presences, but emphasizes that the ancestors come together in the poetic voice's body.

B. How and Why the Maternal Ancestors Haunt

The title of O'Reilly Herrera's poem directs us toward a spectral theme: a woman who is "inhabited" by the ghosts of her ancestors. Habitation invokes place, the people who live there, and home. Here, these elements of place are ascribed to the space of a woman's body. The verses develop this concept as the poetic voice describes how the ghosts of her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother do not appear as ethereal apparitions, but are at once present inside of her. They haunt her from within, but dress her body, constructing who she is and how she appears to the world. Similar to the family resemblance mediated upon in "Burialground," O'Reilly Herrera's poetic voice describes her body through aspects of her past. Her physical presence visually reveals the spirits' presence inside of her. These spirits haunt from within and exist as part of who the woman is.

C. Embodiment of the Ghosts of the Past

O'Reilly Herrera's poem celebrates the embodied presence of ancestors. After the two introductory verses, a stanza of twenty-one verses align to the left, creating a textual corpus representative of the body she decorates—her own. Her ancestors' presences within her are not dead and immobile: "spooning and nesting / pushing and pressing / vying for my attention." (3-5). Rather, they are living, active, and demanding of her acknowledgment. As they push and prod, spoon and nest within, the poetic voice feels physically connected to these ancestors. The verbs O'Reilly Herrera chooses emphasize the insistent (pushing, prodding) and intimate nature of the spirits (spooning, nesting) as they make the woman's body their home. The last line of the stanza suggests a simultaneous division and unity between the women—the poetic voice feels the spirits separately, but they all make up who she is. The women come together to peer from a single pair of almond eyes, presumably the poetic voice's eyes, perhaps reminding us of the

embodied spirits in "Ante un espejo" that dry out *tú*'s eyes. Yet here, the spirits enliven and enhance the descendant's perspective of the world. The ghosts within her influence how she views her every day and lend her greater understanding of herself.

The women are referred to as "the first," "the second," and "the third." Following chronological order, I loosely assume them to be the great-grandmother, the grandmother, and the mother, respectively, because of the emphasis on tradition from the great-grandmother, who lived the longest time ago. However, because the women are listed in a different order in the second verse of the poem, the possibility of other sequences of the ancestors should not be discounted. As we are not provided with details of these women's lives, we do not know who remained in Cuba or who immigrated to the United States, clues that would help determine to which woman the poet is referring in each instance of the poem. However, the question of who is who does not change my reading of the text's ghosts, as the poetic voice emphasizes the combined importance of all three women. Conversely, recognizing the identities of the three women as somewhat fluid instead of assigning rigid roles to each one allows us to further explore the collapsing of time, space, and people that is introduced in the first verse.

The maternal ancestors dress the poetic voice in different ways, leaving physical traces of her heritage upon her body. The descendant's actions are not entirely her own, as the spirits within her influence her body's movements. The third ancestor, whom I choose to read as the woman's mother, "raises our brows in Pyrenees arches, / as she transforms us into a garden of powder and cologne." (9-10). The poetic voice speaks with a plural "we," uniting herself with the women inside of her. The mother, the woman from whom she is most closely descended, affects a part of the body readily seen and easily noticed—her face, her smell, and her mannerisms. However, while it may be tempting to restrict the reading of the first ancestor to

being just the mother, the reference to the Pyrenees alludes to a time before Cuba, perhaps to a relative that emigrated from the Iberian Peninsula. Again, I position this woman as the mother, but additional possibilities enhance the overall interpretation of the poem. The ambiguity reminds us that spirits linger in discordance with the laws of time and space.

The first, the poetic voice's great-grandmother, appears in profile and pulls with small, childlike hands at the nylons around "our ankles and knees" (14). The image of a great-grandmother with such youthful hands startles us as we immediately associate a grandmother with wrinkles and age spots. Again, the poet collapses the past and present, and we remember that the great-grandmother was once young and now exists out of the constraints of age and regular time. As the eldest member of the family, she symbolically dresses the shared body from the bottom up, beginning from the roots, the foundation. She "impatiently discards the modern, choosing instead / a circle of scarabs on linen, / a single cameo and pearls." (15-17). The great-grandmother adorns the body with tradition. Like the mother before her, her identity is also complicated by the details of her presence. Nylons and pearls are most often considered more traditional, perhaps even old-fashioned accessories, although they are not unseen in contemporary fashion. Still, cameos hark back to a Victorian aesthetic, perhaps again suggesting European roots. At the same time, this more European element is contrasted to her skirts, which are like the *framboyán*, the royal poinciana, a tree with bright flowers that grows in the Caribbean and Africa. And, in the midst of all of this, what is the meaning of the scarabs on linen? A scarab beetle is best known as the dung-rolling insect worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. Following this line of thought within the context of a poem that presents spirits preserved within a body, the linen may not (solely) allude to ancient African roots, but also the practice of mummification and preservation of beloved ancestors.

Finally, the second (the grandmother) appears,

> all the while, I sense the second,
>
> present among the shadows
>
> between two shores, riding
>
> the dark waves of my hair,
>
> across these endless seas
>
> that unite us and divide us. (18-23)

Reminiscent of the spirits within “Tropical Flavor,” the presence of the second seems more ephemeral than the others, as she prefers to stay in shadows. Still, the poetic voice feels her within and her dark waves of hair connect her with her grandmother’s spirit. We are told that this ancestor exists between shores, and therefore may be the woman who immigrated to the United States from the Caribbean. Her presence is embodied in waves, which reminds us of the waters separating Cuba and Florida, and I therefore see her as the link between the two cultures. However, the image of two shores again permits additional readings, as the connecting waters could also be those of the Atlantic, an ocean that most Cubans’ ancestors crossed as free immigrants or slaves. The spirits of O’Reilly Herrera’s poem represent an ancestry that reaches beyond the island to the homelands of those who immigrated to Cuba generations before. In this way, the ancestor’s presences also illuminate Cubanness as constructed from a complex and diverse history.

The poem concludes with the assertion that the ancestors’ spirits exist within the body of the poetic voice. The first verse repeats to end the poem, but appears divided into two final stanzas. With this form, the poem plays with the themes of unity and division and, by recycling the first line, creates a circular structure that challenges a linear sense of time. The poem sets

apart “three women” as a single line separated from the rest of the text. It stands alone to emphasize the union of generations. Then, “reside / within / me”, the final three lines, appear increasingly indented from the left to form the last stanza. The poem emphasizes each word, but ends with “me” to stress the poetic voice’s being as a product of her ancestry, that she embodies the spiritual presences of these women.

In these poems, the spectral shifts with the poetic voice’s proximity to exile. Morejón imagines a horrific ghost, but for later generations, the specters of exile appear as welcome, celebrated presences. Reminders of exile inspire uncanny fear for *tú*, but they evoke nostalgia in “Burialground” and, with time and distance, spark self-recognition and pride in “Tropical Flavor” and “Inhabited Woman.” As the ghosts’ nature and purpose transform, they move from an exterior space to settle in the body of the descendant. There, the specters found are “re-bodied” through healing of past trauma. This inward movement corresponds with a loss of what Derrida describes as the “visor effect,” or the feeling of being watched by an unseen, ghostly presence (125). *Tú*’s city-ghost haunts her surroundings, watching her until her soul withers to nothing, but the ghosts in “Inhabited Woman” comfortably view the world through the eyes of the poetic voice. The ghosts remain present inside the body of a woman descended from exile as she is able to heal the wounds of past trauma and celebrate this identity.

Studied together, the ghosts of these works tell a story of migration. Their specters create an arc of transition that moves from painful separation to melancholic nostalgia, to the healing of wounds, and finally to the recognition of pride found in a past that insists upon remaining present. I now turn to Daína Chaviano’s *La isla de los amores infinitos* to explore how the novel’s ghosts aid the exile character’s healing process.

VI. Novel: Daína Chaviano's *La isla de los amores infinitos*

A. Ghosts in Time and Space

Daína Chaviano's novel begins when the main character, Cecilia, meets an old woman, Amalia, in a local bar:

> Estaba tan oscuro que Cecilia apenas podía verla. Más bien adivinaba su silueta tras la mesita pegada a la pared, junto a las fotos de los muertos sagrados: Benny Moré, el genio del bolero; Rita Montaner, la diva mimada por los músicos; Ernesto Lecuona, el más universal de los compositores cubanos; el retinto *chansonnier* Bola de Nieve, con su sonrisa blanca y dulce como el azúcar [. . .] La penumbra del local, casi vacío a esa hora de noche, ya empezaba a contaminarse con el humo de los Marlboro, los Dunhill y alguno que otro Cohíba. (19)

The hazy atmosphere, the flickering images, the melancholic music, and the dim lighting all contribute to the spectral nature of the bar. Amalia, the novel reveals in its final pages, is a Cuban ghost with ties to Cecilia's family. The bar acts as an in-between space where ghosts haunt, the past comes alive, and cultures meet. It is filled with reminders of home and the air seems charged with presence, "En aquel bar flotaba una especie de energía, un aroma a embrujo, como si allí se abriera la entrada a otro universo" (19).

Like the restaurant in "Tropical Flavor," the bar makes the past present. Cecilia feels lost and alone in Miami and resents her inability to return to her home country. She avoids confronting her unhappiness and instead, pushes away her memories and tries to ignore parts of her Cuban heritage. In the bar, reminders of the island surround Cecilia, refusing to allow her to forget her past. The sounds of Cuban boleros and images of the island flicker on the TV screen,

faces of the “sacred dead” line the walls, and the smoke of Cuban cigars fill this space, creating a haven of Cuban culture in Miami. Still, the outside world seeps in as the smoke of the Marlboros mixes with that of the *Cohiba* cigars and Scandinavian tourists enter the bar. While the tourists enjoy the drinks and music, the bar is something more for Cecilia. For her, the place is a link to home.

The bar brings the past alive in many ways, including through the presence of ghosts. Amalia lingers in the shadowy corners as she enjoys the Cuban atmosphere, which “[l]e recuerda otra época” (24). Amalia quickly draws Cecilia into conversation and the ghost woman regales her with accounts of immigrants and exiles, all of whose stories connect to Cuba. Readers are not immediately privy to Amalia’s words, but every other chapter of the novel presents an episode from the lives of different ancestors, who all come together in Amalia’s maternal and paternal family trees. The stories captivate Cecilia as they weave together the lives of generations of people who, like Cecilia, migrated and began again within a new culture.[67] Consequently, the format of the novel itself dismisses a linear story as the reader jumps between centuries and across oceans. The text draws the reader from the past into the present, backwards and forwards again. Upon hearing Amalia’s stories, Cecilia feels almost magically pulled from the present moment:

> El relato de Amalia era más bien un encantamiento. El viento soplaba con fuerza entre las altas cañas de un país lejano, cargado de belleza y violencia. Había festejos y muertes, bodas y matanzas. Las escenas se desprendían de algún resquicio del universo como si alguien hubiera abierto un agujero por donde

[67] Cecilia, as she discovers late in the novel, and her life in Miami will form part of this family history.

> escaparan los recuerdos de un mundo olvidado. Cuando Cecilia volvió a tomar conciencia del entorno, ya la anciana se había marchado y los bailadores regresaban a sus mesas. (25)

Amalia's words spellbind Cecilia. After Amalia vanishes, Cecilia's friends find her in the bar and comment on her "cara de pasmo," saying she looks as if "viene de otro mundo" (25). Their reaction emphasizes Cecilia's experience of being "disjointed" from time and place. The Cuban bar and the ghost's stories recounted inside of its walls awaken Cecilia's connection to her past, something she had previously tried to suppress. Cecilia's healing with exile begins that night in the Cuban bar, where the limits of time and space blur.

B. How and Why the Ghosts Follow

Cecilia's complicated relationship with her past presents the central dilemma of *La isla de los amores infinitos* and this inner turmoil draws ghosts to her. Similar to *tú*'s lifeless wanderings, Cecilia's first years of exile are devoid of life, draining her to a state of empty confusion and isolation. Orphaned on the island, Cecilia lives in Miami where she works as a journalist and has only a few friends and a great-aunt whom she visits infrequently. Although her childhood was happy, she considers her adolescence a part of her life that is dead (22). Cecilia grows to resent the island and dismisses her memories of living there before exile:

> Se había marchado de su tierra huyéndole a muchas cosas, a tantas que ya no valía la pena recordarlas. Y mientras veía perderse en el horizonte los edificios que se desmoronaban a lo largo del malecón—durante aquel extraño verano de 1994 en que tantos habían escapado en balsa a plena luz del día—, juró que nunca más regresaría. Cuatro años más tarde, continuaba a la deriva. No quería saber del país

> que dejara atrás; pero seguía sintiéndose una forastera en la ciudad que amparaba al mayor número de cubanos en el mundo, después de La Habana. (20)

When Cecilia leaves Cuba, she tries to leave her life there behind. Although it is her decision to leave he island, she also feels that her country has abandoned her. In Miami, she distances herself from any reminders of home, but also feels isolated from the Cuban exile community. In some ways, her situation reminds us of Morejón's depiction of exile. Like the future *tú* faces, Cecilia feels empty, isolated, and lost.

Cecilia's struggle to find a home abroad echoes sentiments of Cuba-born exiles noted by O'Reilly Herrera,

> Not identifying entirely with either Cuba or the United States, [they] share a sense of "unbelonging" and perceive themselves to be "spiritual exiles." In effect, they suffer from a kind of vicarious Odyssean complex, caught in the double bind of the person who returns home only to find himself a stranger in his own land. At home (wherever that may be), they are insiders who always feel like outsiders; yet in Cuba or Miami, they are outsiders who feel as though they ought to be let into the circle. (*ReMembering* xxiii)

Trapped between here and there, Cecilia feels lost and alone in Miami, like the double-bound outsider O'Reilly Herrera describes. Without ties to the island and unable to create ties in Miami, Cecilia is stuck "afloat" between two places. Her rootlessness draws the ghosts of her heritage to her.

Chaviano's ghosts dispel grief by reconnecting Cecilia with her past. Rather than acting as a painful reminder of what has been lost, Amalia acts as a spiritual aid in Cecilia's healing process. She haunts to help Cecilia confront the past and find peace. Amalia is neither

frightening nor melancholic, but rather the opposite of Morejón's dark and menacing presence, and Cecilia feels inexplicably drawn to her when they meet in the bar. Amalia does not produce a sense of grief or nostalgia. Instead, she comforts Cecilia and, after a few visits with Amalia in the bar, Cecilia realizes that the old woman eases her overwhelming sense of isolation, "Siempre se había sentido una extranjera de su tiempo y de su mundo, y aquella percepción había aumentado en los últimos años. Quizás por eso regresaba una y otra vez al bar donde podía olvidar su presente a través de las historias de Amalia" (97). Cecilia finds escape from her melancholic daily life through the old woman's stories.

The other ghostly presences in Chaviano's novel haunt for the same reasons as Amalia—they are familiar spirits drawn to Cecilia out of their love for her and their desire to relieve her suffering. Ghosts of family members and friends who cared for Cecilia when they were alive, they appear with the ghost house that Cecilia has been assigned to investigate. During her research, Cecilia interviews Lisa, who witnessed an apparition of the ghosts. Lisa notes the house's odd lack of ominousness, "Generalmente los fantasmas regresan por venganza porque reclaman justicia en un crimen sin resolver [. . .] pero los habitantes de esa casa parecen felices [. . .] Yo creo que han vuelto porque añoran algo que no quieren abandonar" (169). The benevolent nature of the haunting intrigues Cecilia, and she soon realizes that the phantom house is not randomly appearing throughout the city, but is searching for her. This ghostly house, an unfixed place moving through space to remind the exile of her homeland, reminds us of Morejón's stalking city. It, however, follows Cecilia through the streets of Miami to help resolve her pain. These ghosts appear because Cecilia, in her depression and withdrawal, needs to remember her past and who she is before she can find happiness.

Although the occupants of the house seem happy to Lisa, the text describes the places it leaves behind and how they feel overwhelmed with absence: “No había necesitado verla para palpar el rastro de melancolía que reinaba en los lugares donde había aparecido, y la atmósfera de nostalgia, casi rayana en tristeza, que quedaba en cada sitio tras su desvanecimiento” (186). The house searches for Cecilia and when it does not find her, it disappears in grief. Its hope of finding Cecilia reminds us of the other side of exile, much like Morejón’s description of *tú*’s left behind loved ones. Similarly, before she comprehends that the ghost house and its phantom occupants are her protectors, Cecilia’s investigation of the house leaves her feeling more forsaken than ever, “Aquellos muertos que vagaban por todo Miami le traían el aroma de una ciudad que había llegado a aborrecer más que ninguna. Ella era una mujer de ninguna parte, alguien que no pertenecía a ningún sitio” (319). Much like *tú*’s city, the ghosts of Cecilia’s Havana haunt her with scents of home. She also understands, melancholically, that the city she has left will never again be how she remembers it, as her memory preserves it from the changes of time. Cecilia addresses this idea when she discusses absence, forgetting, and mythologizing a lost place with her friend, Gaia, stating that she understands that the Havana she left behind no longer exists (284). However, unlike *tú*, Cecilia is able to overcome exile’s lonely life and find happiness in Miami.

Cecilia’s initial reaction to the ghost house changes when she understands who and what the presences are. Before, the ghost house seems unsettling and strange. In accordance with Blanco and Peeren’s observations of the ghost, Chaviano’s ghosts “do more than obsessively recall a fixed past” as they “reveal the insufficiency of the present moment, as well as the disconsolations and erasures of the past, and a tentative hopefulness for future resolutions” (Blanco and Peeren, “Introduction” 16). Once the phantom house and its ghosts find Cecilia,

they appear as warm and loving reminders of home (not unlike the spirits in "Tropical Flavor"). They help Cecilia to understand why she is lost in Miami, what is missing from her life, and how to build a home there. Unlike *tú*'s haunting in Morejón's poem, the house does not drive Cecilia's empty soul into a pointless existence, but instead fills her loneliness with optimistic purpose.

The novel's assertion that places have souls advances the author's political leanings. Much like a house can move in ghostly form, a city holds numerous spirits that come together to constitute the place's being. In this way, the spirits of past residents and the energies of its history haunt a city. Chaviano uses this idea to position Miami as a place of possibility. She juxtaposes the city as a space of opportunity with Havana, which she describes as a city filled fear and hopelessness.[68]

Likewise, correlations between Castro Cuba and death emerge throughout the novel.[69] One character psychically predicts that after the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, a death-like figure will wreak destruction upon the Cuban people, "Peor sería la llegada de La Pelona, un ente mítico que, apoyado por un ejército de diablos rojos, se convertiría en el Judas, el Herodes y el Anticristo de la isla. Hasta las criaturas pequeñas serían masacradas si intentaban escapar de su feudo" (304). The characters in Miami emphasize Havana as a wrecked and hopeless place. For

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[68] Gaia tells her, "En la vida siempre hay imprevistos y accidentes; ésa es la dosis de inseguridad que admitimos. Pero si ocurre algo que conmueve los cimientos de lo cotidiano, la desconfianza empieza a cobrar proporciones inhumanas. Es ahí donde se vuelve peligrosa para la cordura. Podemos soportar nuestros miedos individuales si sabemos que el resto de la sociedad fluye dentro de ciertos parámetros normales, porque en el fondo esperamos que esos temores sólo sean un pequeño disloque individual que no se reflejará en el exterior. Pero apenas el miedo afecta el entorno, el individuo pierde su sostén natural; pierde la posibilidad de acudir a otros en busca de ayuda o consuelo [. . .] Eso era la casa fantasma de La Habana: un pozo oscuro y sin fondo" (57).

[69] At other times in the novel, Cuba is likened to the lost Paradise of Eden.

instance, one of Cecilia's friends jokes that the Pope visits Havana so that he can see Hell up close. Later, Havana is likened to a Caribbean Pompeii:

> destrozada por un Vesubio de proporciones cósmicas. Las calles se hallaban cubiertas de baches que los escasos vehículos—viejos y destartalados—debían ir vadeando si no querían caer en ellos y terminar allí sus días. El sol chamuscaba árboles y jardines. No había césped por ningún sitio. La ciudad estaba inundada de vallas y carteles que llamaban a la guerra, a la destrucción del enemigo, y al odio sin cuartel. (355)

For Chaviano's exile, the island evokes images of death. Similar to how the exile's choice to live off of the island creates Morejón's hell, Chaviano's exile's choice to leave Cuba produces a loneliness so torturous that it is likened to "un círculo dantesco" (100). However, Chaviano's vision is more complex as she writes an infernal island where the decision to stay would create suffering that is far worse (100). Chaviano's personal experience informs her depiction of Cecilia's experience, as she knows both sides of exile.

Chaviano's describes Cuba as engulfed in anguish to present a political commentary that also emphasizes the novel's use of ghosts as harbingers of resolution.[70] Cecilia's spirits never relinquish their hope that she will achieve peace in the new land. They haunt with an understanding that confrontation with and acceptance of the past will lead to a happier future.

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[70] In a 2010 interview, Chaviano states, "I don't like to mix my political opinions or actions with literature. In fact, although I have actively participated in campaigns for the release of political prisoners or in favor of the Ladies in White, I never talk about that in my interviews, unless I get asked. To be honest, I hate talking or writing about politics in public—an exasperating issue for me because I never find solutions to the problems it presents. That is why, if any of my novels touch some political issue, it is only because the plot forces me. It is never my goal as a writer. In the novels of the aforementioned series [*La Habana oculta* series] I tried to describe some of the disasters in which I was born in and lived" (*Hispanista*).

The house moves as a place of nurturing love with the ability to heal the exile's sense of displacement. The house and Cecilia's family within it, like Amalia, haunt to help the exile establish a new life off the island.

C. Ghosts That are Safeguarded Within

Like the exiles in the poems of Cepero, Cecilia inherits spiritual presences. However, Chaviano's ghosts may remind us more of O'Reilly Herrera's spirits in that they do not passively linger, but directly engage with Cecilia's life to influence who she is. She also recognizes her home as a place that lives within her, "Sí, su ciudad también era parte de ella, como el soplo de su respiración, como la naturaleza de sus visiones " (379). When Cecilia accepts the ghosts' haunting presences and, with them, her family's history, she understands that they will be with her forever.

Also similar to O'Reilly Herrera's poem, Chaviano focuses on female lineage as the means of cultural transmission, and she presents inheritance and family through the novel's ghostly beings.[71] For instance, Chaviano utilizes the curse of the *duende* to represent the matrilineal transmission of culture.[72] As the curse dictates, the *duende* is an otherwise invisible nuisance that appears only to the present matriarch of Amalia's family.[73] In absence of a female

[71] Further emphasizing the role of heritage and family, Chaviano includes Pablo and Amalia's family trees and where their ancestors originated (China and Nigeria/Cuenca, Spain, respectively) as a preface to the novel. So as not to give away the ending, the trees cease after these generations, two before Cecilia's.

[72] A *duende* is a mischievous mythological creature of Iberian, Latin American, and Filipino traditions that is similar to a goblin/sprite/imp kind of creature.

[73] While male ghosts do appear, those who haunt or are able to connect with the spiritual world are almost always women.

descendant, the *duende* attaches himself to the wife of the firstborn son. The imp's appearance in the bar at the end of the novel, therefore, reveals Cecilia's fate to marry Amalia's grandson. Cecilia inherits the *duende*, which ties Cecilia to Amalia's family and serves as a constant presence to remind Cecilia of her heritage.

Cecilia's reconciliation with her heritage prompts her realization of psychic abilities. Inherited from her grandmother and great-aunt, these abilities allow Cecilia to maintain contact with the dead. In this way, she lives in direct communication with her ancestors. This connection with the dead guarantees that Cecilia will never again lose touch with her past. Fuentes writes,

> In Chaviano's novel, the capacity to heal and the ability to see and speak to the dead are transmitted down from woman to woman, from generation to generation. Women hold their family's history, and by extension the nation's, and through Amalia's narration of her family history, another woman, Cecilia, is able to carry on the story of Cuba's multiple transculturations. (8)

This inheritance follows Chaviano's personal belief that women have developed a better intuition for the supernatural as a tactic of survival ("dinosaurios" 200).

Cecilia's struggle with exile concludes when she allows her ghosts into her life and through them, her heritage. She learns that her ancestors accompany her as spiritual presences that she is never alone, and that she carries home within her. Just as "Inhabited Woman" asserts the presence of a Cuban identity maintained off the island, Cecilia's ghost home accompanies her wherever she goes. In *La isla de los amores infinitos*, the ghosts haunt to take their place within Cecilia's heart.

VIII. Conclusions: The Ghost's Refusal to be Forgotten

As Cuba and the United States work through decades of Cold War estrangement, Cubans, Cuban exiles, and Cuban Americans may witness changes on the island and within diasporic communities that awaken ghosts of the pasts. Like the phantom of Paula in the former Cuban consulate in Miami, lingering memories emerge to arouse feelings of fear, pain, nostalgia, and hope. These ghosts ignite thoughts of another time and place and provoke questions regarding the futures of people and families divided by political forces. A local NBC article writes about the ghost of Paula, linking her presence with the experiences of the exile community: "Whether the building is haunted by a ghost is certainly debatable. There's no question, though, that anything connected with the brutally repressive Castro dictatorship is haunted by decades of scorn and fury in this community" (Odzer). Ghosts of the island home persist in exile.

In the texts selected for this chapter, we see how specters inform the identities of exiles and their descendants in evolving ways. "[Exile] is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home," Edward Said states (173). Yet in these texts, we see a healing represented by the transformation of the specter through generations descended from exile. These ghosts of exile transform in presence through time and distance. Earlier ghosts haunt fiercely as a *revenant* (invoking what was) presence for the exile, but later ones are a presence leaning more toward the *arrivant* (announcing what will be) aspect of the ghost.[74] As the children and grandchildren of exiles become further removed from the event of the painful split with the homeland, mourning converts into longing and then into pride. Cepero's two poems and Chaviano's novel represent a link between the vastly different forms of haunting described in the poems of Morejón and O'Reilly Herrera. Whether through direct hauntings or

[74] As Blanco and Peeren note, Derrida's specter is "always both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come)" ("Introduction" 13).

spectral language, the authors utilize ghostly presences to enrich their depiction of the poetic/narrative voice's relationship with an exilic identity.

In Morejón's "Ante un espejo," we see the devastating and self-compromising void that she envisions for the exile. This emptiness takes the form of a ghostly city and haunts *tú*'s surroundings until it drains her to emptiness. Morejón immerses her verses in melancholy for a would-be lost home and warns against a scary, empty life of wandering. Traces of the past in Cepero's poems materialize to stir both a longing for further understanding of and a joy in her Cuban roots. In "Burialground," spectral traces of the past appear on the surface of the poetic voice's body, while they stir inside in "Tropical Flavor." O'Reilly Herrera describes a woman's body decorated by the spirits of maternal ancestors that live within her. Her poem tells of a descendant of exile who is not filled with melancholy and void, but lives as an embodiment of heritage and pride. This poem is a celebration of the ability to rekindle feelings of a culture of which she feels very much a part. This shift in the nature of haunting emerges in Chaviano's *La isla de los amores infinitos*, as we see Cecilia's reconciliation with exile. From the beginning to the end of the novel, we read Cecilia's healing process. She is hurt, angry, and alone until the ghosts of her past intervene to reconnect her with her past. After she accepts her heritage, she feels pride in her Cuban identity, much like the poetic voices in "Tropical Flavor" and "Inhabited Woman." After the ghost house finds Cecilia, she welcomes its inhabitants to reside within her. This inward movement emphasizes that as Cecilia reconciles with her exile condition, the ghosts shed any uncanny nature and take root within the body of the exile. Their presence within gestures to the exile's ability to maintain Cuban heritage, even when separated from the island.

Ghosts linger and haunt. In these texts, specters represent a culture that may change, but does not disappear. A phantom city reminds the exile of what is lost. A resemblance in a photo

offers self-reflection. The spirits that move inside their descendant's body represent a history carried within. They make present a home that is far away. Like Miami's ghost, Paula, the texts' specters offer connection to island culture. Written by women of different Cub*and* generations, these ghosts leave Cuba to follow their exiles. As generations proceed, the spirits enable a re-homing of the past so that the exile and her descendants can keep a Cuban home within themselves.

Chapter Two:

Migration, Rebirth, and the Re-Rooting of Home in Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting*

Cristina García's 2003 novel *Monkey Hunting* spans four generations of migration, following Chen Pan and his descendants across oceans and continents, through tragedy and triumph.[75] Twenty-year-old Chen Pan leaves China in 1857 to work as an indentured servant in the sugar cane fields of Cuba.[76] His departure for the island and the moments preceding his death sixty years later bookend the novel. The majority of the text in-between tells of his voyage and servitude, his successful establishment in Havana, and his life as an older man. In this way, his life path structures the 251 pages as a narrative backbone while the rest of the text bounces through time and space to interweave the stories of his granddaughter, Chen Fang, and his great-grandson, Domingo Chen. Episodes from Chen Fang's experiences in twentieth century China and Domingo Chen's exile to New York City in the 1960s and subsequent deployment in the Vietnam War make up the rest of the fifteen chapters, which divide into three sections to represent the loosely paralleling life stages of these main characters.[77] Through the individual,

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[75] As Lee points out, the title alludes to the trickster figure of Chinese legend, a monkey named Sun Wukong who appears in the 16th century novel *Journey to the West* (127). Begoña Toral Alemán concisely summarizes WuKong's story and notes its influence on García's novel:"A rasgos generales, este libro [. . .] recoge las aventuras del monje Hsuan Chwang en su largo peregrinaje a la India en busca de escrituras budistas; una odisea en la que le acompañan cuatro discípulos que se enfrentan a toda clase de peligros, incluyendo demonios y monstruos" (95).

[76] 1860 saw the end of the second Opium War (1856-60; also known as the "Arrow War"), which weakened the Qing Dynasty and granted trading rights within China to foreigners. Amoy was one of five treaty ports established after the first Opium War (1839-42).

[77] Marta J. Lysik identifies the novel as "a transnational neo-slave narrative insofar as it follows multiple trajectories and brings to the foreground various forms of slavery: chattel system in Cuba, forced marriages, foot binding and cross-dressing in pre-Cultural Revolution China, and prostitution during the Vietnam war [*sic*]" (276).

yet concurrently told, accounts of three generations defined by diaspora, García's text presents complex identity negotiations provoked by displacement and the migrants' hopeful search for home.[78]

García work engages a rhetoric of death and rebirth to tell stories of departure, journey, and the repositioning of identity. In this chapter and the next, I examine what her novel can tell us about the immigrant's process of living within and becoming part of a new community.[79] In the following study, I hope to illuminate this cultural transition by focusing my reading on how the movement of people can be seen as a complex physical and a spiritual passage. More specifically, I am interested in how García's depiction of migration employs language of death and renewal and, furthermore, how this rhetoric corresponds with certain elements and figurations of social rites that center around rebirth. The stories of Chen Pan and Domingo provide the textual foundation for this section as their experiences mirror each other in various ways throughout the novel.[80] Ultimately, the tale of Chen Pan celebrates his successful

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[78] Lee proposes a reimagining of "home" in her discussion of *Monkey Hunting*, highlighting the paradoxical nature of the idea and redefining it through diaspora as a continual "homing" (127-8). She follows Ian Chambers' idea of the mobile home that is neither fixed in place or allocated to a structure, which may also remind us of Gloria Anzaldúa's likening of her own identity to a turtle who carries her home on her back (Chambers 4; Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* 21). For the purposes of this chapter, home describes a spiritual recognition of self that is linked to place. My concept of finding home goes hand in hand with "planting roots," both metaphorically and, as we will see, literally.

[79] Xiomara Campilongo examines how *Monkey Hunting* works to counter Orientalist tropes and stereotypes while also noting that Chen Pan's process of transculturation is far from easy. Rather, it is "painful, one with gains and loses" (122).

[80] These similarities include: their stories begin when they are roughly the same age (about nineteen to twenty years old), neither set of their parents has a harmonious marriage, both of their fathers die when they are young, they have strained relationships with their mothers who remain in their homelands and with whom they eventually cut ties, both go to carnivals before they leave their homelands, both journey overseas, their lovers are women born in the foreign

establishment in Cuba and his full life. The first half of this chapter looks at the process of Chen Pan's transition into Cuban society through ritual elements of migration. His story ends very differently from Domingo's narrative, which leaves Domingo as a lost and wandering young man. The second half of the paper explores why Domingo Chen is unable to re-root himself in a new home. I highlight elements of the ritual process that appear as part of the migrations of both Chens and where their resembling journeys diverge to finally propose what I read as a strong social critique presented in the novel.[81]

Before entering the discussion of the text, I would like to include a brief introduction of the author and her work. Cristina García (Havana, 1958) was raised in New York City after leaving Cuba in 1960 after the Cuban Revolution. Ylce Irizarry writes, "Because she was two years old when they left, she has no memories of Cuba; this lack has shaped her academic interests and pervades her writing, where memory is a constant motif" (175). She holds an MA in international relations from John Hopkins University and worked to become an accomplished journalist before dedicating herself to fiction. Her many awards include the Northern California Book Award (2008), the Frontizera Award from the Border Book Festival (2008), a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship (2004), two Cintas Fellowships (1997 and 1992), a Guggenheim Fellowship (1995), the Whiting Writer's Award (1996), a Hodder Fellowship (1992-1993), and writing/teaching residences at numerous universities and colleges. Her work includes poetry, young adult fiction, theater, and non-fiction, but she is perhaps best known for

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lands where they find themselves, both of their lovers have experienced suffering greater than their own, and both fight to survive in the jungle.

[81] I look at Chen Fang's story in greater depth in the final chapter.

her six novels which include *Dreaming in Cuban*, a National Book Award Finalist in 1992, *The Agüero Sisters* (1997), and the focus of this study, *Monkey Hunting*.

I. Reading Migration through Ritual Rebirth

A. Rites of Passage and Displacement

Chen Pen and Domingo Chen enter an in-between state of displacement upon leaving their homelands. Detached from the "before," the migrant undergoes an intermediate phase before he is able to establish himself "after" as a member of the new place's social fabric. This process is complicated and nuanced, but in García's text I observe an overall pattern that I believe can deepen our understanding of how peoples and cultures connect. In the novel, the in-between stage of migration only concludes when the immigrant finds closure with the past and emerges as a member of the new community. For example, upon leaving his village Chen Pan begins transitioning from the life he has known in China to the one that awaits him in Cuba. His transition is not an immediate change, but rather a gradual process that is not complete until he becomes a member of Havana society. This period of change extends across years of his life, including his time as an indentured servant and his stay in the jungle. Although he may be physically located in Cuba, he is not "re-rooted" there until he feels he is a part of the island and recognizes it as home. We see both Chen Pan and Domingo Chen caught within liminal stages that continue for long periods of time and stretch across vast distances.

Chen Pan and Domingo struggle to pass from one social group to another, which recalls ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's study of social processes in *Les rites de passage* (1909).[82]

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[82] A rich literature of ritual studies exists, particularly in the fields of religion and anthropology. While I include some selected thoughts in hopes of aiding my argument, a comprehensive

Van Gennep identifies three phases of a rite of passage: separation/preliminal (*séparation*), transition/liminal (*marge*), and incorporation/postliminal (*agrégation*). The first stage signals the breaking with or departure from the initial state, while the second encompasses the transitional stage and the third phase marks full integration into the new social position. García's novel consists of three sections titled "Origins," "Traveling through the Flesh," and "Last Rites," a structure that points to the organization of the text around this process (although the characters' life phases do not necessarily follow the stage represented by the section headings).[83]

Van Gennep's second chapter, "The Territorial Passage," is particularly interesting when considering aspects of migration that align with rites of passage. He begins with a discussion of historical boundaries between peoples. He notes the shift of natural borders to religious divisions and later to political ones, which all result in the delineation of territory (15-9). In doing so, he posits a direct link between migration ("crossing frontiers") and social transition, although his research predominantly focuses on ceremonial transitions practiced within a community. He envisions the individual human's life as filled with a continuous and overlapping series of changes and sees the progression of time as developing through a succession of events (3). Most commonly these life milestones are birth, adolescence, marriage, parenthood, advancement to a

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literary review of ritual studies is not within the scope of this chapter nor, I believe, necessary to its purpose. For further reading, Ronald L. Grimes's *Beginning Ritual Studies* provides a good beginning.

[83] Later in this essay I elaborate upon reason as to why this alignment does not occur, primarily because throughout the novel, Domingo remains in a liminal phase and does not fully re-enter society. However, the stories of the three main characters (Chen Pan, Chen Fang, and Domingo Chen) do follow an approximately similar structure in that "Origins" tells of leaving their families and the hardships of their early years and "Traveling through the Flesh" includes all three characters finding brief happiness in non-traditional romance which then ends by the conclusion of the section. Only the final days of Chen Pan and Chen Fang appear in "Last Rites."

higher class, occupational specialization, and death (van Gennep 3).[84] With these ideas, van Gennep provides a foundation in ritual studies that has been greatly built upon, expanded, argued against, and developed.[85]

Importantly, I do not wish to suggest that the novel portrays migration as strictly adhering to van Gennep's conception of social ritual. Nor do I want to imply an all-encompassing experience of migration and social transition that might simplify or minimize the importance of the individual experience. Rather, I intend to explore how elements of the ritual process inform the narrative, what they add to the text, and why García's choice to incorporate this rhetoric to tell stories of migration is relevant for my reading of the novel.

B. Chen Pan Separates from his "Origins"

The novel's first section, "Origins," highlights Chen Pan's departure from his homeland as a break with the past and the beginning of his transition into a new life. From its start, the story focuses on Chen Pan's leaving and journey to the Americas, choosing to reveal little about his homeland. Although the novel affords limited retrospective glimpses into Chen Pan's past that add some depth of character, García lets most of his background remain obscured. In this way, the text purposefully introduces him as a man who is already "in-between" as he has just exited his past life.[86] For the reader, Chen Pan's identity is immediately tied to his status as a migrant.

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[84] Van Gennep conceptualizes life's transitions as a house with many rooms entered by passing under doorways that represented the thresholds of change.

[85] Important theorists include Victor Turner, Ronald L. Grimes, Theodore Jennings, Catherine Bell, Evan Zuesse, Mircea Eliade, Clifford Geertz, and Stanley Tambiah.

Aside from a few scattered memories, the novel rather ambiguously relates the short and only episode in which we see Chen Pan in China. Contained entirely within the prologue, all of the text that describes the time pre-departure appears in italics, setting it apart from the novel as a preceding description of "before." In this section, we find Chen Pan at a circus on the dock of the harbor from which he will depart for Cuba the next morning. Physically located where the land meets the sea, the harbor represents not only the beginning of his overseas journey, but also occupies a place between his inland Chinese village and the island.

The liminal and carnivalesque aspects of the harbor space that surround Chen Pan emphasize his entry into the transition stage. Victor Turner's work develops van Gennep's idea of the liminal phase. He underscores the initiate's sense of disorientation upon leaving the known and understood world ("Ritual Process" 27, 95). In accordance with Turner's observations, Chen Pan feels lost and dazed at the circus as he floats through a cloud of opium smoke and dancing women. Time slows and space distorts as his environment overwhelms him and he realizes the separation between these new experiences and his life in the village: "How far away [his home] seemed to him now" (4).

After the prologue, the first chapter finds Chen Pan aboard the ship, again foregrounding his identity as a migrant.[87] Furthermore, Amoy (Xiamen), China, the city from which Chen Pan's

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[86] Moiles offers another reason behind the lack of information we are presented about Chen Pan's life in China, writing "the thin description implies the futility of attempting to recapture the wholeness of the past" (179).

[87] From 1848-74, a total of 124,813 indentured laborers were brought to Cuba from China and contracted to work for eight years (Okihiro 43). For further historical information, see Antonio Chuffat Latour, Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Arnold J. Meagher, Yrmina Eng Menéndez, Raquel Puig, Don E. Walicek, Lisa Yun, and Ana Zapata-Calle.

ship leaves, is the only Chinese city fully named in the entirety of the novel.[88] García cites places and towns in China using only the beginning letter followed by dashes (for example, "K-----").[89] In this way, the text denies the reader any fixed geographical point to begin the past, instead asking us to situate Chen Pan's "origin" at the place and moment of departure. Chen Pan's past remains a blur of memory about which sparingly little is revealed.

Ironically titled "To Paradise," *Monkey Hunting*'s first chapter relates Chen Pan's crossing of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans as one of the hundreds of indentured servants that left China for Cuba as part of *la trata amarilla*.[90] At sea, the passengers exist between their former lives of home and their hoped-for new beginnings on the island. If we recognize leaving China as a break with the previously known, the departure can be considered as an end or "death" of the former existence in preparation for the beginning of a new life. Viewing migration in this way supports the idea of the journey as a transition phase between two lives, reminding us of van

[88] Zapata-Calle notes, "Los puertos principales fueron Amoy, Macao, Swatow, Hong Kong, y Wampoa" (171).

[89] Hometowns are noted in this way for all the Chinese immigrants in the novel.

[90] In this chapter, I do not employ the term "coolie" (except in direct citations from the work of others) to avoid the historically racist connotations of the word. However, it is used in much of the current literature. Yun and Laremont define coolie: "[T]he term of coolie generalizes Asian laborers in a wide spectrum of ethnic histories, material conditions, and political context. The terms "coolie" or "indentured laborer" are generic assignations that classify the economic utility of coolies […]. Coolie labor was utilized in Cuba, Peru, Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Panama, Mexico, Brazil, and Costa Rica, among other places in the Americas" to replace the dwindling labor force resulting from the abolition of slave trade (Yun and Laremont 101). And Zapata-Calle further describes this history: "La mayoría de estos trabajadores eran hombres que llegaron a Cuba con un contrato de trabajo que les garantizaba teóricamente su libertad tras el cumplimiento del mismo. La llamada "trata amarilla" fue emprendida por los británicos tras el tratado firmado con China al finalizar la segunda Guerra del Opio (1840-1842), mediante el cual los ingleses contaban con toda la disponibilidad comercial en territorio chino. Esta trata duró desde 1847 hasta 1874" (Zapata-Calle 171).

Gennep's detailing of tribal rituals in which the initiate is considered dead within the intermediary stage and reborn upon emergence from the liminal,

> In some tribes the novice is considered dead, and he remains dead for the duration of his novitiate. It lasts for a fairly long time and consists of a physical and mental weakening which is undoubtedly intended to make him lose all recollection of his childhood existence […] Where the novice is considered dead, he is resurrected and taught how to live, but differently than in childhood. Whatever the variations of detail, a series which conforms to the general pattern of rites of passage can always be discerned. (75)

When viewing the passage as a spiritual transition, we can see aspects of the migrant's voyage that both liken it to a type of purgatorial holding stage and continues on the island. They must be endured before achieving a "rebirth."

The prevalence of deathly language in the descriptions of the indentured servants' suffering during the voyage encourages our reading of the scenes as closure of a previous life. Tales of ill-fated trips fill the passengers with fear as they hear of "Death voyages. Devil ships. On one journey, there was nothing to eat on board except rice" (62). Soon, what was once only hearsay becomes the migrants' reality: nine men die within the first month "not counting those killed in fights or beaten to death by the crew" and one man hangs himself with strips of clothing, the sound of his swaying "like the slow tearing of silk" (13; 15). Importantly, the severity of the conditions described are also historically accurate.[91] Onboard the ship, the

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[91] In her interview with the author, Ylce Irizarry notes that García's description of Chen Pan's journey follows the conventions of slave narratives (181). Her horrific descriptions are true to reality as many historians have noted that the transportation of indentured servants to the Americas was equally as terrible and brutal as Atlantic Slave Trade's Middle Passage (Hu-Dehart; Meagher; Yun and Laremont). See Don E. Walicek for the exact data regarding Chinese

passengers suffer physically from violence and "every manner of illness" (13). Thirst, starvation, abuse by captain's guards, threats of mutiny, illness, and conflicts between passengers all contribute to the torturous suffering of the journey: "Chen Pan watched men drink their own urine, lick moisture from the walls of the ship. A few swallowed seawater until their stomachs swelled and they choked in their own filth" (9). Death plagues the ship, a vessel carrying many men who are, in many ways, "as good as dead" as they may not survive whatever awaits them. They must fight to survive the journey's many obstacles as the sea and the ship become spaces saturated with death. These descriptions underscore the position of the migrant as closer to the departed than to the living. In this way, the text continues to link migration and movement to ritual passages of transitions, emphasizing the journey as part of a crossing from one life into another.

Furthermore, the hellish language of death and unrest underscore the journey as liminal.[92] These descriptions follow Turner in that "liminality is frequently likened to death" ("Ritual Process" 95). Aboard the ship, the passengers are miserable and terrified of the unknown. A feeling of looming death overwhelms the migrants as many men die or commit suicide by poison, hanging, or jumping into the sea to end their suffering (14). Rumors of their doomed fate circulate amongst the passengers and heighten their fear "that their ship was headed for the Philippines; that every last man on board would be killed there, heart scooped from his chest;

leaving China, number of deaths during voyage, and survivors arriving in Cuba from 1847-1870 (300). For instance, in 1857, the year Chen Pan departs for China, 1,575 of the 10,116 Chinese who embarked for Cuba died in the voyage (Walicek 300).

[92] The likening of the journey between home and a foreign place (specifically China and Cuba) with death is repeated later in the novel when Chen Pan's wife falls terminally ill, "To him, Lucrecia's impending death felt like a voyage he was preparing to take to a foreign land—to China, perhaps, where he kept promising they'd go before she died" (167).

that they'd be sold to cannibals who savored yellow flesh" (16). The ship entraps them in "cramped, stinking squalor" and is "outfitted like a prison, with irons and grates", encapsulating them in a vessel of pain, confusion, and violence (11; 8). The sea as a deadly space of crossing surrounds them in vast emptiness. This description of the journey as filled with death and suffering enhances passage's portrayal as part of Chen Pan's liminal stage.

The physical and spiritual suffering and the atmosphere of death that imbues the journey presents one of the novel's central themes: that migration is the movement of body and soul. Van Gennep writes that the departure from and the entry into a different space requires "physically and magico-religiously" passing through an intermediate phase, emphasizing the crossing as affecting both the body and the spirit (18). Likewise, García's characters experience migration as a physical relocation of body and a spiritual journey of self. This idea is reinforced by the immediate problem that dying at sea presents for the migrants who have yet to settle in a new home: the absence of land denies the dead man a physical resting place and a proper burial, without which the soul is unable to detach from the body and the spirit cannot to return to China. Those who die during the transition period leave the earth without a located home. To discuss the conflict between the dead body's physical location and the spirits' desire to return to China, characters repeatedly refer to those who have died as ghosts. When Lin Chin dies of a brutal beating,

> his body was dumped at sea. It was said that Lin Chin didn't sink at first but floated alongside the ship for hours, his eyes fixed on the sky. Chen Pan wondered if the dead man's ghost would find its way back to China. Or would it wander forever among the unvirtuous and the depraved? (12)

The man does not sink to the sea's bottom peacefully, but disturbingly follows the ship, his dead body mirroring the path of the migrants and refusing to fully surrender to the ocean depths. The migrating body carries a displaced soul and in this way, a placeless death yields an aimless spirit. Without a home, the man's ghost may wander forever, eternally a migrant, perpetually caught in a state of incomplete transition. Similarly, "The night the Wong brothers died, a squall engulfed the sea. The storm ripped off a mast and tossed two officers overboard. The men feared that the brothers' ghosts had cursed the ship, that they were causing the thunder and the lightning, the wind from eight directions, the waves as high as the Buddha's temples" (15). Their bodies left unsettled and their spirits without home, the Wong brothers inspire fear and are imagined as vengeful ghosts. They are caught in a space of crossing between lands and abandoned without the necessary burial rites. Their unfortunate end again shows that dying at sea prohibits the deceased from attaining spiritual rest.

The novel develops the idea of migration as a spiritual and physical transition by including comparable beliefs of other cultural populations in Cuba, specifically those of the African slaves, and in doing so, García posits that these elements of migration can be transcultural.[93] The novel follows Chen Pan and his descendants; therefore Chinese tradition is weighted most heavily in the text, but García also mentions practices of the communities encountered by Chen Pan (and, to a lesser extent, Domingo Chen in Vietnam). While working

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[93] In his introduction to *Beginning Ritual Studies*, Grimes writes, "Turner rejects aculturalism and atemporalism in method only to rediscover it in liminoid phenomena, which not only are experienced as "moments in and out of time" (1968a, 5) but are cross-cultural and universally human. Liminality is transcultural. […] Despite his recognition of the temporariness of liminality-communitas, he still views this experience as essentially the same in widely differing times and places" (153).

with the African slaves in the sugarcane fields, Chen Pan witnesses their death rituals and beliefs surrounding burial. Rita is a slave whom both Chen Pan and the slave master fancy. The passage describing the death of her lover, Narciso, underscores displacement as informed by both the body and the soul's need to re-root themselves. When the master impregnates Rita and Narciso is executed, "Nobody was allowed to bury him. Instead he was fed to the bloodhounds before the entire *barracón*, piece by bloody piece. Poor Mandingo spirit, the slaves chanted, lost and forever wandering" (35). The slaves' powerlessness to perform the proper burial rites denies Narciso's spirit a return to the homeland. Enslaved on the plantations, the Africans are trapped in a liminal state. The body needs to be ceremonially reunited with the earth in order to free the spirit from its wandering. If the burial is prohibited, as in the case of Narciso, the spirit is forever lost, reminding us of the wandering ghosts of the Chinese men who die at sea.

C. Chen Pan on the Plantation[94]

The depiction of the passage from China to Cuba initiates the turmoil that the Chinese will endure as indentured servants on the island.[95] Spectral descriptions loom in the recounting of

[94] Urbistondo describes indentured servitude, "The Chinese indentured system in Cuba, or *La trata amarilla* (the yellow trade), lasted about twenty-seven years. It first began and stopped in 1847, then started up again in 1853 and continued without interruption until 1874. The Chinese government abolished this treaty with Spain three years later. The indenture system executed term contracts usually lasting between seven to eight years. These contracts were legally binding and recorded in court dockets. Once the term was up, the laborer was supposedly set free and given a sum of money to begin their free life. However, while an indentured laborer, the individual worked under a patron who was legally able to sell indentured contracts as well as coerce indentured laborers" (37).

[95] Many critics point out the similar experiences of indentured servants and slaves, "Once landed, they were offered for sale as though they were slaves" (Richardson 75). As Zapata-Calle writes, "Estos hombres sufrieron explotación y racismo tanto en su estado de trabajadores en los cultivos de caña de azúcar, como al acabar sus contratos, ya que si bien algunos fueron capaces de conseguir su estatuto de libertad y desarrollar negocios comerciales fuera de las plantaciones,

this time on the plantation, "Chen Pan looked out the window at the passing sugarcane fields, at their endless, swaying green. How inviting they looked from this distance. Who could fathom the mountain of corpses that had made these fields possible?" (190).[96] Many Chinese and African workers commit suicide and death and pain permeate the landscape to such an extent that a century later Domingo remembers his father telling him, "To work the sugarcane fields […] was to go wooing mournful ghosts. The chain gangs of runaway souls, ankles ulcerated and iron-eaten and wrapped in rags. Or the luckier suicide ghosts who'd killed themselves dressed in their Sunday best" (48-9). The spirits of those who suffered and died in the fields linger to haunt the land with memories.[97] During Chen Pan's time, the indentured servants and slaves are forced to work, robbed of their freedom and, in many ways, their lives.

Suffering surrounds Chen Pan so much that he begins to think of himself as a man who is less than alive. We see this in Chen Pan's failed attempts at writing letters home to China to

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otros fueron forzados a firmar de nuevo sus contratos (172). Arnold J. Meagher notes the consequences of indentured servitude, "Some have estimated that 70 or 75 percent of the Chinese laborers in Cuba died before the completion of their eight years of indenture" and "Many contemporary observers and commentators unequivocally condemned the system of Chinese indenture as a 'new slavery.' That was the considered judgment of John V. Crawford, the British consul general at Habana, of the Cuba Commission, or Richard Gibbs, the United States minister at Lima, of the Peruvian historian Félix Cipriano C. Zegarra, of the Brazilian statesman Joaquín Nabuco, and of Joseph Beaumont, the chief justice of British Guiana from 1863 to 1868" (Meagher 219, 296).

[96] Most of the Chinese laborers were sent to work on plantations in the Mantanzas region (Yun and Laremont 108).

[97] Moiles notes that the name of the plantation, La Amada, recalls Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved* while Lysik identifies additional intertextual references drawn from *Beloved* and various other slave narratives, including Frederick Douglass' autobiographical writings, Gayl Jones' *Corregidora* (1975), and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) (Moiles 180; Lysik 283-296). Lee also recognizes influences from Maxine Hong Kingston's 1990 novel *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (129).

assure his aunt, wife, or brother that he is not dead. He never finishes his letters, "Better to let everyone think that brigands had robbed and killed him, that vultures had come and plucked out his eyes. He knew that his wife would burn incense in his name, urging his ghost home" (32). Chen Pan's status as an indentured servant holds him in a liminal position. In the preceding text, we see that he still recognizes China as the closest place he has to a home, but he is unwilling to establish any communication with his family there. It also reveals that if his wife received news of his death, she would hope for his ghost's return as Chen Pan does not yet belong anywhere else. This in-between position of his soul reminds us of Narciso's wandering spirit.[98] Furthermore, in his reluctance to prove that he is alive, Chen Pan chooses to allow his family to assume that he is dead. Leaving his family to consider him deceased in China reinforces Chen Pan's severance with his former life even as he is still yet to find a new one in Cuba.[99]

As an indentured servant, Chen Pan remains in a transition phase because he is unable to establish a life in Cuban society as a free man. He exists between what he has left behind in China and what he strives to achieve in Cuba. During this time, Chen Pan works as a servant in hopes of crossing out of this state, however, for the years he is unable to do so he is caught in this "in-between" position where he works without any rights or voice. Restricted from acting as

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[98] Furthermore, this idea of displaced ghosts trying to find home repeats later when Domingo recalls the stories of Vietnamese girls who go to the US, "Stories drifted back to Vietnam of former bar girls waking up in Georgia, bleaching their hair, wearing blue jeans and cowboy hats, renaming themselves Delilah. [. . .] Saddest of all were the suicides—the poisonings, the slit wrists. Anything to set their souls free to fly home" (208-209).

[99] Ghostly language describes additional characters who are trapped and suffering. After Rita's lover is murdered and Chen Pan falls in love with her, the other slaves talk of Rita as if she were already dead, "The other Chinese said Chen Pan was crazy, in love with a dead girl. The Africans also believed this, but they were too tender-mouthed to say it aloud" (35).

a full member of society, Chen Pan is confined to the margins and to a liminal existence, an idea Turner develops from van Gennep's outlining of ritual phases.

Turner utilizes the term "liminal" to expand upon the understanding of the intermediary phase of social rites, describing this position as "being-on-a-threshold […] betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes…" ("Frame, Flow" 465). He extends the idea of the liminal threshold to more than a transitional moment by emphasizing the space it encompasses as "between." His writings transfer the focus from the liminal as a crossing to the idea that the place of transition itself can occupy a space suspended between two central power structures. In this way, liminal identity and marginalized social position are connected to the ritual process. Chen Pan finds himself in this position upon arriving to the island where he feels lost and unsure of who he is. Unsure of how to help himself or secure a future, he wonders, "Who was he now without his country?" and feels his dreams have been lost in vain (21; 30).

Turner also underscores ambiguity as a necessary condition of the liminal state "since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" ("Ritual Process" 95). "Vanishing Smoke," the title of the chapter describing Chen Pan's time cutting sugarcane and his escape to the forest, lends a spectral aspect to the text. It also suggests the liminal quality of Chen Pan's state and refers to the nickname of the legendary first Chinese *cimarrón* in whose footsteps Chen Pan follows, likening the two men who disappear, like smoke, from their plantations.

D. Chen Pan Exits the Liminal and Re-Roots Himself

Chen Pan flees indentured servitude into the Cuban jungle, a space that facilitates his establishment in Havana. The year he spends in the jungle represents the culmination of his

transition phase. The forest exists outside of the rules and norms of society that bind Chen Pan to indentured servitude and force him to occupy a marginalized position. Within what he deems the "semi-civilized world," van Gennep notes that "deserts, marshes, and most frequently virgin forests" are often zones of neutrality that physically mark a liminal zone (18). Between the rural sugar cane plantations and the city, the social structures of the outside disappear within the forest. Wandering in this jungle, Chen Pan still embodies the role of a migrant seeking refuge, "Chen Pan walked and walked until his feet bled, following streams and the slow rotation of stars" (40). Chen Pan looks to nature in an attempt to orient himself in the woods, reminding us of Turner's assertion that the wilderness frequently acts as a liminal space and that the initiate often experiences disorientation within the transition stage ("Ritual Process" 95).[100] The jungle provides a liminal space for the final steps of Chen Pan's social transition.

Chen Pan's year in the jungle also recalls van Gennep's studies of a Congolese tribe's rite of passage for adolescents into adulthood, "The order of the rites is as follows: the novice is separated from his previous environment, in relation to which he is dead, in order to be incorporated into his new one. He is taken into the forest, where he is subjected to seclusion, lustration, flagellation, and intoxication with palm wine, resulting in anesthesia" (81). Chen Pan's experience loosely follows this structure—he is assumed dead by the outside world and he enters a forest where he faces a series of trials. Within the jungle, he seems to lose some of his body's material presence, "His own shadow grew unfamiliar to him, thin and strangely angled"

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[100] The initiate often experiences disorientation within the liminal stage as she or he has left the known and understood world to be "ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life" (Turner "Ritual Processes" 95).

(40). Chen Pan's contorted shadow suggests a diminished and withering substance, reiterating his status as less than fully alive.

Chen Pan's time in the forest is dark and ominous, much like the scenes aboard the ship and in the fields. However, the language describing the physical crossing of the ocean emphasizes death as corporal. As Chen Pan approaches the threshold of his new life in the jungle, the symbols and atmosphere of death that surround him seem less physically threatening and more mystically and spiritually charged. Omens of death pervade the forest as bloodhounds pursue Chen Pan with "devil ghosts" in their throats, the wind carries the sounds of their howling, and owls shriek at him in Chinese (39). The moonless silence augments the feeling of impending danger. Later the moon appears and "The forest turned cemetery-quiet. Moonlight unsettled the trees" and Chen Pan remembers that "The Africans had spoken of the restless demons that roamed the island's woods, disguised in animal furs" (41; 39). Lydia Cabrera reminds us of the *monte*'s spiritual significance in Afro-Cuban syncretic religions, describing the sacred mountain's forests as a supernatural space governed by its own law, a dangerous "dominio natural de los espíritus" (18). The haunting language culminates on the *monte*, but appears through the various stages of Chen Pan's prolonged transition phase (the voyage, the years in the fields, the time in the jungle). The similar frightful elements and the rhetoric of death unify these years as a liminal period in Chen Pan's life. Ultimately the exiting of this forest space corresponds with the conclusion of Chen Pan's transition phase. As this time draws to a close, the spiritual elements of the liminal intensify to reflect Chen Pan's need to face his internal conflicts.

To leave the jungle and enter his new life, Chen Pan not only needs to survive the spooky wilderness but he must also turn inwards and confront his past. The year in the forest acts as the

last phase of the holding period when Chen Pan overcomes the final spiritual and physical trials. These internal battles appear in the form of a brown owl. He believes the bird to be a manifestation of his mother's disturbed spirit, come to haunt him in retribution for abandoning her and failing to fulfill his filial duties of sending money or producing a grandson (39).[101] Chen Pan faces his mother's disappointment by enduring the owl's presence and working to appease her spirit. He remembers, "In China it was said that owl chicks ate their mothers as soon as they were big enough to fly" (40). Like the owlets devour the owl upon being able to leave the nest and begin their own lives, Chen Pan needs to shed his mother's ghost before he can leave the forest, perhaps reminding us of van Gennep's observation that birth (in Chen Pan's case, "rebirth") necessarily includes a rite of separation from the mother ("Rites of Passage" 50-2).[102] Chen Pan is considering eating the owl when she abruptly disappears. For the time she follows him, Chen Pan withstands her presence. Her disappearance acts as a resolution that represents Chen Pan's cutting of ties with and completion of his duties to his mother, and in many ways, his past. Significantly, the owl torments Chen Pan for nine months. He sustains the owl's pestering

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[101] Ignacio López-Calvo recognizes the bird's pursuit and the belief that she is a deceased mother's reincarnation as one of the novel's various intertextual references to Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1968). Others include scenes modeled from Esteban Montejo's memories, the recreation of "silent suicide," and the games the slaves play for entertainment (43-44).

[102] Urbistondo draws from Belinda Edmonson's discussion of Sigmund Freud to examine Chen Pan's desire to eat the owl and its relationship to his exiled status: "The thought of consuming the owl symbolizing his mother's spirit within this exiled space is emblematic of Belinda Edmondson's discussion of the 'matria.' Edmondson states, 'If exile...is predicated on the banishment of the writer by patriarchal authority, the place 'he' is banished from, the native land, the 'matria,' is maternalized. Similarly, Freud equated exile from one's native land with exile from the mother: the nostalgia for the home country is in actuality a nostalgia for the mother's body' (146)" (43-4). Urbistondo goes on to suggest that Chen Pen's failure to consume the owl represents a separation from the motherland, China (44).

presence for the same amount of time as the human gestation period, underscoring the bird's disappearance as the completion of a renewal and "rebirth."

In addition to the emotional trials Chen Pan overcomes and his survival in the wild, an essential element of his passage into Cuban society is that he physically unites with the environment. Chen Pan leaves the forest ready to fully recognize Havana as home only after a union with the nature of the island takes place. First, he climbs to the top of a ceiba tree where he "will[s] himself invisible" (39). He tries to disappear altogether, to blend into his surroundings and become part of the habitat around him. The presence of the ceiba is spiritually significant, which García points out by reminding us of its sacred role in African belief systems, "the tree was their mother; her sap, blood; her touch, a tender caress" (38).[103] Identifying the tree as a mother presence further enhances the reading of Chen Pan's transformation in the jungle as one of rebirth. He sits at the roots of the tree, finds himself among the talismans buried there, and rubs his body with "its sacred earth" (38). In this spiritually-charged place, he unites with the land. Later,

> He remembered something his father had told him. *It is in death alone that we return home*. So Chen Pan arranged a bed of cobwebs and silvery leaves on the bat guano that cushioned the floor of a limestone cave, smeared pollen on his face

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[103] Lydia Cabrera writes, "La ceiba [. . .] es el árbol más característico de la isla y el árbol sagrado por excelencia, al extremo de que cabría preguntarse si es el objeto de un culto independiente—culto a la ceiba, en el que comulgan por igual, con fervor idéntico, negros y blancos—si no supiésemos ya que todos los muertos, los antepasados, los santos africanos de todas las naciones, traídas a Cuba, y los santos católicos, van a ella y la habitan permanentemente. Era también para los chinos que se importaron durante la colonia, y hoy para sus descendientes, <<el trono de Sanfán Kon, el mismo Santa Bárbara en China>>" (149). Therefore Chen Pan's unification with the ceiba also gestures to the tree's prominence in Cuban-Chinese syncretic practices.

> and hands. He would die there, leave his bones to crumble. He would die there in that nowhere cave, and then his ghost would fly home to China. (41)

Chen Pan prepares himself for the end of his life and buries his body, covering himself with dirt, so much so that his skin becomes "red-brown as the island earth" (41). The ritual aspects of death/rebirth (burial) and joining with the earth conflate in a way that recalls van Gennep's discussion of Albrecht Dieterich's writing in *Mutter Erde* (1905) to identify "some resemblances in the details of certain birth and funeral rites" (52). Van Gennep suggests that some of what Dieterich viewed as rites of incorporation with Mother Earth were actually rites of separation (52).[104] In Chen Pan's case, the year in the Cuban jungle closes his transitional identity as a migrant, ending the process of separation from his "before" life in China. His burial not only marks an end, but also completes the crossing of a threshold into his new life. In these moments preparing himself for death, he still does not consider Cuba home and assumes his spirit will try to return to its home of "before." But when Chen Pan awakes the morning following his self-burial, his spirit has not returned to China. Instead, the burial and symbolic death within the liminal jungle completes the transition stage and frees Chen Pan's spirit from its ties to a former land. He can now find his home in Cuba.

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[104] "Some of the rites noted by Dieterich do actually pertain to the earth itself, but they are nonetheless rites of separation. Thus the expression *kourtrophos* should be taken literally; the earth is the home of children before they are born—not symbolically as a mother, but physically, as it is the home of the dead. Therefore, some resemblances in the details of certain birth and funeral rites exist. If a child dies before the rite of his incorporation into the world is performed and is therefore buried rather than cremated, this is done, in my opinion, in order to return him to his place of origin. Dietrich has cited German beliefs (and identical ones exist in Australia and Africa) according to which the souls to be born (taking the word "soul" in its broadest sense) live under the earth or in rocks. Various peoples also believe that the souls live in trees, bushes, flowers, or vegetables, in the forest, and so forth" (van Gennep 52).

Chen Pan performs a final task on his last morning in the jungle. He tells himself that if he kills a *jutía* (a groundhog-like rodent), he will remain on the island. He does so immediately and with ease, this test proving the competence and skills he has gained on his journey. The trials of the jungle prepare Chen Pan for his new life by helping him let go of his past and adapt to his surroundings. We learn in a subsequent chapter that with the act of killing the *jutía*, Chen Pan "cut off his queue and stopped dreaming of returning to his village" (62). Previously, Chen Pan felt relieved that his employer didn't force him to cut off his hair as other landowners did (21). Thus, the disposing of his queue symbolizes the final steps of closing his Chinese life. This marks the end of the liminal stage where "The rites of the threshold are therefore not "union" ceremonies, properly speaking, but rites of preparation for union" (van Gennep 21). Chen Pan realizes that this time has readied him for his new life, thinking to himself, "After two years on the plantation and nearly another battling his mother's ghost, what else could be as hard?" (62). Ana Zapata-Calle too recognizes the obstacles of the jungle as necessary rituals for Chen Pan's "rebirth" or what she calls "transformation of identity":

> El personaje practica todos los rituales necesarios para despedirse de ella adecuadamente, para que descanse y lo deje a él vivir en paz en su nueva vida. Simbólicamente, este es el primer paso de la transformación de la identidad de Chen Pan. Su madre patria china ha muerto y Chen Pan reconoce que no amaba a la esposa que dejó sin hijos en China. Ahora, en la nueva tierra, empezará la búsqueda de su nueva patria. Su transformación hacia una nueva realidad transculturada comienza en el monte con el cambio de su color de piel por el sol y la referencia al valor sagrado de la ceiba, en la que confía, por ser el árbol sagrado de sus amigos negros. (175)

Overcoming the external obstacles of the jungle and the internal ghosts of his past signifies Chen Pan's advancement through the transition phase and, with it, his readiness to fully re-enter the living world and freely establish a new life. Zapata-Calle notes the ending of emotional ties with his family in China and the physical adaptation to the nature of the island as necessary to this process. With these trials completed, Chen Pan leaves the jungle.

After the episode relating Chen Pan's success in the jungle, the novel jumps forward seven years to find him achieving remarkable success in Chinatown as a businessman.[105] The narrative underscores that Chen Pan's fortunate rise in Havana's Chinatown coincides with his identification of Cuba as home.[106] However, Douglas Davies reminds us of the importance of recognizing

> a distinction […] between status and identity, […] At its simplest, status can be viewed as coming from society, as something which is accorded to an individual either because of their birth-right or else through personal achievement. Identity, by contrast, reflects the more internal process of becoming what one is supposed to be. It often takes time for the internal change to match the externally granted position. (7)

Chen Pan's movement from indentured servitude on the fringes of society to his role as a community leader and business owner in central Havana represents the social and internal

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[105] Joseph C. Dorsey asserts that although freed indentured servants were granted "white" status legally, "The legal freedom and honorary white status of the Chinese contract worker theoretically punctuated his social and cultural separation from the black slave, and therein lay the heart of a rather unsurprising contradiction. According to local and transient observers as well as the Chinese themselves, they were not treated as free people at all" (Dorsey 20-1).

[106] Importantly, the novel also emphasizes luck and a wealthy benefactor as keys to Chen Pan's success.

processes of reinvention. He accepts a separation from his Chinese life, which allows him to self-identify as Cuban (his later assistance to the soldiers fighting in the Ten Year's War highlights his loyalty to his island home).[107] Still, his "death" or distance from his past life and embracement of Cubanness does not mean that he forgoes his Chinese heritage.[108] In fact, the novel reveals that he maintains various traditional Chinese practices. Chen Pan takes pride in his home culture while also embracing his identity as Cuban. During the rest of Chen Pan's long life on the island, he wavers between moments of feeling more attached to his Chinese heritage and more connected to his Caribbean home. In this way, a mix of cultures informs his sense of self, pushing and pulling within him. The process of "rebirth" does not erase or take away what came before but, importantly, it allows Chen Pan to make Cuba his new home and find acceptance there.

Six years after his time in the jungle, Chen Pan feels deeply that Havana is his city: "Chen Pan never understood what the sight of Havana, with its seductive curve of the coast, stirred in him; only that from the moment he arrived, he knew it was where he belonged" (62). Those in Havana also come to recognize him as part of the city: "The ginger vendor nodded when he saw Chen Pan. Others did, too. Everyone knew him in Chinatown. His regular customers called him *un chino aplatanado*, a Chinese transplant. The recent arrivals from China

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[107] García references Havana's monument honoring the Chinese who fought in the War of Independence. Erected October 10, 1931 on la Calle Línea in Habana it reads, "No hubo un chino cubano desertor; no hubo un chino cubano traidor" (Siu, "Restaurant" 164, 169). García states, "I [...] was surprised to learn that the Chinese participated in various wars for independence. They very quickly took on the nationalist cause and fought as long and hard for Cuban independence as anybody. There were many Chinese war heroes" (*Monkey* 259-60). Further information regarding Chinese involvement in these wars can be found in Antonio Chuffat Latour and Lisa Yun.

[108] For more on questions of Chen Pan's cultural identity, see the next chapter.

wanted to be like him, rich and unflinching" (62). Chen Pan achieves impressive status in Chinatown. He belongs to a community in which he is admired as a leader by other Chinese immigrants. Additionally, the use of "aplatanado" in Chen Pan's nickname signals an identity in Spanish, specifically Caribbean Spanish. He is known beyond Chinatown with a phrase that means "becoming native" in the dominant language on the island, signifying that he has found a place there as Cuban despite encountering many by racial, cultural, and linguistic differences as an immigrant.

Chen Pan's exit from the liminal phase is possible only after he overcomes his internal conflicts and physically endures the island's natural environment. Reading Chen Pan's transition into Cuban society as a mental and physical process writes the experience of migration as a movement of the body and soul. Earlier in the novel, Chen Pan remembers his father telling him, "If it was true that man had two souls, one of the body and the other ethereal, then they would merge with the earth and the air after death" (10). His father's words correspond with the beliefs regarding death of the Chinese on the ship and of the African slaves and reinforces the necessity of connecting to the earth in death. His statement again likens burial to Chen Pan covering himself at the foot of the ceiba, the earth allowing for the release of both souls. It highlights the importance of Chen Pan's transition period as both of the body and of the mind so that he can find himself completely in his new home. The novel presents a migrant who assimilates to Cuban society after he completes a ritual-like transition that occurs during the voyage, on the plantation, and then culminates in the wilderness.

II. A Social Message Within *Monkey Hunting*

A. Introduction

García's migrants suffer because of human corruption. She writes the destruction of everyday people at the hands of Caribbean slave owners and Chinese warlords, by the Communist Party of Cuba and US occupation forces on the island, and because of the senseless violence of soldiers and generals on both sides of the war in Southeast Asia. By telling these stories, the novel brings to light the unsettling *status quo* of historical oppression and "prob[es] and revisit[s] traumatic moments in history, saving them from silence and oblivion" (Lysik 293). While doing so, García's narrative consistently avoids any outright alignment with a particular political philosophy, preferring to describe the hardship and pain inflicted throughout history by powerful exploitive forces.[109]

Sean Moiles agrees that the novel presents the threats of "absolutist, totalitarian visions and policies" regardless of where their governing beliefs fall on the political spectrum (171). Through the stories of Chen Fang and Domingo, the novel highlights the suffering inflicted by authoritarian communism and colonizing capitalism. He also argues that the novel constructs a political argument that draws parallels between corrupt histories to criticize totalitarian communism, Western imperialism, and capitalism, suggesting that the one hundred and thirteen year scope of the novel highlights the repeated exploitation of entire groups of people throughout the last two centuries, "In terms of political parallels, García's historical portrayal of Chinese servitude functions [. . . to] suggest[] an analogy between the brutalities of Cuban sugar plantations and the profit-seeking methods of global, neoliberal capitalism—exercised, for example, on outsourced workers in the developing world" (179). He puts forth this reading in

[109] Moiles argues, "*Monkey Hunting* supports Domingo's father's interpretation of the Cuban Revolution as applying generally to all twentieth-century grand narratives: "Papi had insisted that the Revolution couldn't work because it focused solely on ideas, not people" (154) (Moiles 172).

support of Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez's claim that after the 1960s, contemporary Latinx writers creatively engage with the past to call for social change (Moiles 168; Dalleo and Sáez 7).[110]

The text likens seemingly opposing systems to describe how abuse within them results in similar evils. Through the suffering of its characters, we read of how greed and power tear families apart, divide communities, and marginalize entire groups of people. Corruption oppresses those who are vulnerable most: migrants and those without a "place" in society. Yu-Fang Cho sees the focus on these stories as a means of recuperating what has been lost or ignored by hegemonic accounts of the past: "García's re-narration of transnational histories of multi-racial formations as a critical response to the long tradition of Euro-American travel writings and Orientalist narratives which reproduce White Euro-Americans as the privileged subjects and the authority of colonial enterprises" (2).[111] She studies how the novel creates alternative histories and suggests that doing so goes beyond reading the text as a postmodern questioning of history or a critique of social systems to also allow us to see the work as a "radical vision of imaginary and epistemological emancipation" (2-3).[112] The novel does so through its

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[110] In doing so, Moiles attempts to defend the novel against mixed reviews that claim the narrative's structure is jerky, abrupt, and unsatisfying. He suggests that negative opinions result from a shallow reading of the text (168).

[111] For further reading, Cho advises seeing Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains* (1992); Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference* (1991); Vincent L. Rafael, "Colonial Domesticity: White Women and the United States Rule in the Philippines" (1995); and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978).

[112] Cho draws upon Ann Laura Stoler's conception of "tense and tender ties" that examines the structure of empires through history by considering "tense ties" as "relations between colonizer and colonized [which] could confound or confirm the strictures of governance and categories of rule…" and identifying "tensder ties" as those referring "to the transfer points of power at "sites of production of colonial inequities" (Stoler 24).

cyclical narrative that questions the structuring of history through empire and Western imperialism and presents stories otherwise lost from colonial archives (3).

Both Moiles and Cho propose insightful and thought-provoking analyses of *Monkey Hunting.* In the following section, I suggest a different, but congruent, reading that follows the study of the text through the language of death, life, rebirth, and rites of passage presented in the first part of this chapter. The narrative strains of ritual process in *Monkey Hunting* provide a base for what I propose is the novel's critical view of global society: that corrupt power structures that function with a lack of regard for humanity result in the enslavement of populations, the poisoning of the earth, and the ostracizing of complex subaltern identities.

B. Exceptional Chen Pan and the Suffering of His Descendants

The migrants of García's novel leave their countries in pursuit of possibilities not afforded to them by the conditions in their homelands. When they emigrate, they are not rich or well off, but poor, oppressed and in search of a better life. The leaders' abuse of power leaders leaves much of the population with little option but to move elsewhere. Many choose this journey to avoid death and/or in hopes of opportunity and stability not available in their countries of birth, "Chen Pan heard heart-sorrow stories. Famine and civil war were rampant back home, they reported. Long-haired rebels were destroying everything. Boys were being kidnapped and carried from their plows against their will. There were mutinies on the high seas" (62). In perilous transition, the migrants find themselves between the harsh reality of their home and the possible futures of the new land. Those who depart China during Chen Pan's time leave a country of famine and violent upheaval, of "forced conscriptions [. . .] the young men sent far to the north, to lands of interminable winters and roaring bears" (86). The circumstances in their

countries of origin are precarious or with little chance for the future—so much so that the better option entails a long voyage into the unknown that is plagued by mutiny, disease, and starvation. Emigrating brings almost unimaginable hardship. It also means confronting unknown circumstances that can alter the migrant's life in unexpected ways, "Chen Pan thought of how a man could start out with one idea—like sailing off to Cuba to get rich enough to return home an important man—and end up with another life altogether. This never could have happened in China. There the future was always a loyal continuation of the past" (70). The text at times champions the bravery and optimism of its characters, highlighting that such a choice permits hope, something those who stay may never have.

Chen Pan's story represents the epitome of the successful migrant as he arrives in Cuba with aspirations of reinventing himself and ultimately attains his dreams. However, even Chen Pan's seemingly exemplary experience provokes some reflection upon the consequences of migration. Domingo, struggling to understand his position in the world, remembers his ancestor's choice to leave his country:

> Domingo wondered about these migrations, these cross-cultural lusts. Were people meant to travel such distances? Mix with others so different from themselves? His great-grandfather had left China more than a hundred years ago, penniless and alone. Then he'd fallen in love with a slave girl and created a whole new race—brown children with Chinese eyes who spoke Spanish and a smattering of Abakuá. His first family never saw him again. (209)

Appearing in the last chapter of Domingo's story in the novel, this text allows for a glimpse into his mind and illuminates effects of migration that are not necessarily negative but, in the case of Domingo, add to his current questioning of identity and feeling of aimlessness. He struggles to

understand where he belongs, maintaining that he is from Cuba, a place to which he cannot return, while also recognizing the various cultures of his ancestors. His diverse heritage and exiled condition complicate Domingo's understanding of self as they deny him a single identity or place that he can claim. He traces this multicultural inheritance to his great-grandfather's migration, a story passed on through generations so that Chen Pan's example becomes an almost mythic tale. Domingo's contemplation of his ancestor's past and the effect of this inherited diasporic identity portrays one of García's stated themes of exploration for the novel: "the notion of immortality, how legacies get passed on from generation to generation, and how we're always beholden to our origins" (*Monkey* 260).

With repetition and time, details of stories are often lost. This natural erasure coupled with our limited knowledge of Chen Pan's life before he leaves China seems to simplify Chen Pan's story. It allows a certain idealization of Chen Pan's experiences that we do not see in Domingo's story. We have little knowledge of Chen Pan's past life as we almost exclusively witness his struggles and successes in Cuba. Chen Pan is not without his flaws, but even through his faults and traumatic experiences, his narrative seems more romantic, especially in comparison to the rawer tone of Domingo's story, as if to represent how time tempers the harshness of reality. Domingo's remembering of his grandfather's life also adds to Chen Pan's role as a legendary figure, because we see how his great-grandfather's experiences are passed down through generations (106). Chen Pan is the honored ancestor and as readers, we more readily absolve him of any judgment for leaving behind his family in China. Importantly, the novel's third-person, neutral, narrator never passes judgement on Chen Pan nor Domingo, but the lack of knowledge presented regarding Chen Pan's past lends a better impression of Chen Pan than it does of his son Lorenzo, for instance. After some years, Lorenzo never again visits his

children of his first wife in China, the youngest of whom is Chen Fang. Parts of the novel relates Chen Fang's story and we see how Lorenzo's abandonment shapes much of her life. In contrast, the text makes clear that Chen Pan departs from Amoy with intentions of returning to China and does not abandon any children. When his plans change, we read Chen Pan's decision as brave and sensible. Overcoming the trial of the owl, he makes amends with his critical mother's spirit and therefore loses only an infertile, loveless marriage. However, just as Lorenzo's choices are not without consequences, Domingo's migration is complicated by his decisions as they affect others adversely. In this way, his concerns regarding "cross-cultural lusts" are not only an inherited internal struggle regarding his own place in the world, but also an anxious projection of his present circumstances. His worries reflect the future consequences of his actions when abandons a child who will grow up fatherless in Vietnam. This happens after he falls in love with a Vietnamese woman, Tham Thanh Lan, and impregnates her with a son before leaving both mother and child behind.

The less fortunate endings of Chen Pan's descendants emphasize the exceptionality of his happiness and success. Through Domingo's narrative we read of the suffering of his father, Pipo Chen. Political forces continuously tear at his life, robbing him of his family and home and Pipo ultimately commits suicide in exile. Zapata-Calle points to a passage in the novel that unites the beginning of Pipo's life with political division—when Chen Pan travels with his son, Lorenzo Chen, by train to the birth of his son, Pipo. The scene occurs in 1912 during the "race war" in Cuba. From the windows of the train, Chen Pan sees men chained together and forced to march at gunpoint.[113] At this time, Chen Pan reflects upon human cruelty and the existence of evil. He

[113] Also known as the *Levantamiento Armado de los Independientes de Color* (the Armed Uprising of the Independents of Color), the Little Race War, or the War of 1912. An armed uprising from May 20 to June 27, 1912 of the primarily Afro-Cuban peasants associated with the

longs to explain these things to the grandson he holds in his lap, to explain "that los negros were protesting for their right to form a political party, that they would pay for their protesting with their lives and the lives of many innocent others. What choice did they have? Revolutions never took place sitting quietly under a mango tree. Men grew tired of tolerating misery, of waiting for better days" (193-4). Lorenzo's political leanings differ from his father's and Zapata-Calle recognizes this moment of conflicting ideology as marking the beginning of Pipo's politically-torn life,

> La postura tomada por Lorenzo al alienarse a los blancos y dar la espalda a los negros que ve masacrar por la ventana es lo que llevará al hijo que va a nacer a la muerte con la Revolución. […] Lorenzo no ve el peligro de su cambio político hacia la derecha a pesar de la desconfianza de su padre, lo que va a llevar a su hijo a la muerte. Este cambio político se expresa en una conversación que mantiene Lorenzo con su padre, cuando este se lamenta de no poder oír bien con su oído izquierdo y el hijo le contesta: "So turn your head to the right" (190). (181)

The smaller fissures in beliefs and ideals between Chen Pan and his son at the time of Pipo's birth foreshadow the life-altering rifts that political forces later create. The divisions between his parents run so deep that Domingo's Communist mother testifies against his father on charges of "anti-revolutionary activities" (112). This results in his father's institutionalization in a psychiatric ward where he, along with other political prisoners, are subjected to "revolutionary treatment" that includes drugs, electrotherapy shock, and beatings (112-3). Domingo uses his

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the *Partido Independiente del Color* (PIC) in the Eastern region of the island that resulted in the massacre of 3,000-6,000 rebels and civilians by the Cuban Army and intervening US forces. For more, see Louis A. Pérez Jr.'s *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (1988).

father's contacts at the US naval base in Guantánamo to get Pipo and himself off of the island. Together, they travel to New York City.[114] Domingo's father suffers the physical toll of migration. Ill and refusing to spend his final years as what he considers a burden to his son, Pipo jumps in front of a subway train. Political strife dominates Pipo's entire life and keeps him from any lasting happiness. He is a voiceless individual subjugated by powerful divisive forces against which he is helpless.

Like his father, Domingo finds his existence defined by rupture. As Domingo sees his family fall apart, he questions political forces and their effects. The Revolution and his parents' political disagreements cost Domingo his relationship with his mother and his home. Pipo represents Domingo's last ties to the island and upon his father's death, Domingo finds himself alone and rootless in the world. He ponders the possibility of going back to Cuba, to his "home to the life before this war. But he suspected that it was too late to go back the way he had come" (114).[115] Exiled and understanding the difficulty of returning to the changing island and the impossibility of regaining his former life, both physical and political boundaries separate

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[114] Lok Chun Debra Siu researches the exiled Chinese Cuban population, noting New York City as one of the community's most popular destinations, "The Cuban revolution of 1959 was a watershed moment for Cuban Chinese in many ways. The Castro government, which undertook a massive nationalization of the private economy, did not bode well for many Cuban Chinese who owned small businesses [. . .] Of course, it goes without saying that, like the rest of Cuba, the Chinese community was split along ideological lines, with some supporting Castro and others not. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, thousands of Cuban Chinese had remigrated to the United States, with New York City and Miami being the most popular destinations" ("Diaspora" 126).

[115] Turner discusses the idea of transition as a permanent condition, specifically in regards to religion, "But traces of the *passage* quality of the religious life remain in such formulations as: 'The Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveler, with no place to rest his head.' Transition has here become a permanent condition. Nowhere has this institutionalization of liminality been more clearly marked and defined than in the monastic and mendicant states in the great world religions" ("Ritual Process" 107).

Domingo from his mother and family. Exile and the Revolution provoke Domingo into reflecting upon his identity and that of all Cubans, "But what was their world now? What belonged to them? Was it possible, Domingo wondered, to be saved and destroyed at once?" (56). With no commitments nor attachments to any person or place, Domingo joins the US military and is sent to fight in the Vietnam War.

Domingo's lack of purpose or place relegates him to a ghost-like presence as he fights a war for country that is not his own. In this way, his existence in Vietnam may remind us of Chen Pan's powerless years working for the profit of others on the plantation. Domingo reflects upon the similarities between his situation and that of his great-grandfather's decades before in the Cuban jungle. He contemplates dying alone in the wilderness, just as Chen Pan worried he would, and like his ancestor, Domingo feels invisible. He believes himself so insignificant and unsure of his presence that he questions if he has already died, testing his shadow to see if he still has a physical body or if he has become merely a spirit (106).

Domingo feels ambivalence toward living, which adds to his identity as an aimless wanderer without home or hope. Although Domingo's knack for surviving the dangers of war impresses his fellow soldiers, his attitude towards death is very different from that of his peers. They only wish to go home, but Domingo, without a place or a family to return to, "doesn't understand this hunger to grow old, this clinging to life as though anyone owned it outright" (110). During his time in the forest jungle of Vietnam, Domingo meditates upon his life before the war, much like his great-grandfather worked through his emotional ties to his homeland in the Cuban jungles. Domingo does not regret his decision to leave Cuba with his father, but he never reconciles with his past nor attains peace through the closure of that period in his life in the

way that Chen Pan does. This hinders him from moving forward into a new life as part of a community that he can recognize as his home.

Similarly, Domingo cannot leave his wandering stage even when he falls in love with Tham Thanh Lan in the last part of his story. Lee writes that Domingo finds a metaphorical home in her body, citing how Tham Thanh Lan reminds him of the island he knew as a child and that her body "stored everything in its flesh" (Lee 135; García 162). Our conception of "home" differs (see footnote 78) and I do read Domingo's time with Tham Thanh Lan as offering Domingo an impermanent escape from his wandering, but for me, the fleetingness of this time denies Domingo the necessary internal advancement signified by finding a more permanent home. With Tham Thanh Lan, Domingo secures the comfort and happiness that he so desperately needs, in the best way he can, but he is still unable to exit the transition stage because he finds this temporary relief in the remembrance of what he has lost. Her body reminds him of the island, so his connection with her arises at least partly from an attempt to recuperate the unrecoverable, to turn to nostalgia as a means of filling an absence instead of finding peace with its permanence. For this reason, Domingo remains in a wandering state, unable to establish a permanent life with his lover. Being with Tham Thanh Lan does not lead Domingo to focus on the hope and possibilities of his future with her and his son: instead he connects to her as she is a brief refuge through association with a remembered home. For this reason, he does not stay.

C. The Impossibility of Re-Rooting Home in a Poisoned Earth

The migrations of Chen Pan and Domingo Chen occur in distinct historical moments, but their situations mirror each other in various ways. Among other similarities, they both search to understand their identity and start anew after an overseas journey. They face death alone in a

foreign jungle, confronting the wild and surviving various challenges.[116] Yet within this similar framework, their experiences differ greatly in that ultimately only Chen Pan obtains fulfillment.

The role of nature in the migrants' journey provides a first hint at what I suggest is a principal component as to why the ending of Chen Pan's story so starkly contrasts with that of his great-grandson. Images of the sea, the land, the sky, and the horizon appear in the novel as Chen Pan and his descendants traverse the world. The text incorporates these fixtures of landscape to enrich our understanding of each character's relationship with their changing surroundings, following George B. Handley in that "It [is] necessary to understand the natural fact that human and natural histories are not separate genealogies" (94). The same elements repeat to describe the characters' environments throughout the novel, but how they appear differs meaningfully depending upon whom they surround. For example, the horizon represents hope for Chen Pan as he sails toward and later works in the fields of Cuba:

> Now and then a breeze blew through the sugarcane fields, carrying a scent of jasmine or heliotrope. This heartened Chen Pan. No matter that he was stuck on this devil island surrounded by mangroves and flesh-hungry sharks, that his arm often dropped in mid-swing from pure exhaustion. He imagined the breezes as fresh breaths from the sea, coaxing boats along the horizon, their sails puffed up and purposeful. (28)

However, in Vietnam, Domingo "[looked] at the damp horizon, imagined death coming toward him from the trees" (111).[117] Furthermore, while on night watch in the Central Highlands of

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[116] See footnote 80 for other commonalities in the stories of Chen Pan and Domingo.

[117] In his final hours, Chen Pan also contemplates the horizon which marks the beginning of another journey into death (248).

Vietnam, Domingo thinks, “He might have loved this sky in another time, from another perspective” (103). The circumstances in which Chen Pan and Domingo find themselves influence how they view the world around them and change the symbolism of their environments. As both characters move across the earth, toward a horizon, they confront fears and dreams. But if Chen Pan feels overwhelmed, he overrides doubt with optimistic determination. Domingo, on the other hand, looks toward the future without the same purpose-driven hope.

As their stories increasingly differ, examining how Chen Pan and Domingo interact with their natural surroundings is key to understanding what I read as a prominent social critique presented by the novel. Chen Pan’s jungle aids his escape, hides him from the outside, helps him move on from his past, and eventually bonds him with the island. Although it initially seems terrifying, the forest protects him from the constraints of the outside world and provides the necessary space for Chen Pan to undertake the tasks of transition. In Domingo’s jungle, the outer world’s conflicts seem magnified as violence permeates the Vietnamese forest. His time in the Vietnamese jungle offers him no means of moving out of his wandering state.

A single most significant distinction emerges from comparing Chen Pan’s experience in the jungle to his great-grandson’s: Domingo does not unite with the earth. Moises alludes to but does not develop this idea when he writes that Pipo commits suicide because “US soil will not sustain him” just as “Cuban soil fails to support the ‘chrysanthemums’ Chen Pan's great-aunt ‘had in China’ China (Moiles 178; García 78). Unlike the chrysanthemums that Lucrecia attempts to grow in Cuba, Chen Pan is able to transplant himself in the soil and flourish. However, this metaphor of earth and replanting offers a deeper meaning than solely the symbolism of surviving in a new place. Chen Pan succeeds in uniting with the land and the earth

also welcomes him, lending a mutual acceptance necessary for beginning a new life. When Chen Pan blends into the branches of the ceiba and covers himself with soil, he offers himself to the land so that he can be "reborn" from this soil. The burial represents a reciprocal connection between land and migrant that allows Chen Pan to re-root himself on the island and establish Cuba as home.

In contrast, Domingo's circumstances prohibit his connection with the jungle and therefore render impossible any attempts at establishing a new home.[118] Chen Pan's forest offered protection, food, and spiritual enlightenment; it provided a liminal space where he could find the necessary closure with his past. Domingo's jungle is polluted and imbued with trauma: dead birds fall from trees, elephant carcasses rot and putrefy, the rains fester his feet, and "Men [are] blown out like matches" (111). Not only is Domingo unable to connect with the land, but the earth seems so conditioned by violence that it no longer gives life but is only able to accept death: "There was only this: the slow suck of the earth reabsorbing the blood and inedible muscle" (117). At one point, when Domingo must walk directly into a threatening situation, he decides that "Whatever it was […] he would absorb it, become one with it, like the receiving earth" (118). He likens his inevitable confrontation with danger to the earth's absorption of its surroundings. In some ways, his thoughts are reminiscent of the scene in which the earth

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[118] When the interviewer, Scott Shibuya Brown, asks about Domingo as a "lost soul," García confirms his wandering position, "Domingo is a twenty-first-century man in the twentieth century. I had to ask myself what identity meant when it such a mix. And are the ways in which we discuss identities still meaningful or are they becoming obsolete? In Domingo's time, compounded identities such as his were still uncommon. His confusion is further complicated by his moving from Cuba to New York and then to Vietnam in a few short years. He really doesn't know who he is or where he belongs" (*Monkey* 263).

envelops Chen Pan, but here the earth does not accept Domingo to protect him and grow new life, but instead it soaks in the fear and death that floods it.

The forest animals react against Domingo's presence too, rejecting him in a way that Chen Pan's jungle wildlife did not. The most significant animal that Chen Pan encounters in the Cuban wild is the pestering owl. However bothersome the bird's presence is, in the end, it actually aids in Chen Pan's completion of the transition phase. The animals in the Vietnamese jungle are far more threatening and Domingo falls victim to a vicious monkey attack. The monkeys brutally bite him and steal his rifle and during the attack, while the air fills "with sulfur and smoke" (118). For Domingo, the forest is not a safe harbor aiding in transition but a hostile landscape with menacing fauna and severe violence. Later, a land mine planted in the earth tears into Domingo's torso. The damage tears out a section of his intestines and sends him to the hospital. With the explosion of this mine, the land itself becomes dangerous because of the war raging upon it. Not only does the earth absorb death, but terror and violence emerges from it when the mines detonate. This earth does not sprout life but explodes in destruction; the jungle of Vietnam does not welcome Domingo, but brutally forces him out.

In Vietnam, Domingo has no opportunity to re-root himself, because the earth has become too poisoned by human violence. He cannot connect to the land because it cannot support life. Although far from easy, Chen Pan's transition into Cuban society is relatively simpler in comparison with the struggles of Domingo Chen, a difference that can be directly ascribed to the environmental damage that humankind precipitates during the decades separating these generations. As an elderly man Chen Pan notes the destruction of the Cuban land even within his lifetime. Recalling his year in the jungle, he wonders:

> Now who could walk the way he'd walked in Cuba anymore? Who could hide for three hundred days, avoiding men and ghosts, living on nothing but memories and his five senses? On the island all the trees had been chopped own, the land leveled and torn to plant more sugarcane. Forget the pines, Chen Pan lamented, forget the mahogany, the cedars, the indigo trees (from which he'd whittled the best and sharpest knives). Forget the trogon birds hiccupping in the canopy. Forget them. Forget everything. That island he knew no longer existed. If he could start over, would he board the ship for Cuba again? (250)

Deforestation changes the island's natural vegetation and animal life. Chen Pan mourns the loss of the trees and birds that sheltered him from the slave owners and provided him with the tools and food necessary to survive. He observes the destruction that colonizing powers force upon the natural environment. Seeing these changes, he knows that his transition into Cuban society would be made considerably more difficult, if not impossible, because of humankind's changing of the landscape and is unsure if he would risk everything to immigrate to the island again. He understands that, decades after his arrival to the island, the damage of the land confronts current immigrants with prohibitively challenging circumstances. In this way, he directly associates his success in Cuba with his natural surroundings. Furthermore, he connects the impact of corruption on the island with the deterioration of the environment and the resulting loss of opportunity for immigrants.

This reading is consistent with ecocritical readings of García's previous novels.[119] When asked about the relationship between Cuba's human history and natural history, García responds:

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[119] For example, Handley discusses migration and the environment in *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992).

> A large part of the deforestation and land cultivation began in the 1800s. It continued full force in the early 1900s, compromising Cuba's natural state even more. This process was absolutely related to Cuba's relationship with the United States. The more Cuba 'developed,' the more unnatural it became. The political and social alliance with the United States really meant the denaturalization of Cuba. I would say that they are parallel movements. (Irizarry 178-9)

García's concern for Cuba's nature is not unfounded; relative to size, the West Indies incurred more ecological damage and greater losses of biodiversity during the past five centuries than any other region of the world (Benítez-Rojo 49).[120] By incorporating these stories into her novel, García answers Handley's call for writers and academics to respond to the devastating environmental consequences of colonialization throughout the Global South (94).[121]

The hostility of the land results from the cruelty of humankind, whose corruption impacts and pollutes the earth and in turn hinders a migrant's ability to re-root himself and establish a new home. García introduces this idea and builds upon it throughout the novel. War and chemicals change nature in Cuba and Vietnam alike:

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[120] Also, "If we take the five-century period between 1500 and 2000 as a framework, it turns out that one-quarter of all the mammalian extinctions have occurred in the West Indies" (Benítez-Rojo 49).

[121] "The human atrocities of New World history make it seem almost an afterthought, and perhaps a banal one at that, to say that nature too has been a victim of the colonial machine, but the banality has more to do with our incapacity to absorb multiple horrors than with some notion of natural history's comparable insignificance. […] It is time for critics, especially those concerned with the social fate of the global south, to move beyond Foucault's merely political and anthropocentric critique of epistemic machinations, and into the realm of nature's silent and untranslatable record of human hands" (Handley 94).

> His mother had blamed the *yanquis* for every deformed baby she'd delivered in Guantánamo—the infant born with an eye in his umbilicus; the hairdresser's triplets attached like paper dolls by their hands and feet. The Americans, she said, had dumped poisons into the Río Guasco, contaminating the sugar cane fields, making the coffee trees redden with blight. One Easter Mamá had delivered a Haitian boy whose heart had steamed furiously outside his chest. A moment later, his tiny heart had exploded in her face like a grenade. (205-6)

and

> the wildflowers in Vietnam had changed colors from one spring to the next or how the river fish were bloating pink with chemicals, the hills wearied to nothing by napalm. In-country, Domingo had seen newborn deformities stranger than the ones in Guantánamo, infants in the central highland's villages, their features monstrously shuffled, their mothers stick-dry from weeping. *When bad things happen to the land, bad things happen to the people.* His Tío Eutemio had told him that. (116)

The similarity of these two passages of text highlights the global effects of twentieth century occupation and the conflict such invasive presences incur.[122] Similar deformities result from the

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[122] In Chen Fang's narrative, we also see the effects of corrupted power as a correlation of violence toward humankind and damage to the earth. She describes effects of the Cultural Revolution, specifically stating that death now covers a land where flowers and gardens once grew, "As it is, many thousands have killed themselves. They jumped off buildings or hanged themselves when the Red Guards came. Instead of one hundred flowers blooming, we have ten thousand bloody corpses, then thousand pairs of vacant eyes. Lu Chih-mo's personal campaign is to destroy the country's ornamental flowers, which he berates as a bourgeois preoccupation. I am told that nothing is left of Shanghai's fine gardens but dirt and mud" (231). Chen Fang agains describes the connection between corruptive, colonial forces and the destruction of the land when the Japanese invade Shanghai, "The Japanese are everywhere. Flags with their red savage suns flutter on every rooftop. The city is stripped down and starving, the fields around us all husks

American's presence in Cuba as do from their chemical weapons in Vietnam. One group of people exercising power over another results in the poisoning of rivers, fields, trees, wildlife, and hills all around the earth. Furthermore, these selections underscore that the lives most gravely affected by such power struggles are those of the innocent—babies. Those destroying the earth do not consider nor do they care about how the poisons they leave behind disfigure the bodies of the newly born. Their environments filled with hazardous chemicals, many born into the future generation are denied any opportunity to live. In the first of the cited two passages, a baby's body is so conditioned by violence that his heart is likened to a weapon. Furthermore, Tío Eutemio's remarks reinforce the message that humanity and earth depend upon each other and a cycle of ruin between the two generates suffering. Unnatural chemicals and bloodshed spoil the earth, not only making it inhospitable for newly arrived people, but also makes it toxic for the flora and fauna indigenous to the area. The earth becomes incapable of sustaining healthy life. Deformities that plague the newest generations are the lingering effects of chemical warfare. Violence seeps into the earth, hindering the migrant's ability to start again and causing the suffering of those who remain.

The narrative intrinsically links the act of finding home with the ability of the earth to sustain a "re-rooting." A history of natural destruction parallels the unnatural "development" forced upon Cuba and Vietnam by colonialism, corrupt communism, and imperialist capitalism. Depicting the environment as essential to the migrant's wandering, the novel connects political abuses and forced migration to the killing of the natural world. In an interview with Scott

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and wind. Only the same pack of dogs is fat from feasting on corpses. It is said that there are no more poppies in the fields, that the water is unsafe to drink, contaminated by the dead. Others say that in places the rain comes down black with revenge. A mere trickle of water escapes my faucets" (148).

Shibuya Brown, García discusses elements of her personal convictions of anti-colonialism: "I suppose I share with Chen Pan a disdain for colonial imperatives and impositions. This also comes through in the Chen Fang section when the Japanese invade Shanghai. And it appears in my previous books, as well" (*Monkey* 264). We see these politics play into her novel through the convergence of cross-cultural and pan-political decadent misuse of power, the destruction of the island's environment, and the subsequent absence of hope for new immigrants.

A damaged earth grows inhabitable, creating a linked chain of pain that ultimately hurts marginalized peoples to the greatest extent.[123] As death consumes the land and people, Domingo reflects upon all that he has witnessed. He concludes that the poor bear the greatest burdens in life and sacrifice the most, "Now all Domingo knew as the relentless feeding of death, as if feeding it were a specialty of the poor, like playing the congas or tending water buffalo" (111-2). Cycles of violence underscore the perpetual presence and human nature of cruelty and greed, which affect the less privileged to the greatest extent. García's narrative goes hand-in-hand with Handley's observations that contemporary environmental disasters most severely impact those who have the least,

> Deforestation has been devastating to the integrity of ecosystems and human communities alike, especially when the latter, such as the Caribbean's Neo-African religions, are animistic and tree-centered. The recent floods in Haiti were caused by heavy rainfall, yes, but even more by the political and economic forces that have perpetuated the extensive deforestation begun by slavery; destitute

[123] A brief passage in the novel also discusses the destruction of Native American land by the United States government, "Domingo had learned that the white settlers in North America had murdered most of the Indians, that they'd killed off their buffalo, millions of them roaming the Great Plains, that the Indians were partitioned off on reservations, aimless and mad-eyed" (210).

> descendants of slaves are forced to rely on wood for fuel and thus continue to find their hold on their sense of place slipping away. The consequences of natural events are often distributed according to the tragedies of human oppression and poverty, and for precisely that reason, ecology cannot be ignored in a global South. (95)

These conclusions thread through two centuries as abuse of the subaltern and the inseparable destruction of humankind and the earth. Africans and Chinese are sold like animals into slavery to work sugar cane fields that ruin the Cuban land. Generations later, we see the suffering of earth and people at the hands of political forces as Domingo's father points to the millions of Cubans who starve in the name of Revolution. The horrors with which humankind tears apart the earth inhibit the step of reconnection necessary for Domingo's re-rooting. His inability to exit his state of wandering plagues his present, relegating him to a diasporic state. The environment poisoned by humans hurts and destroys the lives of other people, especially the most powerless, and the pollution of the land results from this violence.

D. Questions of Domingo's Fate

The trajectory of Chen Pan's family may point to a fear of worsening global conditions and of humankind's increasing potential for destruction. An old man in 1917, Chen Pan notes the cyclical nature of greed-driven power struggles: "Now warlords ruled China again. Chaos and violence reigned, just like when he was a boy" and that "In times of misery, there were always profits to be made" (245-6). While the nonlinear, multi-perspective narration opposes a teleological reading, Zapata-Calle sees Chen Pan's household as a microcosm of Cuba: his marriage with Lucrecia and the death of her half-white son allegorically portray the downfall of

white colonialism (181-2). The demise of this system results in a "new" multicultural Cuba that discounts Chinese contributions to island culture (181-2). She likens the novel's structure to a downward spiral in the tradition of a family saga, noting that after Lorenzo, all of Chen Pan's descendants are abandoned, lose themselves, or end up tortured, which suggests the bloodline ends in self destruction, à la the Buendía family of Gabriel García Márquez (183-5).

Cho agrees with an overall pessimistic vision of the novel, but also states that the juxtaposition of Chen Fang's story with Chen Pan's creates a tension within the narrative that "[symbolizes] the possibility of hope even in utmost destitute and despair" (8). Moiles provides an alternative approach to the novel's development, "the circular, planar structure of the novel functions as an imaginative apparatus" (175). While recognizing the overall tone of the novel as despondent, Moiles goes on to argue rather optimistically that contemporary parallels with the atrocities of history ("especially those tied to totalitarian communism and free-market capitalism") "encourage readers to imagine a society significantly different from the present and the past" and that these reconstructions of history "argue that the future is not pre-determined" (168-9). He draws out the possibility of positive change and encourages a reading of hope for the betterment of society.

I read Domingo's open ending as hopeful. For me, the novel's outlook for the future depends greatly upon the fate of Domingo and, significantly, his life path remains uncertain at the end of his story. The narrative purposefully leaves him in the second section of the novel, his story unresolved. Although Cho compellingly argues for the unchronological pairing of Domingo's story with Chen Fang's so that together they represent the past and future of the Chen family, I see Domingo as representative of the future (6-8). The final section, "Last Rites," only includes the last chapters of Chen Pan and Chen Fang's lives. Chen Fang is 80 years-old and

imprisoned, dreaming of another existence. Her story is all but concluded as she reaches her final days. Likewise, the novel sees the end of Chen Pan's life as he dies in the final chapter. Domingo, on the other hand, still has much of his life ahead of him. He is lost, but he has time. When we last see Domingo, he has lost his family and his home and has seemingly rejected a chance at establishing a new home by choosing to leave his unborn son behind. He is struggling and listless, a wandering, damaged, and isolated young man. But García does not end his story with his death in Vietnam, his torture in a cell, or with his being eaten by ants. I read a glimpse of optimism in that his story continues beyond the constraints of the novel. And although the text may leave us with a sense that his placelessness is irresolvable, the decision to keep Domingo's future uncertain yields a shred of hope in the unknown.

Monkey Hunting tells the successes and heartbreaks of a family's continual migration and of a relationship between the earth and its people. Through the language of death and rebirth, we read the experience of migration as a physical and spiritual transition and the break from home as one filled with deathly omens and frightful imagery. Parallels between beginning a new life in a foreign place and crossing a ritual threshold align the stories of Chen Pan and Domingo Chen with elements of social rites. Uprooting one's existence from a home in hopes of resettling in another place physically moves the body from one location to another, and this rupture with home leads to a displaced state of wandering. For Chen Pan and Domingo Chen, displacement requires a movement of soul, a replanting of roots that necessitates an identification with the new home, a spiritual rebirth, and a connection with the earth. The successful crossing of the transition threshold depends upon many factors, but significantly includes this union with the surrounding environment. Political upheaval, violence, and the power-hungry "progress" of

humankind complicates the possibility of this connection as these conflicts pollute nature and make it progressively uninhabitable. In these stories of migration, spiritual language of ritual death and rebirth portray the migrant's journey as a complex social transition while underscoring both the increasingly negative impact of greed and forced global movement upon the environment and humankind's dependence upon this threatened earth.

Chapter Three:

Wiggle Room, Spiritual Connections, and Cultural Change in *La isla de los amores infinitos* and *Monkey Hunting*

Doris Sommer proposes the idea of wiggle room as a space of negotiation and creativity in her introduction to *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (2006). She describes how "gaps in destabilized systems" appear within oppressive structures, especially during unstable times. These spaces, she suggests, allow for wiggle room. Within this wiggle room, endangered communities can develop creative culture as an alternative form of resistance (4).[124] In this chapter, I consider how wiggle room manifests for migrants in Daína Chaviano's *La isla de los amores infinitos* (2006) and Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting* (2003). Wiggle room allows for migrants in these novels to adapt to a new culture while also maintaining certain traditions and creating new forms of cultural practice. In an unfamiliar land, migrants resist both assimilation (and the abandonment of their heritage) and the acceptance of social ostracization (for maintaining practices unlike those of the mainstream culture). Wiggle room exists between these contradicting forces and, within it, spiritual presences and practices offer a means of communication across differences. The spiritual's ability to inhabit the spaces between divisive structures allows for the migrant to concurrently engage with the new community while also preserving his or her home culture. In this way, spiritual practices and presences act within wiggle room to facilitate the migrant's adaptation and establishment of a new home.

My study of these two novels aims to fill a research gap that Susan C. Méndez identifies in the critical literature treating *Monkey Hunting*, "There has yet to be sustained analysis of

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[124] She describes the ways in which her ideas fall in line with Gramsci's "passive revolution" (5).

ancestral spiritual practices and their enabling of survival, identity-formation, and empowerment" (131).[125] Méndez's work addresses this void by focusing on drumming as an ancestral African spiritual practice. I approach the novels' portrayal of spiritual presences and practices, tradition, and identity from a very different angle, but with a similar goal of speaking to the gap she notes: I explore how spiritual aspects of various cultures inhabit "wiggle room" gaps between stricter, confining social forces to foster coexistence, hybrid practices, and the process of transculturation.[126]

I. An Introduction to Wiggle Room

Wiggle room exists when gaps open in the many social forces that organize and facilitate the workings of a community. Theorists who study these structures—including Émile Durkheim, Louis Althusser, and Claude Lévi-Strauss—identify powerful ideologies that construct a society, among which they include religion, economy, law, language, and class.[127] These forces shape

[125] Méndez states that this gap exists in the present research on both García's novels, *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Monkey Hunting*.

[126] Josune Urbistondo's doctoral dissertation investigates "sacred citizenship" as "an alternative and qualitative citizenship practice" in Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic women's writings. She includes chapters on *Monkey Hunting* and *La isla de los amores infinitos*, asserting that both "novels construct cross-cultural, syncretic spaces and present memory as a shared and accessible vehicle for belonging" (1). Her research provides an insightful approach to examining exile and spirituality in these works. Specifically, her work includes examinations of physical space, spiritual syncretism, and the erotic.

[127] My reading of Sommer's wiggle room converses and overlaps with other critical theories, including Michel Foucault's work on the Panopticon. Foucault describes the separation and segregation of those who fall on a non-conforming side of the hegemonic power-imposed social binaries. A Panopticon-like social system both "assures automatic functioning of power" and "produces homogeneous effects of power" as it vigilantly keeps those who are marginalized separated (201; 202). Thus, a key factor in the Panopticon's operation and maintenance of power is its denial of cross-cell contact. "Lateral invisibility" ensures that "there is no danger of contagion" and avoids the "dangerous mixtures" that may result from such interaction (200; 200-

hegemonic manifestations of culture for those who live within their systems and, in turn, mainstream culture supports and maintains the structures from which it stems. Sommer states that wiggle room appears when such organizing establishments threaten subsets of the population by, for example, jeopardizing civil liberties, actively maintaining an uneven distribution of wealth, or working to eliminate social programs.[128]

One society's structures differ from another's. The immigrant characters of both of the selected novels choose to migrate because the "ruling establishments" (to borrow Sommer's language) of their home countries confine, limit, and suppress any significant opportunities for success. They leave their homes due to famine, violence, or political oppression. A novel told in six parts, *La isla de los amores infinitos* interlaces the stories of immigrants from Nigeria, China, and Spain who come to Cuba during the 1800s with Cecilia's experience as a Cuban exile in Miami during the 1990s.[129] Similarly, *Monkey Hunting* interweaves the lives of three main protagonists: Chen Pan, who immigrates from China to Cuba in 1857; his granddaughter, Chen Fang, whose narrative follows her life in China from 1899 to 1970; and Chen Pan's great-grandson, Domingo Chen, who leaves Cuba for New York in 1967 as an exile, only to join US military forces in Vietnam.

1; 198). Wiggle room opens space between these separations, thus allowing for this mixing, hybrid practices, and cultural agency.

[128] Sommer's introduction is a call to action for academics working in cultural studies. She asks for critical work to move beyond the current trend of describing or denouncing issues in order to promote change (3-4). She reminds us of Foucault's skepticism regarding discourse as a weapon against oppression and his assertion that such work may result in an unproductive cycle of "repression and refusal" (5). However, she suggests that Foucault forgets the power of cultural practice and cites Michel de Certeau's "practice of everyday life" and James Scott's "domination and the arts of resistance" (5).

[129] Cecilia's story makes up about half of the text of the novel.

Driven from their homes, the immigrants often do not immediately "fit" into the hegemonic structures of their new society.[130] They are caught in-between the social structures of two places: where they came from and where they arrive. With traditions that differ from that of the new country's majority population, these immigrants exist on the fringes of a mainstream culture. There, they experience varying degrees of social marginalization. Some feel unsure of their place, face racism or pressures to assimilate, or fear living isolated and unable to actively partake in the unfamiliar community.

Scholars such as Gustavo Pérez Firmat and Gloria Anzaldúa expand the idea that difference relegates minorities to social margins in order to describe a lived experience and identity.[131] Both critics employ the concept of the liminal in-between to describe the position of

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[130] Cecilia leaves Cuba as an exile in *La isla de los amores infinitos.* Amalia's ancestors come to Cuba because of economic hardship—worms eat the crops in Spain and in China soldiers burn rice fields (96; 117). In *Monkey* Hunting, Domingo Chen is an exile, and when Chen Pan leaves China, famine and violence threaten his country (86).

[131] The idea of wiggle room also overlaps importantly with Gloria Anzaldúa's writings on "nepantla." She describes nepantla as a second step to *conocimiento*, echoing wiggle room's call to social activism. Nepantla, she tells us, is "the only space where change happens" ("now" 574). This space is where one feels torn between two cultures and negotiates identity, "Bereft of your former frame of reference, leaving home has cast you adrift in the liminal space between home and school. [. . .] While home, family, and ethnic culture tug you back to the tribe, to the chicana indigena you were before, the anglo world sucks you toward an assimilated, homogenized, whitewashed identity Each separate reality and its belief system views with others to convert you to its worldview. Each exhorts you to turn your back on other interpretations, other tribes. You face divisions within your own cultures—of lass, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ethnicity. You face both entrenched institutions and the oppositional movements of working-class women, people of color, and queers. Pulled between opposing realities, you feel torn between 'white' ways and Mexican ways, between Chicano nationalists and conservative Hispanics. Suspended between traditional values and feminist ideas, you don't know whether to assimilate, separate, or isolate. [. . .] In the transition space of nepantla you reflect critically, and as you move from one symbol system to another, self-identity becomes your central concern. While the opposing forces struggle for expression, an inner impasse blocks you [. . .] Nepantla is the site of transformation, the place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures.

those who do not completely adhere to one centralized, dominant culture.[132] I draw upon their foundational concepts, employing terms they use, such as "marginalization," "liminality," and "cultural borderlands," in this analysis. These terms stem from a spatial conception that stresses the peripheral space occupied by minority groups. Anzaldúa, for example, proposes that those who identify with peripheral practices or with multiple communities instead of one established norm live within cultural borderlands.[133] Both critics emphasize aspects of blending and mixing that occur when minority groups come into contact with a dominant culture and the resulting

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Nepantla is the zone between changes where you struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it" ("now" 548-9).

[132] Another scholar whose work intersects with Sommer's concept of wiggle room is Walter Mignolo. Most notably, Mignolo emphasizes that "The colonial difference creates conditions for situations in which a fractured enunciation is enacted from the subaltern perspective as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspective" (Mignolo x). These ideas intersect with Sommer's assertion that opportunities for expression and response emerge from within imposed social structures. Mignolo focuses on the imperial forces of Western dichotomies, calls for thinking from within border spaces, and explores the possibilities of decolonial production of knowledge. He grounds his analysis in the constructed dichotomy of indigenous thought versus that of the colonizers, arguing that European and state forces have controlled and marginalized indigenous knowledge. Although he frames his argument very differently from Sommer's wiggle room, Mignolo identifies migration and globalization as phenomena highlighting border areas of spaces where "global histories clash with local histories" (xv). He develops his concept of "border space" from the US/Mexico border, but includes areas of cultural mixing. He specifically dialogues with Ortiz's concept of transculturation in the context of the Caribbean. (He writes of his preference for the term "colonial semiosis" over transculturation, "I prefer the term colonial semiosis to transculturation, which, in the first definition provided by Ortiz, maintains the shadows of 'mestizaje.' Colonial semiosis, emphasized, instead, the conflicts engendered by coloniality at the level of social-semiotic interactions" (14)).

[133] María Lugones draws upon Gloría Anzaldúa's conception of borderlands to examine resistance to the coloniality of gender. She notes "relations to the spirit world" can contradict colonial systems: "As coloniality infiltrates every aspect of living through the circulation of power [. . .] its logic and efficacy are met by different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital" (754). She highlights the possibility of the spiritual to exist outside of restrictive social forces.

hybridity that such mixing engenders.[134] In this way, Pérez Firmat's and Anzaldúa's theories intersect with Sommer's concept of wiggle room as they too emphasize cultural negotiation within the margins and the creative possibilities afforded by such spaces.

Sommer focuses on the possibilities of wiggle room as a space for cultural agency to incite social change. She points out the gaps between conflicting, divisive, or incongruent social forces that construct identity and society and how the wiggle room that results from conflict between regulating powers allows for the emergence of original cultural production. She writes: "Like civil society itself, agency operates at many levels of association and belonging, often providing more than one anchor of identity for each subject. In the contradictions among those anchors is wiggle room to act up" (5). Following this thinking, I consider how the immigrants of the two selected novels react to conflicting cultural "anchors" that ground various facets of their identities. I draw upon this idea to analyze the connections established between diverse characters and the representation of tradition and syncretic practices within the novels. These connections often produce an alternative culture, which can be seen as a form of resisting an imposition of exclusive, hegemonic cultural practice.

I choose to base my reading of these novels in Sommer's idea of wiggle room because it stresses the gaps *within* a mainstream hegemony, which underscores what can happen *between* social constructions that impose norms foreign to or unaccepting of people coming from an

[134] Ignacio López-Calvo speaks of the Chinese and Cuban multiculturalism through transculturation and hybridity: "The result of the transculturation and mestizaje (or race mixture) of Sinic cultures with those of both the Creole and the black African communities was an entirely new Sino-Cuban hybrid reality with its own idiosyncrasies and institutions (schools, churches, occupational guilds, political parties, newspaper, chambers of commerce, cemeteries, theaters, clan associations, hospitals, residences for the elderly), which challenged traditional assumptions of Chinese separatism" (96).

outside culture. Other critical approaches do not exclude these ideas (frequently, they discuss them), but the concept of wiggle room places the emphasis on how possibilities of negotiation can emerge and the connections that can happen there.

This distinction highlights the unique position of the spiritual to manifest and connect within wiggle room. Present through unstructured beliefs or immaterial figures, the spiritual exists, unrestricted, among social structures that divide peoples. Spiritual practices and presences exist unhindered by forces that restrict people according to race, class, politics, religion, etc. The spiritual can "wiggle" in the structural gaps to provide the migrant characters with an avenue for transculturation. Because of this, they emerge in the novels as a means for the migrants to begin to negotiate their own identities, connect with those around them, and become part of their new communities.

Thus, in these texts, I read the possibilities of the spiritual to foster connection in a way that emphasizes the migrant's process of finding community in spite of dividing factors. I examine how spiritual beings and practices help immigrants adapt to a mainstream practice or establish connections with other minority groups. More precisely, Chaviano's ghosts work as intermediaries across divisions created by time, space, and cultures to connect Cecilia to her exile community and to her past. In García's novel, the characters who adapt to their new situations do so in spite of differences, specifically by finding similarities among varying beliefs and spiritual practices.

Sommer underscores how strong a connection across differences can be when empowered by a common belief system. She highlights Antonio Gramsci's theory that a shared ideology or a "popular religion" acts as the unifying bond between otherwise different peoples and that such thought has the potential to create a new, creative culture (6). In the novels, the

spiritual engages with wiggle room's creative potential so that hybridity results from cultural mixing. Thus, the possibilities of wiggle room to foster cultural agency allows for the development of new belief systems, which often take the form of syncretic spiritual practices.

In Sommer's opinion, Gramsci's view is limited by his confidence in a single uniting culture, an idea that she claims would be impossible in today's globalized society where constant migration ensures social difference. She argues that "heterogeneous" societies "demand creativity" in a way that "cozy communities based on 'likeness'" do not (12). In this way, she spotlights diversity and multiculturalism as a catalyst for innovation. Sommers writes, "a kind of cautious confidence in cultural agency comes from the very openness of culture to variation and to multiple interpretations" (5).

Fernando Ortiz famously posits Cuba as a cultural mixing space, an island whose history of immigration brings people together to form a constantly transitioning culture. He describes Cuban culture through the metaphor of *ajiaco*—a traditional stew of the Taíno natives made from a variety of vegetables, legumes, and meats of different origins—stating, "Lo característico de Cuba es que, siendo ajiaco, su pueblo no es un guiso hecho, sino una constante cocedura" ("factores" 12). He develops this concept of culture's continual transition in *Contrapunteo del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). In this work, Ortiz asserts that this process of social transition is a fundamental aspect of Cuban society that must be understood in order to comprehend the island and its people (86). He coins the term "transculturation" to describe the complex and continual transmutation of cultures that occurs in Cuba (*Contrapunteo* 86-90).[135] Transculturation, he

[135] "Entendemos que el vocablo *transculturación* expresa mejor las diferentes fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una distinta cultura, que es lo que en rigor indica la voz angloamericana *acculturation*, sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudieran denominarse de *neoculturación*. Al fin [. . .] en todo abrazo de culturas sucede lo que

writes, denotes an incessant flow of cultural reinvention and terms the resulting new culture "neoculturation." Transculturation differs from other descriptions of cultural change because it encompasses every stage of the process. It describes the original contributing cultures, the created culture, and the transition between the former and the latter (*Contrapunteo* 90). With these ideas, Ortiz positions Cuban society as particularly open to the change and interpretation Sommer notes as conducive for cultural agency.

Similarly, both novels emphasize Cuban identity as multicultural as they write of the island's history through the stories of immigrants from all over the world. The Caribbean islands have long been considered an epitome of cultural mixing spaces. As Monika Kaup writes, "As is well known, Caribbean culture, more than any other region in the Americas, is defined by cultural syncretism" (187).[136] In a multicultural community, a variety of heritage lends more difference from the mainstream and in turn, creates more opportunities for connection between dissimilar groups. Chaviano and García engage with this history in their novels as they write

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en la cópula genética de los individuos: la criatura siempre tiene algo de ambos progenitores, pero también siempre es distinta de cada uno de los dos. En conjunto, el proceso es una *transculturación*, y este vocablo comprende todas las fases de su parábola" (90).

[136] Monika Kaup footnotes various references to support this assertion, including Michael Dash in *The Other America*, "because [the island cultures of the Caribbean] are marked by an extermination of the original population, were subjected to repopulation, and became totally dependent on the metropole because of their plantation economies, the Caribbean archipelago witnessed the extremes of the New World experience producing [. . . a] cultural crossroads in a more intense way than is possible in a larger landmass or where the indigenous population manages to survive" (Dash 5 quoted in Kaup 207). Kaup also cites the following passage from the introduction to *Caribbean Creolization*, "The location of the Caribbean archipelago determined that the island would be at the center of intense economic and cultural exchanges and would serve as a bridge connecting North and South America. As a result of the slave trade and colonial economic exploitation, vast numbers of people from diverse geographic, racial, and cultural origins were forcibly imported to the Caribbean—a region that stands today as a reminder of the disruption and eventual subversion of both the physical origins of these peoples as well as all academic theories of unitary origins" (Butalansky and Sourieau 2).

about generations of immigrants that contribute to Cuban society. As Sommer recognizes, culture can divide peoples: "Culture can do damage, for example, by closing ethnic ranks to breed intolerance. And it can do good [. . .] In either case, human values and desires develop through cultural practices that constitute vehicles for change" (4-5). Different social practices can reinforce divisions, yet in the novels, the characters interact with the multicultural aspects of Cubanness to connect, work, and live with each other. When these characters move to different communities, they experience conflict between their home culture and their new society. This difference opens wiggle room, which allows for transcultural practices and connections. In this way, Ortiz's description of Cuba as a place of constant reinvention coincides with Sommer's idea that cultural agency stems from wiggle room as a creative force.

II. A Note on the Novels and their Presentation of Multiculturalism in Cuba[137]

In *Monkey Hunting* and *La isla de los amores infinitos*, connections made possible by wiggle room permit immigrants to simultaneously adapt to their new communities and preserve a part of their heritage.[138] The novels' depiction of Cuba's incessantly transforming culture especially encourages wiggle room and connection across cultures. These themes speak to a

[137] See this dissertation's second chapter for more information on the history of Chinese immigrants in Cuba.

[138] Marta Caminero-Santangelo discusses *Monkey Hunting* and Achy Obejas' *Days of Awe* (2001) "against the backdrop of Cuban exile narratives that have posited a singular, white, and Catholic national identity by narrating a prerevolutionary Cuban nation that was already multiethnic, multiracial, and irretrievably conflicted and divided from within: a panethnic nation that [. . .] did not cohere" (95).

primary concern of both novels: the continuation of tradition in an ever-changing society.[139] Both works confront the challenge of maintaining culture through generations and migrations.

To explore the cultural tension between the past, the present, and the future of immigrant families, the novels highlight Chinese presence in Cuban history and *ajiaco* culture.[140] They write stories of this dwindling population to explore how it continues to influence today's Cubans. Although the Chinese population on the island drastically decreased after the Revolution of 1959, Havana's Chinatown once encompassed a forty-four-square block area of the city, the

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[139] See Caminero-Santangelo's chapter for an in-depth reading of *Monkey Hunting* through constructions of race, Cuban identity, and exile to investigate her central question: "What happens to the construction of national identity, already defined by exclusion, when it is driven by the nostalgia of the exile community?" (94).

[140] Notably, Ortiz includes Asian ingredients in his description of the stew, "La imagen del ajiaco criollo nos simboliza bien la formación del pueblo cubano. [. . .] La indiada nos dio [. . .] el primer ajiaco. [. . .] Los castellanos desecharon esas carnes indias y pusieron las suyas. [. . .] llegaron los negros de África y estos nos aportaron guineas, plátanos, ñames y su técnica cocinera. Y luego los asiáticos con sus misteriosas especias de Oriente; y los franceses con su ponderación de sabores que amortiguó la causticidad del pimiento salvaje; y los angloamericanos con sus mecánicas domésticas [. . .] Con todo ello se ha hecho nuestro nacional ajiaco" ("Factores" 10-1). However, López argues, "The dominant narrative of Cuban national identity becomes problematic when two foundational intellectuals of its formation—José Martí and Fernando Ortiz—either sideline Chinese immigrants or cast them as outsiders. Martí did not link his commentary on Chinese immigration to a discussion of race in Cuba, which he constrained to black, white, and mulatto. Ortiz in some of his essays relegated the Chinese to a realm completely outside of Cubanness (*cubanidad*). His description of the Chinese as 'yellow Mongoloids' references their phenotypical difference and essential otherness. Ortiz also commented on the Chinese use of opium and practice of homosexuality. He held that among the new immigrants from China and Japan, along with merchants, fishermen, and gardeners, were spies. He thus cast the Chinese as an undesirable component of cubanidad: in addition to being physically different from Europeans and Africans, they were degenerate and morally questionable, despite their heritage of the 'celestial' civilization. Like Martí, Fernando Ortiz located the main generative force of Cuban culture in the mixing between Europeans and Africans because, in the contest of racial tensions and violence in the republic, the black-white binary seemed to be most relevant for Cuban society" (*Chinese* 210).

largest *barrio chino* in Latin America (Chiu 1).[141] In her novel, García notes these changes in Cuba's demographics when Chen Pan reflects on his current situation in 1912: "These days, there were more funerals than births in Chinatown. The younger generations hardly considered themselves Chinese" (199).

Chaviano describes how her interest in Chinese tradition arose from a desire to include aspects of Chinese spirituality in her writing in an interview with Emilio Gallardo

[141] In his introduction to Mauro García Triana and Pedro Eng Herrera's *The Chinese in Cuba: 1847-Now*, editor and translator Gregor Benton provides an overview of the history of the Chinese in Cuba, " 'Asiatics' (principally Chinese, but also including members of some other Asian groups) shrank as a proportion of the Cuban population in the decades after they were first counted in the Census, from .9 percent in 1899 to .1 in 1981. In the dozen or so years after 1922, their numbers halved, from 60,000 to 30,000. [. . .] In the mid-nineteenth century (when they were included with whites in the Census), the Chinese were almost exclusively laborers. Many fought alongside whites, blacks, and mulattos in the liberation armies. Between 1860 and 1875, however, 5,000 Chinese fled to Cuba from the United States, to escape new anti-Chinese laws and general sinophobia. These rich newcomers, known as the Californians, laid the foundations for Havana's Barrio Chino (Chinatown) and hired Chinese laborers freed from their indentures to work in their enterprises. Commerce flourished in the Barrio and an urban Chinese community formed, with concomitant institutions. By the end of the century, the 'Californians' dominated the community. [. . .] Between 1903 and the 1930s, up to 30,000 Chinese arrived in Cuba. Ostensibly, most of these newcomers came to work in the sugar industry, but many entered other sectors" (xiii-xv). And, "In the 1920s and the 1930s, sections of the Cuban press started up an aggressively sinophobic campaign that represented the Chinese as lawless and dangerously alien. A wave of anti-foreign resentment came to a head in 1933, during the Depression, when Cuba's Grau San Martín government deported tens of thousands of black Antilleans and passed a law limiting 'foreign' workers to 50 percent of the workforce and prohibiting new appointments of them. This campaign drove Chinese and other immigrants into petty entrepreneurship, where they tried to escape the new law by claiming to be each others' [*sic*] 'partners' rather than each others' [*sic*] bosses and workers. The Cuban communisis opposed the new anti-'foreign' measures and continued to try to rally Chinese laborers in a cross-racial front, but they paid the price for their stand of principle and were denounced as 'anti-Cuban' by their opponents" (xvi). And, lastly, "There is, as yet, no substantial study on the effect of the change of government in 1959 on Cuba's Chinese and ethnic-Chinese population. Many Chinese welcomed and supported the new regime, but many others—primarily those connected with Cuba's 3,000 Chinese family businesses—emigrated to North America and Europe because of the sweeping nationalizations" (xx).

("dinosaurios"). Her subsequent research informs much of the novel *La isla de los amores infinitos*. In the same interview, she states:

> Me di cuenta de que nadie había tocado el tema de la integración china con las otras dos razas imperantes en la isla. [. . .] Por eso, aunque las historias del pasado muestran simbólicamente la llegada de las tres etnias a la isla y la manera en que se funden, quise dar más relevancia a la china. Se trataba de un territorio completamente virgen en la literatura cubana al que nunca se le había dado la importancia que merecía. ("dinosaurios" 200)

Chaviano observes what she believes to be a lack of attention to the Chinese population in Cuba. However, various critics including Ana Zapata-Calle and Yvette Fuentes note, that a Chinese presence appears in the works of such traditionally canonical writers as Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), José Lezama Lima (1910-1976), Severo Sarduy (1937-1993), and Miguel Barnet (1940-) (Zapata-Calle 183; Fuentes 1). Fuentes recognizes Chaviano's novel as an example of a "renewed interest in [. . .] Asian immigration and its influence on the development of the island-nation's culture" (1). She argues that Chaviano's work aims to write the Chinese out of the margins of Cuban history and into a more complex national identity.[142]

In *Monkey Hunting*, García explores her long-held curiosity about the mixing of Chinese and Cuban cultures. She considers the novel to be "ultimately a 120-year dialogue between Cuba and Asia" (*Monkey* 259). Her interest in this topic, she remembers, first piqued by the experience of eating in a Chinese and Cuban restaurant as a child: "when I asked my parents how and why the Chinese and the Cuban dishes could go together like this, they couldn't tell me. So this book,

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[142] *Monkey Hunting* was published in 2003, three years before *La isla de los amores infinitos* (2006).

in part, is an exploration of 'why?'" (*Monkey* 257-8). She notes how this initial exploration of Chinese-Cuban culture provoked broader ideas for the novel: "It was only when I was halfway through *Monkey Hunting* that I realized 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 anticommunist parents meant that I had a very limited notion of what Cuba and Cuban history meant" (Irizarry 178).

García's and Chaviano's novels privilege Chinese tradition to encourage our understanding of its influence in Cuban culture. Both texts write Chinese and Chinese-Cuban characters into the island's history and modern day society to emphasize their contributions. Following their lead, I read the novels' representations of multicultural identity primarily through Chinese aspects.

Many other notable similarities between *La isla de los amores infinitos* and *Monkey Hunting* sparked my interest in examining the two works together. In addition to expounding the historical presence of Chinese immigrants, both novels trace migration through multiple generations. The family trees included at the beginning of each novel outline their trajectories. These characters move around the world, contemplate feelings of displacement, and deal with the complex internal and external struggles of the migration. They portray the exile's relationship with the past as complicated and painful, as they explore what it means to be alone and ostracized in a place that one does not identify as his or her own. The novels treat this topic sensitively, providing reflection upon the effects of isolation, exile, and the struggles of living far from home. They are similar in narrative style too. García employs an omniscient narrator (with the exception of Chen Fang's narrative, which she retrospectively tells from her first-person point of view) and a third-person narration similarly voices Chaviano's work.

Two of the most pronounced differences between the novels are their genres and their conclusions. Chaviano's text incorporates many fantastical elements, which include ghosts and folkloric figures that live among the human characters. She grants these beings agency to interact with human characters. García too writes of spirits, but her text is more traditionally realistic in that such beliefs only appear within the text as they might in everyday conversations.[143] Ghosts and spirits exist solely as part of a larger dialogue surrounding the characters' belief systems. Finally, Chaviano's novel grants Cecilia an ideal conclusion, complete with a love interest and the promise of happiness. In contrast, of the three main characters in *Monkey Hunting*, only Chen Pan finds happiness and fulfillment.

Notably, Chaviano's and García's novels respond differently to the threat exile poses to Cuban identity. Chaviano preserves a past that she feels may be lost by Cubans on the island today. Her background as an exile informs this central question within the text. Already an established writer, Chaviano left Cuba at the age of thirty-four. In Miami, she re-established her life as an adult Cuban exile, much like her protagonist, Cecilia.[144] García's work, on the other hand, investigates the effects of continual displacement upon cultural identity. Born in Havana, she left Cuba in 1961 with her parents as part of one of the first waves of exile. She left the island at the age of two and grew up in New York City. She also states that her daughter's multicultural identity informs *Monkey Hunting*, "my own daughter is part Japanese, part Cuban, part Guatemalan, and part Russian Jew, and I've become interested over the years in

[143] I want to clarify that my intention is not to conflate spirituality, religion, and ghosts/spirits/the spectral. I base this chapter's discussion of the "spiritual" on looking at how the texts translates beliefs in otherworldly presences into the everyday life of the characters.

[144] Chapter one includes more biographical information on Daína Chaviano. Chapter two includes more biographical information on Cristina García.

compounded identities such as hers" (*Monkey* 258). Like Chaviano, García's personal experiences shape her text.

III. *La isla de los amores infinitos*

A. Spirits and Wiggle Room

La isla de los amores infinitos introduces Cecilia, a Cuban exile in 1990's Miami and the novel's main protagonist, the night she meets a story-telling, *bolero*-loving, old woman in a Miami bar. Cecilia feels physically and mentally ostracized from her past and her home country. She wants nothing to do with the island, "Allí no tenía pasado. Su biografía había quedado en otra ciudad que se esforzaba en olvidar aunque era parte de su infancia feliz, de su adolescencia perdida, de sus padres muertos […] O quizás por eso mismo. No quería recordar que estaba irremediablemente sola" (99). However, the old woman, Amalia, brings Cuba back to Cecilia by telling her stories of the island. She describes immigrants' journeys to Cuba, and, as the novel progresses, we learn that all of these characters come together as members of Amalia's family tree. The novel's conclusion offers two revelations: Amalia is actually a ghost and Cecilia is fated to marry Amalia's son. This last note adds Cecilia's exile story to Amalia's long family history of migration. By the end of the novel, Cecilia embraces her Cuban identity and changes her mind completely, "No podía mentirse a sí misma. Sí le importaba ese país; tanto como su propia vida, o más. ¿Cómo no iba a importarle cuando era parte de ella?" (356). Cecilia reconciles with exile and Amalia and other spiritual elements catalyze this healing process. Ghosts are, in large part, responsible for Cecilia's change of heart.

In Florida, Cecilia considers herself different from the people around her. An interaction with foreigners in the Cuban bar highlights these feelings. When she sees the Nordic tourists,

"Cecilia repasó los rostros de sus compatriotas y supo qué los hacía tan atractivos. Era la inconsciencia de su mezcla, la incapacidad—o tal vez la indiferencia—para asumir que todos tenían orígenes tan distintos. Miró hacia la otra mesa y sintió lástima de los vikingos, atrapados en su insípida monotonía" (22). In part, she dislikes the tourists' presence in the bar because it is, for her, one of the only places in Miami where she feels at home. She seems to resent their commodification of the intimate space. She also immediately dismisses them because their background is unlike her own. She identifies with the mixed heritage of her Cuban friends and takes pride in it, but also distances herself from people who are unlike her when she considers them inferior.

Cecilia also feels dissimilar from much of the Cuban exile community. This is primarily because she arrives in Miami as a young woman and, unlike much of the exile population that makes up a large part of the community around her, she has not grown up nor spent substantial time in the United States. Although the novel presents her suffering as complex and painful, it also describes how Cecilia judges some of the Cuban Americans around her and thus contributes to her isolation. When Cecilia first speaks with Roberto, a man born in Miami after his parents left Cuba, he claims to be Cuban. This perturbs Cecilia because, in her opinion, he falsely asserts this identity, as he was neither born on the island nor has spent a substantial amount of time there. At another moment in the text, Cecilia reacts negatively to the "placeless Spanish" spoken by Miamians: "Se dio cuenta de que empezaba a añorar gestos y decires, incluso ciertas frases que detestara cuando vivía en la isla, toda esa fraseología de barrios marginales que ahora se moría por escuchar en una ciudad donde abundaban los *hi, sweetie* o los *excuse me* mezclados con un castellano que, por provenir de tantos sitios, no pertenecía a ninguno" (21). Their Spanish unsettles her because it sounds different from the Spanish she grew up speaking on the island.

She initially rejects the Cuban community in Miami because certain aspects of their way of living are unfamiliar to her. This shows that, in some ways, Cecilia contributes to her isolation. Her cultural bias reveals a lack of the openness that Sommer identifies as pertinent for wiggle room.

These are the conflicting forces in Cecilia's life: she is torn between the island and her new home, pulled between two places, but not "fitting" into either one: "Su corazón estaba a mitad de camino entre La Habana y Miami" (380). She is stuck, caught between a past she rejects and a present she dismisses. However, as these different "anchors" conflict, wiggle room opens and spiritual presences emerge to facilitate her connection to her past, to those around her, and to herself. They are able to do so because the spiritual materializes outside of the structures that marginalize Cecilia. Time and space define her exile status: she cannot return to one place and she does not identify with the other; she disavows her past and cannot come to terms with her present situation. Spirits, however, can move freely across these very constraints.

The text highlights the ability of Amalia's stories to bridge the dividing forces of time and place. Cecilia thinks, "Siempre se había sentido una extranjera de su tiempo y de su mundo, y aquella percepción había aumentado en los últimos años. Quizás por eso regresaba una y otra vez al bar donde podía olvidar su presente a través de las historias de Amalia" (97). Cecilia's resentment and pain cause her to disassociate from her past, but she finds comfort in Amalia's tales of the island: "En verdad, ¿qué importancia tenía su soledad cuando todo el pasado aguardaba por ella en el recuerdo de una anciana?" (105). Amalia's words seem to spectrally transport Cecilia to another time and place, which allows Cecilia to see beyond her own circumstances, "Las visiones surgidas del relato de la anciana y la evocación de una Habana

pletórica de deidades musicales le habían dejado un raro sentimiento de bilocación. Se sintió como esos santos que pueden estar en dos lugares al mismo tiempo" (26).

Much of Cecilia's internal battle stems from her inability to understand how people can belong to more than one place at the same time, but Amalia teaches her: "Su combinación te mostrará quién eres y qué debes esperar de ti" (378). This proves to be true as her "split soul" and ability to see Cuba from a distance ultimately lends Cecilia a greater understanding of her island country, its multicultural past, and its exile present (321). Amalia shows Cecilia how the two parts of her that initially cause pain can help her to both maintain her heritage and create a life in Miami.

A spiritual practice also helps initiate Cecilia's process of reconciliation with exile. Early in the novel, she discovers an interest in the spiritual at a new age, Miami bookstore called "Atlantis." The store's apt name hints at the importance of Cecilia's visit to this place. For most of the novel, she considers Cuba an island lost to her forever.[145] Yet Cecilia's entry into a space called "Atlantis" suggests the rediscovery of a disappeared island. There, Cecilia attends events that spark her curiosity in the spiritual. Amid literature that teaches many new age practices, I Ching immediately intrigues her.[146] This interest encourages Cecilia's engagement with the spiritual, which strengthens throughout the novel. By the end of the novel, Cecilia discovers she has inherited her grandmother's psychic abilities, which include the ability to communicate with ghosts. Her initial draw to the spiritual in a bookstore develops to allow her direct connection

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[145] The text later likens Havana to lost cities, "La Habana era como el resto de las tierras míticas: Avalon, Shambhala, Lemuria […] Por eso dejaba una impresión indeleble en quienes la visitaban o habían vivido en ella" (325).

[146] I Ching originates from an ancient divination text of the Western Zhou period (1000-750 BC). This is also an example of Chaviano's incorporation of Chinese culture into the text.

with the past from which she previously felt entirely separated. She opens herself to the realm of the spiritual and this ultimately allows Cecilia to reconnect to her Cuban identity.

Through their haunting, ghosts of Cecilia's past provide a means of keeping a faraway home in her heart. Cecilia works as a news reporter and she is assigned to investigate various reports of a ghost house. The house moves around Miami, as if searching for someone. As time passes, Cecilia realizes it is trying to find her. Once the house encounters Cecilia, its inhabitants are revealed to be parents and loved ones who protect her: "Por eso arrastraba consigo una casa habitada por las almas de quienes se negaban a abandonarla" (378). As she heals, she takes this place into her heart, keeping home within her:

> Su Habana moribunda, habitada por tantos fantasmas dispersos por el mundo [. . .] recordó los rostros de esos muertos amados que seguían en su memoria. [. . .] su corazón pertenecía a los vivos—cercanos o ausentes—, pero también a los muertos que seguían junto a ella. (380)[147]

She learns that she can keep this heritage because her ghosts live within her, safeguarding her ancestry.

After her interactions with Amalia and the ghost house, Cecilia is able relate to people who have had similar migrant experiences. She is able to see her exile as a part of a larger history of the Cuban people, one that has always included migration: "¿Cuándo terminaría aquella fuga? Su país siempre había sido una tierra de inmigrantes. Personas de todas las latitudes buscaban refugio en la isla desde los tiempos de Colón" (348). Although this repeated history worries her,

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[147] This quote from the Chaviano's novel may remind us of Nancy Morejón's "Ante un espejo," which I read alongside this novel and three other poems in the first chapter of this dissertation. Chaviano's ghosts are benevolent, but they represent Cecilia's loved ones who follow her into exile, similar to Morejón's description of *tú*'s family ghosts harrowingly stalking her.

it also ties Cecilia's struggles to those of her relatives and to immigrants whose lives contribute to the history of the island. Her experiences help her to identify with a greater tradition of migration that contributes to Cuba's history.

Outside of her home country, Cecilia reinvents herself by accepting her circumstances and understanding that she carries her Cuban heritage within. She develops her own identity as a sort of creative agency. Her wiggle room allows her to resist the pressures of outside structures that she feels demand she be one way or the other. Instead, she determines who she is. Thus, Cecilia regains happiness when she reclaims Cubanness and redefines, for herself, what it means to be Cuban off the island. The ghosts' role in this process aligns with Kathleen Brogan assertion that "For authors who take as their subject the dynamic of cultural loss and recovery, the ghost offers an apt metaphor for the ongoing process of ethnic reinvention" (24).

"Ethnic reinvention" defines not only Cecilia's dilemma, but also many of the lives of characters in the novel. Kui-fa is a Chinese woman who migrates to Cuba in the early 1900s. Similar to Cecilia's experience of exile, Kui-fa mourns the loss of a former life: "contempló la luna, que parecía rodeada por un halo sobrenatural. [. . .] Comprendió que su vida anterior había desaparecido para siempre, como si ella también hubiera muerto junto al resto de su familia" (148). Political turmoil drives Kui-fa and her husband, Síu Mend, from China, slave trade steals another character, Dayo, from the banks of Ifé (Nigeria), and economic hardship pushes a young Spanish couple, Angela and Juanco, to leave Cuenca for Cuba. As Urbistondo writes, these "protagonists' connection to magical and mythical elements around them prompts alternative modes of being outside oppressive tools of representation" (188). She notes how their children maintain some of their parents' spiritual traditions, but they also adjust to life on the island and construct who they are as first-generation Cubans:

> although worlds apart, Kui-fa brings her Buddhist customs and beliefs to Cuba as her devotion to Kuan Yin—the Chinese Buddhist Goddess of Compassion and her worship of the Three Origins (Heaven, Earth and Water)—never wanes. In Cuba, Kuan Yin becomes Goddess of Mercy [. . .] Both mother and son pray to Kuan Yin for dichotomous purposes. [. . .] What I find most productive when the Three Origins are summoned in Cuba are their representation of the three originary ethnic groups—the African, the European, and the Chinese—that are coming together producing a socio-cultural product different than any of the original progenitors. This moment of difference and accommodation alludes to Fernando Ortiz's final state in transculturation, neoculturation. (197)

Through the lives of these secondary characters, *La isla de los amores infinitos* ties together the island's three major heritages and describes the reinvention and cultural creativity key to Ortiz's transculturation and Sommer's wiggle room. The characters arrive to Cuba from China, Spain, and Nigeria, representing the island's "Three Origins," as the first section of the novel is titled.[148] These heritages are represented as their traditions mix and blend to produce new practices.

The novel highlights the Chinese population's influence on Cuban language, for example, by including a number of common Cuban idioms that incorporate their presence. These phrases,

[148] The novel endeavors to capture aspects of reality's complexity. However, many pertinent social elements are briefly mentioned or left out. For example, a work writing of immigration to Cuba cannot completely ignore class and racial conflict on the island. Instead, the text notes these conflicts—for instance, Dayo's enslavement and sexual assaults and the presence of racist attitudes that arise when interracial marriages are met with resistance—and then turns its attention to Cecilia to develop her ongoing struggles with exile. The text recognizes their presence, but does not explore them in depth, most likely because they are out of the scope of the novel. Their inclusion in the text invites us to consider such issues, but the narrative focuses on the presentation of Cuba's dynamic culture, the influences of Chinese tradition in Cuban culture, and relating the anxiety of exile through Cecilia's story.

which are used in everyday Cuban Spanish, appear as selected pages of Pablo's notebook and introduce each section of the novel. They include "A ése no lo salva ni el médico chino," which indicates the severity of an incurable illness or a very serious problem.[149] Pablo, as Amalia's grandson, has Chinese ancestors. He does not appear as a character in the story until the last chapter, but his writings underscore his Chinese heritage throughout the novel. By incorporating these details into her story, Chaviano presents a modern-day Cuban Spanish shaped by the historical presence of Chinese immigrants.

People from diverse backgrounds share interest in and acceptance of varied beliefs in the spiritual realm, which helps them establish a common ground. When Amalia explains the curse of the *duende* to Pablo, for instance, he remains rather unfazed, responding that these things are common in his Chinese culture. His Chinese heritage prompts his unquestioning acceptance of this unfamiliar imp because his own traditions allow him to understand Amalia's situation. Amalia tells him that the *duende* (an imp of Spanish-origin) follows the current matriarch of Amalia's family lineage. She explains that if the family has no daughter, the *duende* attaches himself to the wife of the eldest son. In time, as generations of Amalia's ancestors marry different people on the island, the *duende* makes no distinction between women of Spanish, Chinese, or African heritage.[150] The *duende*, like all of the spiritual presences, interferes equally

[149] Other phrases include: "mi chino/a" (and "mi negro/a") to express affection; "Tengo un chino atrás" to indicate that bad luck is following you; "Quedarse en China" to mean that someone is completely lost or confused; "Búscate un chino que te ponga un cuarto," which is a popular phrase to indicate rejection; and "Ponérsela a alguien en China" to convey confronting an impossible situation (18; 84; 138; 264; 328).

[150] At the end of the novel, the *duende* appears to Cecilia, revealing that she is destined to marry Amalia's grandson.

in the lives of the living and disregards any cultural or racial distinction. The imp bounces in and out of time, like a ghost, to link together very different women as all part of one family.

New spiritual practices emerge as cultures come into contact and the flexibility of the spiritual allows for creative practices. As the stories of different peoples come together, their beliefs appear as fluid and they revere deities of various traditions. We see this occur when the novel specifically addresses how Chinese spiritual traditions contribute to modern Cuban culture in her novel,

> Perhaps where this novel most emphasizes Chinese influence on Cuban culture is in its representation of Chinese spirituality. *La isla de los amores infinitos* . . . includes numerous references to Chinese religious imagery. San Fancón, the syncretic Chinese warrior, is mentioned as are the I-Ching and its Cuban version, "la Charada China." But most relevant is the inclusion of Kuan Yin, the Chinese goddess of compassion or the Bodhisattva of mercy in the narrative. (Fuentes 6)

Urbistondo points to a passage in which the novel describes the adaptation of Shangó as an avatar of Kuan Kong to suggest that the text's version "establishes the deity as a medium for connecting the oppressed Chinese and African on the island," while an alternative narrative that is also mentioned "narrates a connection between the two groups" (201).[151] The text alludes to

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[151] The passage reads: "Kuan Kong había sido un valiente guerrero que vivió durante la dinastía Han. Al morir, se transformó en un inmortal cuyo rostro rojizo era reflejo de su probada lealtad. Durante la época en que los primeros culíes chinos llegaron a la isla, un inmigrante que vivía en la zona central aseguró que Kuan Kong se le había aparecido para anunciar que protegería a todo aquel que compartiera su comida con sus hermanos en desgracia. La noticia se extendió poer paías, pero ya en Cuba habitaba otro santo guerrero llamado Shangó debía de ser un avatar de Kuan Kong, una especie de hermano espiritual de otra raza. Pronto ambas figuras formaron el binomio Shangó-Kuan Kong. Más tarde, el santo se fue convirtiendo en San-Fan-Con, que protegía a todos por igual. Pablo también había oído otra versión, según la cual San-Fan-Con era el nombre mal pronunciado de Shen Guan Kong (<<el ancestro Kuang a quien se venera en

other santería practices too. For instance, a santera performs a curse-breaking ceremony where she invokes both the Catholic and the Santería variations of a saint/orisha (164-83). Furthermore, Fuentes highlights the correlation between Kuan-yin, goddess of mercy, and Ochún, the Yoruban goddess of love, proposing "At one point, this novel [. . .] suggests that religious beliefs are by nature syncretic" (7). This blending of spiritual traditions is again apparent in the description of the appearance of Cuba's patron saint, La Virgen de la Caridad:

> El océano, la lluvia y los huracanes eran bautizos naturales que redimían a los hijos de una virgen que, según la leyenda, había llegado por mar en una tabla, deslizándose sobre las olas en el primer *surfing* de la historia. No era extraño que esa misma virgen, a la que el Papa coronara Reina de Cuba, se pareciera a la diosa del amor que adoraban los esclavos, vistiera de amarillo como la deidad negra, y tuviera su santuario en El Cobre, región de la cual se extraía el metal consagrado a la orisha africana [. . .] Oh, su isla alucinante y mezclada, inocente y pura como un Edén. (363)

Here, Chaviano writes of the Virgin's legendary arrival to the island, foregrounding the saint's yellow garb and association with copper to emphasize her similarities to Ochún. After the description, the passage lauds the mixed purity of the island, interweaving Biblical allusions to the Garden of Eden. Most of the cross-cultural practices, however, are more casually included in the everyday lives of the characters. Their hybrid beliefs manifest as confidence in healers like the *La Obispa*, faith in the influences of syncretically-derived deities such as *orishas*, and acknowledgement of illnesses caused by the evil eye.

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vida>>), cuya memoria había vulgarizado algunos compatriotas. El joven sospechaba que, a ese paso, podrían aparecer más versiones sobre el origen del misterioso santo" (225).

Such syncretic practices represent cultural agency found between more restrictive religious practices. These rituals do not adhere to a strict, doctrinal regulations, but rather arise from mixing, flexibility, and openness to difference. They seep into daily routines, in the same way that the appearance of fantastical beings becomes quotidian. Significantly, as Cecilia continues to open herself to the spiritual realm, she feels drawn to a mixture of spiritual beliefs, rather than one religion: "Allí comulgaba con sus pesares y sus desdichas frente a Aquel que destilaba poder sobre todos, cualquiera que fuese su nombre: Olofi o Yavé, Él or Ella, Ambos o Todos. Por principio, no iba a misa. No confiaba en ningún tipo de guías o caudillos, fueran o no espirituales. Prefería hablar a solas con Dios" (45-6). Cecilia prefers to define her own spiritual life. She distrusts any one leader or presentation of beliefs. Instead, she accepts a flexible divine presence that may answer to many names. Between the religious structures into which she does not "fit," Cecilia finds "wiggle room" to decide her own beliefs independently from the strict doctrine of a single belief system.

Spiritual elements in the novel reinforce Cuban identity as inherently multicultural and exemplifying of creative agency. Chaviano primarily draws from Cuba's three most prominent immigrant groups to include their spirits, ghosts, and folkloric figures. Yet she does not limit herself to these traditions. Pan, for instance, is an ancient god of Greek origin who appears to Angela in Spain. Fuentes writes, "In the novel, Kuan-yin and Ochún appear as protectors of the women who are devoted to them. Chaviano, however, does not exclude Cuba's European connection to the exclusivity of African or Asian beliefs. But rather than turn to Christianity or Roman Catholic figures, the novel turns to Celtic Pagan beliefs and Greek mythology" (7). This all-inclusive approach suggests that the spiritual realm transcends geographic borders. Following

this idea, the author states that writing of spirituality and the traditions of Cuba's immigrants was one of her primary goals for the work:

> me di cuenta de que, si deseaba mostrar en la serie ciertos aspectos de la espiritualidad cubana que nunca habían sido tratados, debía abordar el tema del mestizaje cubano, incluyendo como protagonista la etnia china que nunca había formado parte de la novelística cubana a la par de los africanos y los españoles. Así surgió *La isla de los amores infinitos.* ("dinosaurio" 200)

In my first chapter, I note that ghosts and spirits appear in many cultures, but in very different ways.[152] Although the specters act as connectors between peoples and time periods, they originate from the perspective of the author. While the social position of ghosts, how spirits manifest, and the roles specters play differ greatly across cultures, Chaviano writes her novel as a Cuban exile living in the United States. A spirit may be Chinese or African in the novel, but the author constructs each from a Western framework. Still, the novel's ghosts and spiritual beings exist unconstrained by the cultural contexts of the narrative. While the spiritual beings originate from different practices, they provide a point of understanding between peoples whose dissimilar backgrounds may otherwise segregate them. Chaviano's ghosts are cross-cultural spiritual beings purposefully drawn from various traditions to reflect Cuba's diversity. The immaterial presences

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[152] Furthermore, María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren write, "As Benson Saler has shown, the category of the supernatural, to which ghosts are readily assigned, is itself not universal, but a western construct with a convoluted history. Thus, what appears as shared spectrality is in fact diachronically and synchronically refracted, comprising a range of habits, customs, and traditions, all subject to change. The very use of the term "ghost" already entails turning one, essentially Judeo-Christian, mode into the paradigmatic one, just as the seemingly neutral "spectral" carries with it implications of ocularcentrism that mark it as a product of western modernity" ("Spectropolitics" 92).

of the spiritual realm linger outside of dividing social factors to act as a means of connection across time and space, between past and future generations, and across traditions.[153]

B. Exile and the Preservation of Cuban Identity

Cecilia's narrative principally focuses on the exile community's call to preserve Cuban identity. In the novel's conclusion, Cecilia accepts that she must live outside of her home country. When she heals the void between her past and present, she does not reject her heritage, but learns that she carries her past within her. Wiggle room opens between the forces that threaten Cuban identity: an oppressive government on the island and a foreign mainstream society off of it. Cecilia learns that she can exist between these threatening forces, both as an individual and as a member of the exile community, to conserve Cuban culture for future generations.

Chaviano discusses in an interview how neglect poses a threat to Cuban culture. For her, the loss of Cuban history and tradition is a perilous reality for those who remain on the island under the current Communist regime,

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[153] Blanco and Peeren describe, "At the same time, in recent decades, the ghost has become an increasingly *globalized* figure as it relentlessly crosses borders, in multiple directions, in practices and imaginations transported through travel, migration, and the global culture industries. This has caused various traditions to intersect and intermingle, for example in the tsunami of Asian 'ghost' films remade by Hollywood (where 'Asian' should itself be differentiated into Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, at least) and ensuing co-productions. [. . .] The point of this part is not to present different "ghostly" traditions as incommensurable or to reject spectrality as a potentially useful heuristic instrument, but rather to insist on taking seriously the disarticulations that remain even as a spectral Esperanto seems to be emerging" ("Spectropolitics" 92).

> Entonces los cubanos de las nuevas generaciones comprobarán que su tragedia mayor no ha sido su aislamiento y su falta de contacto con el mundo exterior, sino la pérdida de su propio pasado y de sus tradiciones culturales y cívicas. El derecho a pensar, hablar y actuar con libertad, el derecho a decidir qué harán con su vida, no será solo parte de una historia fantástica. [. . .] Siguen vivos, y algún día volverán a la isla para devolverles la memoria de lo que han perdido. ("dinosaurios" 200)

Of all of the abuses suffered by Cubans on the island, Chaviano asserts that the greatest tragedy has been the loss of the past and of tradition. She believes the current political climate endangers the future of the island identity as traditions disappear from contemporary life. In the novel, memory acts as a means of conserving fundamental aspects of Cuban society, so that one day this history will be returned to the island.

The novel exists as a physical representation of cultural agency produced from this wiggle room. Chaviano writes the text from exile and in it, she conserves Cuban history by integrating dates of historical significance into the novel. She weaves the history of the island into the lives of the characters. Notably, the text includes important dates, most of which mark events leading up to and occurring during the Cuban Revolution, but also of its aftermath. For instance, Amalia's story includes the news of Eduardo René Chibás Ribas' suicide. Born in 1907 in Santiago de Cuba, Chibás Ribas was a politician who denounced the corruption of the government through a weekly radio broadcast. He shot himself on August 5, 1951, during his radio program because he had failed to present promised evidence of embezzlement against the education minister, Aureliano Sánchez Arango. Chibás Ribas died eleven days later. This detail records the event in the novel.

Similarly, the ghost house that haunts Cecilia appears only on certain dates. The dates act as clues as to the house's significance. For instance, its materialization on April 22nd recalls the date when numerous prisoners of war, who were captured during the Bay of the Pigs Invasion suffocated inside a closed bus in 1961. Other dates when the ghost house appears include July 13, July 26, January 1, January 8, April 13, and April 19. These dates correspond to the following historical events:

July 13: the massacre of forty-one Cubans who tried to flee Cuba on *13 de marzo* tugboat*;*

July 26, 1953: Castro's failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on (now hailed as the beginning of the Cuban Revolution);

January 1, 1959: marks the fall of dictator Fulgencio Batista;

January 8, 1959: Fidel Castro arrived in Havana;

April 13, 1961: a terrorist attack bombs Cuba's largest department store, *El encanto*, killing Fe del Valle and injuring eighteen others;

April 19, 1961: the failed invasion of the Bay of the Pigs Invasion (*Playa Girón*).

Ultimately, she understands that the house appears on dates of importance, both in her family's history (like her parents' wedding anniversary on February 14th) and in Cuba's history (302). In this way, the ghost house ties Cecilia's individual history to that of the island, suggesting that their pasts are irrevocably connected. It is also important that Cecilia had to remember her country's history—a history she was trying to forget—before she could solve the mystery of the ghost house. The dates in history required Cecilia to actively remember the past. As Cecilia recalls these events, the novel records this history and presents it to the reader.

In addition to historical events, the novel incorporates classic works of Cuban art to conserve their cultural significance.[154] *Cecilia Valdés*, Cirilo Villaverde's novel, contributes the name of Chaviano's protagonist and that of another Cecilia in the story.[155] This fictional work details interracial relations in nineteenth-century Havana. Its story informs Chaviano's text when people who inspired Cirilo Villaverde's novel appear as characters in *La isla de los amores infinitos*. Icons of Cuban popular culture make appearances within the text as well. Among them, famed singer and actress, Rita Montaner, acts as a fairy godmother figure to Amalia.[156] We read of Joaquín Nin, and beloved Cuban songs provide the titles for the novel's chapters.[157] In this way, Chaviano's work records details of literature, art, and people of Cuba's past. Their presence within the novel invites us to learn more of the island's history and culture.

As previously noted, the novel's emphasis on Chinese culture in Cuba's history and contemporary society works toward a larger purpose of recording the island's multicultural history. Historical contributions of the Chinese and how these influences remain present in

[154] Chaviano also incorporates texts from other traditions, such as two-time Pulitzer prize winning, Italian-American Gian Carlo Menotti's 1946 drama "The Medium."

[155] *Cecilia Valdés,* by Cirilo Villaverde, was published in 1882. This novel also inspires part of Caridad's storyline, especially with the character of Pepito, who is a lazy student who drinks too much and almost obsessively pursues Mercedes, Caridad's daughter.

[156] Rita Montaner (1900, Havana –1958, Havana) was a famous singer, pianist, and actress.

[157] Joaquín Nin (1879, Havana – 1949, Havana) was a famous pianist and composer. The first four chapters, for example, are titled: "Noche azul" (composed by Ernesto Lecuona, 1895, Havana –1963, Santa Cruz de Tenerife); "Espérame en el cielo" (most famously performed by Antonio Machín, 1903, Sagua la Grande – 1977 Madrid); "Yo sé de una mujer" (performed by Panchito Riset, 1910, la Habana – 1988, New York) and "Fiebre de ti" (top hit of Benny Moré, 1919, Santa Isabel de las Lajas – 1963, la Habana).

contemporary Cuban society appear throughout the text.[158] Examples include mention of the Chinese Lottery as an aspect of everyday life and of the Chinese cemetery, where the descendants of immigrants visit the graves of their ancestors (156; 246). Significantly, Amalia narrates the histories of African, Chinese, and Spanish immigrants. Her stories bring the lives of the past into the present and her words preserve these diverse stories as part of the island's multicultural heritage.[159] Amalia performs the role that Fuentes notes regarding the women in the novel: "[they] are the guardians of the family, and by extension, the nation's stories. Through their telling and retelling, the women lend voices to those who precede them, re-inscribing Cuba's marginal groups, like the Chinese, into its history, thus affirming the syncretic nature of Cuban culture and identity, which Fernando Ortiz once labeled "the Cuban ajiaco"" (8). Significantly, the novel ends when Cecilia accepts and embraces her Cuban exile identity and meets her future husband, Pablo, who is Amalia's grandson. Cecilia receives Amalia's stories throughout the novel. When she learns she will marry Pablo, Cecilia becomes a safe-keeper of this family heritage.

Cecilia worries about what a destiny of exile means for the Cuban people. She views a Miami shrine as a strangely different replica of the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Cuba:

[158] I discuss García's reference to Havana's monument honoring Chinese participation in the War of Independence in the previous chapter. Chaviano also includes the quote found on this monument in her novel, "Después echó a andar junto a su madre con la cabeza más alta que nunca, repitiendo como un mantra, con la intención de grabarla en sus genes, la frase del monumento que su futuro hijo jamás debería olvidar: <<No hubo un chino cubano desertor; no hubo un chino cubano traidor>>" (345).

[159] Chaviano reminds us of silenced existences that have been lost from official records of history by subtly including details such as African slaves being forced to use Spanish names and the haunting of Havana by a mute, scarred Indian ghost who was assassinated centuries earlier.

> La ermita original, situada en la región oriental de la isla, poseía una arquitectura muy diferente. Por eso, ver aquella copia del templo miamense en suelo cubano resultaba una visión extraña. Aunque, si se pensaba bien, era la conclusión de un ciclo [. . .] Todo era como uno de esos juegos con espejos que repiten una imagen *ad infinitum*. (322)

The endless game of the reflecting mirrors represents her fear that without the island, only reflections (and thus less substantive versions) of Cuban culture can exist. At the same time, she recognizes that Cubans have, throughout history, been constantly in transition.

Miami represents a location established to conserve this history and culture for the exile community. It is a holding space for their tradition and culture, a reflection of the lost island they love. She understands the city to be a place of refuge, a type of "time capsule" that can maintain a threatened culture for future generations:

> Miami se había convertido en un enigma. Comenzaba a sospechar que allí se conservaba cierta espiritualidad que los más viejos habían rescatado amorosamente de la hecatombe [. . .] Tal vez la ciudad fuera una cápsula del tiempo; un desván donde se guardaban los trastos de un antiguo esplendor, en espera del regreso a su lugar de origen. (143)

Cecilia remembers that the island was once a place of hope for so many immigrants forced from their homes, just as this city in Florida represents a site of courage for the exiles of the last half century. There, she learns about her own culture: "De pronto reconoció cuánto le debía a Miami. Allí había aprendido historias y decires, costumbres y sabores, formas de hablar y trabajar:

tesoros de una tradición perdida en su isla" (321). As Cecilia and other Cuban immigrants adopt Miami as their home, the city becomes a center for exiles, a bastion of culture and heritage.[160]

Miami exists between the faded island and the mainstream culture of the United States, creating a Cuban space in the wiggle room between the two:

> Miami podía ser una ciudad incomprensible hasta para quienes la habitaban, porque mostraba la imagen racional y potente del mundo anglosajón mientras su espíritu bullía con la huracanada pasión latina; pero en aquel sitio febril y contradictorio, los cubanos guardaban su cultura como si se tratara de las joyas de la corona británica. Desde allí la isla era tan palpable como los gritos de la gente que clamaba desde la pantalla: <<Cuba para Cristo, Cuba para Cristo…>>. En la isla flotaba un espectro, o quizás una mística, que ella no había notado antes—algo que sólo había descubierto en Miami. (321)

Miami offers a space of conservation for Cuban culture. There, what has been lost from the island can remain and flourish. This corresponds to Urbistondo's statement that in this novel (and others that she includes in her analysis), "depict[s] the protagonists as productively moving away from their initial position of marginality, and, through their multiple sacred engagements, producing a space that re-imagines socio-political belonging" (3). However, I read Miami as a space that still exists between two cultural centers—Cuba and the United States—and therefore remains located on the margins, but develops as a peripheral space into a unique community that

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[160] Chaviano states, "En una de mis novelas (*La isla de los amores infinitos*), su protagonista reconoce que en esa ciudad [Miami] febril y contradictoria, los cubanos han conservado y cuidado de su cultura como si se tratara de las joyas de la corona británica. Es posible que, algún día, lo que Cuba ha perdido en el último medio siglo regrese a la isla proveniente de Miami, no igual que antes, sino pasado por el tamiz del tiempo transcurrido en el resto del mundo; un tiempo que nunca pasó por la isla, donde la sociedad no solo se estancó, sino que retrocedido en muchos aspectos tecnológicos, sociales y económicos" ("dinosaurios" 200).

redefines a sense of belonging for itself and its exiles. This redefinition represents the creative agency of wiggle room.

Thus, culture and history can be transferred and then resettled into a space between two different forces. The ghost house that stalks Cecilia through Miami is a metaphor for the idea that home is not attached to place. The house uproots "home" from the island and brings home and her past to Cecilia, settling in Miami, a place that she ultimately believes to now hold more Cuban culture than Cuba itself.

Key to understanding why Miami can act as a cultural reservoir is Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation and the island's perpetual reinvention. Just as Ortiz recognizes Cuba as an *ajiaco* of perpetual change, Cecilia's story presents exile identity as one that must adapt to changing circumstances and exist among different people and customs. Cecilia comes to understand that the ever-changing *ajiaco* quality of Cubanness encompasses her exile experience. Cecilia learns that home does not depend on location, but rather it is something carried within. Home can be safeguarded against political threats and displacement. Likewise, it can be gifted to future generations regardless of where they are born.

These ideas assert that "Cuban" identity does not require being physically located on the island. Instead, Cecilia's experience, together with Amalia's stories, put forth immigration, resilience, and the ability to begin again as at the heart of what it means to be Cuban. These realizations allow Cecilia to find a home among other Cuban exiles in Miami. Between forces that she perceives to threaten Cuban culture, Cecilia finds wiggle room to creatively redefine herself as a Cuban exile and preserve her heritage.[161]

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[161] Notably, Chaviano's vision of exile significantly differs from Morejón's (which is discussed in chapter one).

IV. *Monkey Hunting*

A. Wiggle room, Cultural Agency, Syncretic Spiritual Practices

Many of the characters in *Monkey Hunting* move from one culture to another, whether they travel across oceans like Chen Pan or, like Lucrecia, escape slavery and live in Havana's Chinatown. We meet Lucrecia when Chen Pan sees an advertisement for her sale in the local newspaper. Chen Pan buys her and her son (who dies soon after) from the horrid Don Joaquín Alomá. After Chen Pan frees her, Lucrecia chooses to stay with him in Chinatown, where she sells candles to pay back the one thousand peso price of her sale. Together, they adapt to one another's culture and to their surrounding community. Like Cecilia, Chen Pan feels pulled between his past self and the expectations of his present circumstances. This tension between cultures weighs upon him for the rest of his life.[162] Independent and self-sufficient, Lucrecia becomes a part of Chinatown—a place once completely foreign to her—as she manages her husband's store and embraces his Chinese culture.[163] They define themselves and their relationship, and in doing so, reject social forces that focus upon their differences. The characters' openness to different cultures aids their adaptation to their new communities.

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[162] As Raquel Puig writes, "Chen, almost at the end of his life, suffers from an ambivalent sense of nationalism. He does not belong in China, neither does he fully belong in Cuban society. The unified "imaginary community" may have built a monument to the *chinos mambises* (Chinese freedom fighters) who bravely fought in the insurrection against Spain, but once sovereignty and nation are achieved, they become the instruments of exclusion. And, Chen Pan, as countless others are left in the periphery of that excluded multitude" (243).

[163] Caminero-Santangleo states: "Lucrecia [. . .] has 'constructed' for herself a Chinese ethnic identity in Cuba—a transculturation that is distinct from cultural assimilation in that the culture adapted to, assumed, is another 'foreign' minority culture in Cuba rather than the dominant Spanish one" (105).

Spiritual practices, in particular, act as a means for cross-cultural communication, connection, and creating agency.

Racial and cultural divisions separate people on the island.[164] When Chen Pan arrives to Cuba, he is immediately sold to a plantation. There, dissimilar backgrounds create social divisions among the laborers. He works with other Chinese indentured servants and African slaves in the sugarcane fields, but most of the Chinese laborers choose to stay segregated from the Africans. Likewise, many of the African slaves do not interact with the Chinese.

Chen Pan crosses the social divide when he forms relationships with the African slaves. His willingness to do so differentiates Chen Pan from the majority of the other Chinese immigrants, "The other Chinese ridiculed Chen Pan. They said the black men were liars, that they stank like monkeys and stole their food. But Chen Pan paid them no mind" (26).[165] Ann Marie Alfonso-Forero questions García's presentation of race and identity, "While [García] takes

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[164] Urbistondo discusses race construction in eighteenth century Cuba. She cites Silvia Schultermandl who states that the concept of race "was based on 'social and cultural difference[s]' which did not pertain 'to transnational groups of people distinguished by biological factors such as skin color but rather to various ethnic groups distinguished primarily by cultural practice'" (Schultermandl 98). Urbistondo writes, "Schultermandl stresses that the various ethnic groups were all primarily from regions in Spain which then based competing notions of whiteness solely on cultural and economic differences and not natal place or skin color. In nineteenth century Cuba, the African population—both slaves as well as manumitted individuals—did not trouble this racial discourse; however, the insertion of the Chinese laborers produced the need to reevaluate who was considered "white" in Cuba and what that entailed" (Urbistondo 38).

[165] Zapata-Calle recognizes Chen Pan's relationship with the African slaves as a principal difference between the descriptions of life on the sugar plantations in *Monkey Hunting* and *Biografía de un cimmarón*: "La diferencia básica entre el relato de Montejo y el de Cristina García, en cuanto a la relación de chinos y negros en las plantaciones y barracones, es que en la novela que aquí tratamos se incluyen algunos contactos interpersonales entre negros y chinos, no sucede así en *Biografía de un cimarrón*. Este es el caso de las relaciones del propio protagonista, Chen Pan, quien gracias a su amigo Cabeza de Piña logra participar en los pasatiempos de los negros narrados también por Montejo" (174).

on a project that intends to explore a racial minority that is underrepresented in contemporary Cuban American fiction, the manner in which she approaches Chen Pan's Chinesenness is problematic because he is not purely Chinese in his cultural choices" (6). She argues that Chen Pan is "not representative" of the indentured servants because he consistently makes decisions that set him apart from the others, especially in his willingness to connect with different groups of people. According to Alfonso-Forero, his life story should not be considered a realistic portrayal of the Chinese immigrant experience. Thus, his distinct ability to act cross-culturally may inaccurately differentiate him from the majority of Chinese laborers.

I would argue, however, that Chen Pan's story does not represent the Chinese experience in Cuba, but rather brings forth an individual story that contributes to the country's multicultural social fabric.[166] Chen Pan is exceptional from the moment he begins to connect across cultures on the plantation. Thus, while details of his life accurately follow historical accounts, the character of Chen Pan does not aim to represent a typical experience. Instead of depicting the majority of indentured servants' stories—many of whom never left slavery—the novel describes how Chen Pan shares his life with Lucrecia, owns a successful business in Havana, and has Cuban children. His story centers upon his remarkable ability to cross social divisions and become part of the island's multicultural society.[167] It begins when Chen Pan flouts the social

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[166] Discussing the multicultural spaces in García's novel, Zapata-Calle describes Havana's Chinatown in terms of Homi Bhabha's concept of Third Space: "El florecimiento del comercio en Cuba está ligado a la influencia de los chinos, y el Barrio Chino constituyó para ellos lo que Homi Bhabha ha llamado 'El tercer espacio', ya que surgió como un lugar intercultural ni plenamente chino, ni criollo, ni africano, sino como un lugar donde las tres culturas tenían cabida al mismo tiempo, un barrio particular y diferente, pero que a su vez participaba de la vida de la Habana como parte de la ciudad" (176).

[167] Some of the indentured servants left Cuba, but most remained on the island, either because of deceitful contracts or because they were not able to afford a return ticket to China (Hu-DeHart 108). "Finally, the hypocrisy was exposed, and the fate of the coolies consequently sealed, when

norms that separate races on the plantation; his actions reveal an openness to difference that wiggle room requires.

Significantly, Chen Pan makes decisions independently from the rest of the Chinese laborers and finds similarities within distinct spiritual traditions.[168] Not all of the Africans accept him, but Chen Pan gains a protector through his friendship with Cabeza de Piña. Notably, the recognition of a shared spiritual quality reinforces their cross-cultural friendship. Cabeza de Piña draws upon his personal beliefs, asserting that he and Chen Pan are similar: "Chen Pan, like him, was the son of the God of Fire" (26).[169] This commonality transcends the divisions of race and religion to connect the two men. Chen Pan and Cabeza de Piña's friendship grows as they share practices stemming from their traditions and beliefs: "Chen Pan taught his friend Chinese exercises to begin his day, to gather energy from the heavens to strengthen his body" (26).

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the regulations were revised once again in 1860 to require that coolies recontract indefinitely once their original eight-year term expired, or leave Cuba at their own expense. Only those whose original contracts expired before 1861 were exempted, so as years went by a few coolies did obtain residency permits and were allowed to stay in Cuba as free men; some recontracted, and most eventually opened small businesses in provincial capitals in Havana. Recontracting as just another way to effectively keep the coolies from every gaining their freedom and from working and living in Cuba as free men. For all practical purposes and to all appearances, Chinese coolies were slaves. This fact was not lost on the eminent Cuban historian Juan Perez de la Riva, who concluded that the coolie system was barely disguised slavery, a ploy to prolong slave labor for the plantations" (Hu-DeHart 108). Many freed servants died bachelors or married island women (most frequently former slaves like Lucrecia) as there were very few Chinese women on the island (Hu-DeHart 108; López 90-2). Some entered businesses, but few were as successful to expand beyond Chinatown as Chen Pan does.

[168] His cross-cultural relationships on the plantation also include an affair with an African slave, Rita.

[169] Toral Aleman recognizes the "god of fire" as Changó: "Cabeza de Piña, quien protege a Chen Pan como a un hermano, lo identifica con una divinidad del panteón yoruba, concretamente con Changó, que, como sabemos, es el dios de la pasión, del trueno, de la música, del baile, y también del fuego" (89). Also, it is important to note that "Shangó" and "Changó" are different spellings of the name of the same orisha.

Unlike those who remain isolated in groups of their own race, these two characters share and connect through spiritual practices.

Cabeza de Piña's teachings significantly aid Chen Pan's survival in the forest when he flees servitude.[170] Chen Pan learns about the sacred ceiba tree from Cabeza de Piña. He recalls this information as he hides from pursuing bloodhounds: "Chen Pan remembered what Cabeza had told him: the tree was their mother; her sap, blood; her touch, a tender caress" (38-9). Running for his life, Chen Pan camouflages himself at the roots of the ceiba and hides in its branches. The spiritually significant tree shelters him from his pursuers.[171] The connection Chen Pan makes with Cabeza de Piña is life-altering, as it significantly increases his possibility of survival during his escape from the plantation.

Similarly, Lucrecia's willingness to embrace unfamiliar traditions facilitates her relationship with Chen Pan. Both are open to the other's background, and Chen Pan and Lucrecia build a life together in which their spiritual practices never conflict. When Lucrecia enters Chen Pan's house for the first time, she offers a sprig of mint to his Buddha statue without hesitation (132). Together, they create a home where both of their spiritual traditions occupy the space of the house, "[Lucrecia] painted their apartment a soothing blue and kept the Buddha's altar

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[170] The novel often describes the actions of other indentured servants, who react very differently to their circumstances than Chen Pan does. For instance, some remain as separated as possible from other groups of people on the island, while others "adopted Spanish names, cut off their queues, adapted their palates to the local food. They took the names of wealthy Cubans, hoping for their same prosperity. Yü Ming-hsing became Estéban Sariñana. Li Chao-ch'un renamed himself Perfecto Díaz and slicked his hair back with perfumed grease. Thickheaded Kuo Chan insisted on being called Juan-Juan Capote" (36). Chen Pan consistently thinks and acts as an individual while the text tends to describe the other Chinese as acting within a group. However, it is difficult to assess Chen Pan's actions as "not Chinese" when the others in his position do not conform to one way of living.

[171] See chapter two for more information on the spiritual significance of the ceiba.

smoking with incense. Next to it she put a statue of Yemayá, in honor of her mother, and offered her watermelons and cane syrup, now and then a fresh hen" (178).[172] The novel never mentions any spiritual negotiation or internal processing of Lucrecia's beliefs. Instead, the subtle way in which the text includes the coexistence and, later, mixing of spiritual practices emphasizes how seamlessly these traditions work together in her life. For instance, she unquestioningly "prays to Buddha and all the saints" to keep her son, Lorenzo, from harm (178).[173]

Notably, the novel represents religious institutions on the island as frequently imposing strict ideology. In contrast to the flexibility of individual practices, established religion appears as a rigid social structure. While Chen Pan is remarkably open to the practices of the Africans, he reserves suspicion toward the Catholic Church. During their first moments together, Lucrecia crosses herself on their walk home from Don Joaquín's house. This prompts Chen Pan to wonder, "what sort of foolishness the nuns had taught her" (69).[174] As Kathleen López notes, the

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[172] Also: "The glass case under Chen Pan's abacus was devoted to religious articles: prayer books and crucifixes, two chalices and a bishop's miter, rosaries of varying lengths and hues. One worn blue rosary had been there for years. It reminded Lucrecia of her mother's hands, of the African sayings she'd made her memorize. *Aseré ebión beromo, itá maribá ndié ekrúkoro*. When the sun comes out, it shines on everyone. *Champompón champompón ñanga dé besoá*. What was yesterday is not today. Mamá had been devoted to Yemayá, goddess of the seas. She used to dress Lucrecia in blue and white and together they'd take offerings to the beach on Sundays" (127).

[173] Zapata-Calle discusses Lucrecia's syncretic practices, citing Frank F. Scherer's work investigating the mixing of Santería practices and Chinese beliefs, "[a]ccording to Orientalist knowledge, the name Sanfancón, also San Fancón, San-Fan-Con, or San Fang Kong, represents a Western corruption of Cuan Yu, who, after his death, became the 'Venerated Ancestor Kuan Kong' and eventually the 'patrón' of all Chinese immigrants to Cuba" (Zapata-Calle 182; Scherer 165).

[174] While Lucrecia's faith is steadfast, but Chen Pan questions the spiritual throughout his life. He seems equally open to different traditions, but draws upon belief as needed instead of maintaining regular spiritual practice in his life.

novel's depiction of the Catholic Church falls in line with its historical actions, which often worked to maintain racial divisions on the island:

> Amidst growing concern over criminal behavior among slaves, free people of color, and Chinese, in 1864 the colonial government circulated a royal order promoting Christianity as a solution [. . .] Although they focused on 'vice' and sexual relations, the men were motivated by the maintenance of the work regime and the prevention of racial mixing. ("Afro-Asian" 62)

On the quickly changing island, the Church acted as a social force for upholding a racial status quo that discouraged interracial union. However, Lucrecia recognizes hypocrisy in the actions of those who present themselves as religious, which she points to as justification for the distance she puts between herself and the Church's more restrictive teachings.[175] Her flexible belief system allows for her to connect with Chen Pan in a way that the stricter doctrines of religious institutions would not support. Lucrecia never fully adheres to Catholicism, but rather accepts some beliefs and rejects others. For instance, she crosses herself and reveres various saints, but does not regularly attend Mass (129).[176]

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[175] "Early on Ash Wednesday, Lucrecia had seen people wear *cenizas* on their foreheads, but by noon they were eating meat and trading horses. Last year, a Dutch nun had told her that Cubans were immoral. Where else was it normal for a priest to go straight from the church to the cock pit without bothering to remove his three-cornered hat? And the priests had families of their own with mistresses on the side, just like any other man. [. . .] One sermon after another. Lucrecia knew that what they said had nothing to do with her" (128).

[176] The Catholic Church also represents a welcoming presence in Lucrecia's life when Lucrecia finds herself pregnant and the nuns welcome and care for her (135). However, Alfonso-Forero argues that this was the Church's way of covering up the incestuous pregnancy (3).

Protestant missionaries represent another exclusive, potentially isolating religious force on the island, but the text mentions them briefly and with critical dismissal. Chen Pan brushes off their presence, "In Chinatown, the Protestant missionaries besieged him constantly with the decrees of their god, Jesus Christ. But Chen Pan distrusted all forms of certainty" (69). Most notably, Lucrecia resists any imposition of guilt or shame for not officially marrying Chen Pan, even though "[the Protestant missionaries] told her that she was living in sin, that she had to marry Chen Pan to sit right in the eyes of God" (128).[177] She rejects these beliefs, just as she refuses complete assimilation to Catholicism.

Despite Lucrecia's dismissal of such rigid social forces, they continue to influence her life. She confronts racism while she works in the store, "The light was dim, and she could tell that the women were trying to gauge the precise shade of her skin. They weren't accustomed to seeing *mulatas* in the finer shops" (126). She also prefers not to work on Good Friday because she is afraid that her neighbors and customers might disapprove of the shop being open on a Catholic holy day (124). Lucrecia defies many social pressures to become a free woman who

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[177] Verena Stolcke discusses social status, physical appearance, and legal race. She specifically examines marriage laws of the time in her fifth chapter, "That despite their legally white status the Chinese were far from being classed by public opinion in this category emerges also from two cases in which the respective families of the two free *pardas* were opposed to their marrying Chinese 'without more basis than the minute difference in colour' which should have favoured the Chinese if the criterion had been whiteness. And one mother could say that 'she'd rather see her [free *parda* daughter] living with a negro or dead than married to a Chinese'. This attitude had clearly nothing to do with a preference for a whiter skin colour but emphasized rather occupational differences. As a consequence of their 'being rejected by the white women but also by those of colour', the Chinese were said to succumb to other 'unspeakable vices', and are to this day" (79). For clarification, "the term 'parda' was only partially an indicator of color, suggesting 'brown,' and did not have a meaning similar to the English usage of 'mulatto' in referring to the first generation of inter-racial birth to European-descended and African-descended parents. It instead marked any level of perceived European and African joint genealogy and distance from popular assumptions of pure African ancestry and phenotype" (Morrison 52).

successfully runs a business with Chen Pan in Chinatown, but she still lives within a community which largely upholds racism and restrictive religious beliefs. She endures prejudices and social pressures that marginalize her and demand a certain level of adherence.

Within these oppressive structures, Lucrecia establishes an individual wiggle room that allows for the overlapping and blending of spiritual customs. Alfonso-Forero argues that the novel's representation of hybrid cultural phenomena depicts Ortiz's concept of cultural development and overcomes racial divisions that might otherwise have threatened Lucrecia and Chen Pan's relationship. She writes,

> *Monkey Hunting* accurately depicts the phenomenon that Ortiz calls neoculturation. Furthermore, Ortiz's reminder that culture is acquired emphasizes that unlike race, cultural identity can be chosen or rejected by the individual, as well as passed on from one generation to the next (although not genetically, or through the body). For both Chen Pan and his wife, Lucretia [*sic*], race is bound inextricably with the oppressive systems that govern the island: colonization, slavery, and indentured servitude. Definition by race, as the novel would have it, shapes yet another facet of this oppression. Instead, by allowing these characters the agency to choose the features that determine their identities among Cuba's many different cultures, they are permitted a chance to self-define through hybridity. These self-chosen hybrid identities come to characterize each of them far more accurately than a racial definition ever could. (5)[178]

[178] I similarly consider hybridity as agency, but I focus my study upon the spiritual as a means of wiggle room within the limitations of social structures.

Alfonso-Forero emphasizes Ortiz's assertion that culture can be created, transformed, and self-defined. "Definition by race" represents a restrictive social construction that enforces separation based upon difference. Spiritual practice, however, plays a central role in the novel's presentation of hybridity. In the characters' lives, mixing of beliefs produces hybrid practice and, through the ability to define what they believe, the characters find cultural agency. In this way, hybrid spirituality creates individual resistance. The practices emerge from within the wiggle room between rigid social structures, including those that reinforce racial division.

For Lucrecia, spirituality is malleable, overlapping, and syncretic and she claims individual agency by defining her own beliefs. She incorporates a number of spiritualities into her life, including her mother's devotion to the Yoruba Orisha Yemayá, Catholic rituals, and Chen Pan's Buddhist traditions.[179] The resulting hybrid practice exists outside of strict religious doctrine. Alfonso-Forero recognizes Lucrecia's individual belief system as an act of independence in the face of different structures that represent the oppression of colonialism:

> By rejecting exclusive participation in any particular religious institution, Lucretia [*sic*] avoids further submission to patriarchal, colonial power. When she leaves Don Joaquín's house and the nuns wave goodbye, Lucretia [*sic*] escapes a religious institution that had been willing to cover up her father's shameful indiscretions. Later on, Lucretia [*sic*] brazenly asks "From what?" when Protestant missionaries attempt to convince her to convert (128). These

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[179] When asked about her inclusion of Santería practices, García states, "Santería was traditionally an unacknowledged and underappreciated aspect of what it meant to be Cuban. Yet the syncretism between the Yoruban religion that the slaves brought to the island and the Catholicism of their masters is, in my opinion, the underpinning of Cuban culture. Every artistic realm-music, theater, literature, etc.—owes a huge debt to Santería and the slaves who practiced it and passed it on, largely secretively, for generations" (*Dreaming* 255).

> institutions represent colonial power under the guise of salvation, and Lucretia [*sic*] understands that submitting to any one form of worship is akin to giving up the freedom she worked so hard to obtain. (3)

Alfonso-Forero argues that Lucrecia's hybrid identity allows for self-definition through the refusal of colonial structures.[180] My reading of the novel aligns with Alfonso-Forero's when she states that these hybridities challenge the "patriarchal Spanish colonial paradigms" as they allow for the characters to cross social boundaries and to create their own identities that challenge hegemonic cultural divisions.

In a similar vein of thought, Méndez writes of Santería's ability to preserve cultural memory and racial history and unify diverse peoples:

> The power of Santería ensures the perseverance of cultural memory and racial history in order to facilitate its practitioners' futures. Indeed, the power of Santería to record and overcome spiritual and bodily violations astounds one. Lucrecia and her mother survived nightly rape and torture for many years through the worship of Yemayá. This is the greatest gift Santería, as a practice and a literary production, has to offer readers and practitioners: the ability to make one whole after extreme violation and fragmentation; in other words, the ability to make one diverse yet unified people out of many. (153)

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[180] Ann Marie Alfonso-Forero highlights religious hybridity when she argues that "through the narrative of Chen Pan and his family, García explores the ways in which self-chosen hybridities allow for the inclusion of both Chinese and African cultures in Cuban identity and function against patriarchal Spanish colonial paradigms that tend to restrict identification along the lines of race and gender. Privileging cultural and religious hybridities over fixed racial identifications, García celebrates her characters' ability to create fluid and dynamic identities" (1).

Méndez emphasizes how these hybrid practices unify and record culture. Lucrecia creates a practice that is her own as she adjusts to life in Chinatown. Through it, she keeps her own culture and accepts aspects of Chen Pan's. She defines her beliefs free of doctrine and, in this way, Lucrecia's individual wiggle room lends her greater independence.

As scholars have noted, Lucrecia's spiritual practices highlight multiculturalism and syncretic practices on the island.[181] In fact, García nods to Ortiz's writings when she explains Lucrecia's thoughts on spirituality:

> In her opinion it was better to mix a little of this and that, like when she prepared an *ajiaco* stew. She lit a candle here, made an offering there, said prayers to the gods of heaven and the ones here on earth. She didn't believe in just one thing. Why would she eat only ham croquettes? Or enjoy the scent of roses alone? Lucrecia liked to go to church on Easter to admire the *flores de pascuas* [*sic*], but did she need to go every Sunday? (129).

The *ajiaco* culture of Cuba presents her with a smorgasbord of beliefs from which she can freely choose to incorporate into her life or dismiss altogether. Jade Tsui-yu Lee writes that García's novel "exemplifies" Mary Louise Pratt's concept of a contact zone (135).[182] She discusses the text in terms of cultural mixing and highlights Pratt's development of Ortiz's *transculturación* to describe how "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Pratt 6). However, when looking at syncretic

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[181] See: Alfonso-Forero, Lysik, Méndez, Moiles, and Zapata-Calle, among others.

[182] Mary Louise Pratt describes a contact zone as a space where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4).

practices, the characters do not always draw from a dominant culture. Santería plays a role in the daily lives of various characters, and this syncretic tradition stems from the mixing of African beliefs with Catholic practices. Yet when these practices appear in the novel, they represent a unique belief system that exists beyond any influence of the Church. And, as noted earlier, Lucrecia chooses what she practices from Catholicism. These beliefs are not passively received by the dominant culture, but instead, the characters actively decide which elements of the hegemonic practice they incorporate in their self-determined belief systems. Furthermore, within the narrative, we see that most significant cross-cultural connections occur between people of different marginalized cultures, such as Chen Pan and Cabeza de Piña, and Chen Pan and Lucrecia. In this way, spirituality offers a powerful unifying force for enabling cross-cultural relationships, most commonly across marginalized groups, and a means of asserting identity within cultural contact zones.

B. Migration's Impact on Tradition

Similar to Chaviano's novel, *Monkey Hunting* includes elements of various traditions to highlight all of their contributions to contemporary Cuban society.[183] She intersperses idioms, poetry, and songs from Chinese and African traditions to create a text as richly intercultural as the characters she writes, while purposefully foregrounding the influence of the Chinese.[184] The novel's first section, "Origins" begins with an epigraph taken from Wu Ch'êng-ên's *The Journey*

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[183] *Monkey Hunting* incorporates texts, and above all poetry, from various traditions (including Chinese, African, Cuban, and Vietnamese).

[184] Chapter two includes footnotes with more historical information regarding Chinese immigrants in Cuba.

to the West.[185] With this citation, the text immediately presents one of the novel's principal themes: migration between the East and the West.[186] As we read the selected quote that has been translated from an ancient Chinese text to be included in a contemporary novel about Cuba that has been written by an exile in the United States, we partake in a migration of ideas and cultures across geographic, linguistic, and temporal borders. We begin our reading of the novel immediately in dialogue with the elements of multiculturalism and migration that inform the major themes of the text.

Through the wanderings of Chen Pan's great-grandson, Domingo, García contemplates a possible result of continued migration over generations - the feeling of not belonging to any one place or anywhere at all. His story most closely resembles the trajectory of Cecilia's life, as he enters exile and struggles to find himself abroad. Domingo, however, nostalgically longs for a home to which he cannot return. He clings to a Cuban identity but, in contrast with the peace Cecilia attains at the conclusion of Chaviano's novel, Domingo is stuck in the past and cannot move forward in his life. He considers himself Cuban and carries this heritage, but is yet to be able to establish a home in another place. Whereas wiggle room allowed Chen Pan to connect to those around him, nostalgia ties Domingo to the island and denies him the openness required to adapt to a foreign society.[187]

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[185] Wu Ch'êng-ên (c. 1500-1580), a novelist and poet of the Ming Dynasty is often credited as the author of *The Journey to the West*, one of the Four Great Classical Novels of pre-modern Chinese fiction.

[186] "I Old Monkey, can with this pair / of fiery eyes and diamond pupils, / discern good and evil," Wu Chêng-ên, *The Journey to the West.* For more information on this work, see the first footnote of chapter two.

[187] Chen Pan, in contrast, leaves China and immigrates to Cuba, where he wavers between feeling Cuban and Chinese. During the parts of his life in which he feels more Cuban, he embraces this identity even though he was not born on the island. In this case, place changes

As the novel traces Chinese heritage through generations of Chen Pan's family, it asks what remains of the ancestral culture for a migrant's descendants. Domingo Chen's physical attributes, which he inherits from Chen Pan, present one response to this question.[188] During his time in Vietnam, Domingo's "biggest fear was that in the heat of a firefight, his fellow soldiers would mistake him for Viet Cong and shoot him dead. Enough of them were suspicious of him to begin with. With his heavy accent and brown skin, how could he be American?" (41; 107).[189] As Zapata-Calle notes, "El problema es que Domingo tendrá que marcharse de la isla expulsado con su padre por la ideología revolucionaria y en la diáspora neoyorquina no consigue ser considerado como cubano por sus rasgos físicos asiáticos" (182). Domingo's appearance, in combination with his Cuban culture and Chinese heritage, sets him apart from many people in New York City and from the Americans fighting alongside him in Vietnam.[190] Neither a native

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national identity. However, it also shows the malleable quality of Cubanness as he is able to identify with one, the other, or both of these countries throughout his life.

[188] Domingo also mentions that when he is a child, another boy "used to taunt him, saying his Chinese eyes tilted everything he saw" (107). His appearance distinguished him from others on the island, but this does not affect that he self-identifies as Cuban, whereas this difference underscores his internal struggle with his identity in exile.

[189] Considering the connection between heritage and the body, it is notable that Lorenzo who embraces his Chinese heritage, also capitalizes off the traditions of his father's country as *el médico chino* who prescribes Eastern medicine and remedies that he learns in China (200). He sells these remedies to treat the bodies of his clients, benefitting from promises such "exotic" treatments promise. Alfonso-Forero claims that "Chen Pan's cultural hybridity is opportunistic: by participating in both the Chinese and criollo communities, he not only guarantees his financial success, his stated goal when he leaves China in the first place, but also secures the means with which to create a family legacy" (4). Chen Pan's process of integration into Cuban society necessitates his participation in the capitalist society that once propelled his servitude. Notably, Chen Pan's business sells objects that promote the Chinese as an exotic Other, especially to tourists (Zapata-Calle 184). See Alfonso-Forero, Moiles, and Zapata-Calle for further analysis of the role of capitalism within the novel.

[190] Caminero-Santangelo argues, "the majority exile community generally did not represent itself, and was not perceived, as a racially 'mixed' community in the 1960s; rather black (and

of Vietnam nor obviously "American," Domingo's multicultural heritage complicates his everyday life and may even endanger him during the war (Zapata-Calle 179). His racial ambiguity both outwardly represents his internal struggle to understand who he is and where he belongs, and refuses to let him forget his great-grandfather, Chen Pan.

In this way, the text explores multiculturalism's relationship with the bodies of migrants and their children. When Chen Pan migrates, he carries his traditions with him. He takes these practices with him from China to Cuba. In his new setting, wiggle room permits a space for these practices to shift, reshape, and allow for adaptation. Yet, as we see with Domingo, identity becomes increasingly complex as subsequent generations continue to migrate and mix traditions. Generations earlier, Chen Pan contemplates migration's impact upon identity when he looks at Lorenzo's body and ponders his son's flesh as a vessel that encapsulates the past. The poetry of Carlos Drummond de Andrade clearly propels these themes and García discusses the Brazilian writer's influence in the following excerpt from an interview:

> I thought it would be interesting to explore the notion of identity traveling through the flesh, a concept I came across in the poetry of the Brazilian writer Carlos Drummond de Andrade. What do we inherit, not just physically but emotionally, psychologically, temperamentally? Does the past suffuse the present like a kind of water tale? These were among my many obsessions writing this book. (*Monkey* 260-1)[191]

other nonwhite) Cubans simply fell off the radar in terms of the picture of Cubanness presented to mainstream U.S. culture" (96).

[191] Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902-1987). García refers to his 1945 poem, "Retrato de Família" which includes the verses, "O retrato não me responde / Ele me fita e se contempla / Nos meus olhos empoeirados. / E no cristal se multiplicam / Os parentes mortos e vivos. / Já não distingo os que se foram / Dos que restaram. Percebo apenas / A estranha ideia de família /

These questions act as central themes to *Monkey Hunting* as she develops the idea of the body as a transmitter of culture, especially through racial and cultural identity.[192]

Many other characters confront questions of belonging and identity. Chen Pan's three children form the first generation of his family born in Cuba. The children's different attitudes toward their Chinese heritage represent possibilities of how a second generation may relate to an inherited identity. The text mentions Chen Pan's daughter only briefly, which suggests a neutral attitude toward her Chinese heritage or its absence from her life.[193] Desidero, Chen Pan's eldest son, dismisses and rejects his Chinese ancestry with embarrassment,

> Desidero was a year older than Lorenzo and despised everything Chinese. It grieved Chen Pan that his own son was ashamed of him, of his accent and the Chinese "pajamas" he wore. On Christmas Day, Desidero sent a creaky *quitrín* to pick him up at the Lucky Find. For one strictly supervised hour, Chen Pan got to visit his other grandchildren. (198)

Desidero spurns his heritage and his father. This creates a rift between Chen Pan and the subsequent generation, his grandchildren, whom he is only allowed to see infrequently. Lorenzo, on the other hand, embraces his Chinese heritage and maintains the closest relationship with his father. Notably, his enthusiastic acceptance of his father's homeland is not entirely positive for

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viajando através da carne." These ideas of the body as a vessel of heritage and past experience may recall, in some ways, Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," discussed in chapter one.

[192] Notably, as Chen Pan acclimates to the island, his skin turns the same color as the dirt. This darkening and reddening of his flesh represents an adaptation to the earth and a planting of roots in a new home. Chapter two discusses this episode in more detail.

[193] "Even Caridad had settled down after a quixotic singing career and finally married a quiet shopkeeper in Viñales" (191).

everyone in his life. He visits China, marries a woman there, and then leaves her and their three children behind. The youngest of these children is Chen Fang, whom he never meets. His absence leaves Chen Fang completely vulnerable to the abuse of her mother. Chen Pan considers the implications of his younger son's migrations when he wonders: "His son had returned to Havana a stranger after being a foreigner abroad. Now where could he call home? Lorenzo's skin, Chen Pan supposed, was a home of sorts, with its accommodations to three continents. Or perhaps home was in the blood of his grandsons as it traveled through their flesh" (191-2). In this text, Chen Pan contemplates the connection between place, the body, and home. He understands that the inheritance of many traditions and a lack of roots may lead to feelings of confusion and displacement. We see these anxieties augmented in the life of his great-grandson, Domingo Chen.

During her final days, Chen Fang reflects upon similar concerns, "The new generation, I fear, is largely without history or culture, boys and girls weaned only on slogans. Guns have taken the place of intellect. In the old days, it was not unusual for millers to blind the mules they used to turn their grindstones. Is this what we have become? A country of blind mules? Where are the ideas that took a lifetime to comprehend?" (227-8). In Domingo and Chen Fang's narratives, we see how stories, mementos, and traditions from Chen Pan's life linger. For instance, Sean Moiles writes of the inheritance of physical objects that seem to bestow Chen Pan's extraordinary luck on his grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

> Physical objects also produce salutary effects in the lives of Chen Fang and Domingo Chen, who possess Chen Pan's photograph and spectacles respectively. García implies that these historical traces invite the imagination to search for possibilities outside the rigidity of top-down political, economic, social, and

> cultural systems. In addition to stories and poems, the actions of Chen Pan's father remain a significant trace throughout Chen Pan's life: they provide memories that inspire Chen Pan's own heroic acts. (173)

Both Chen Fang and Domingo carry objects that once belonged Chen Pan. Yet time threatens to erode their material presence and use up the luck they carry. For instance, after a landmine severely injures Domingo, “His great-grandfather’s spectacles had survived intact, but whatever luck they’d imparted obviously had run out” (151). Material objects collect fortune and stories of their previous owners, which we again see as in Lucrecia’s belief that the second-hand objects sold in Chen Pan’s store “confessed their miseries to her” (76).

In addition to material objects, oral histories and stories passed down through generations represent the continuation of tradition. Chen Fang grows up listening to tales of her grandfather, Chen Pan, while Domingo remembers his great-grandfather’s legendary deeds as he traipses through the jungles of Vietnam (106). These traces persist but transform with time. Chen Fang believes, for example, that Chen Pan had been kidnapped in China and enslaved on a large farm in Cuba. From there, he had

> escaped the farm after killing three white men. That he had survived for years as a fugitive in the woods, eating nothing but hairless creatures that swung through trees. That he became rich after saving a Spanish lady’s honor, although he never succeeded in marrying her. That he was, miraculously, still alive. (91)

Time alters the stories of earlier generations. It turns Chen Pan into a hero of mythic proportions in Chen Fang’s version of his life, while Domingo’s recollection of Chen Pan’s survival in the jungle makes up a mere paragraph. Through the decades, details are lost and the truth bends.

Other examples of heritage within a changing culture in the novel include food, music, and language. Zapata-Calle highlights the mixing of cuisines in both Lucrecia's kitchen and in the New York restaurants that Domingo frequents, the latter of which reminds us of García's visit to a restaurant as a child (Zapata-Calle 180). Xiomara Campilongo discusses language and clothing within the novel as examples of cultures mixing (116-7; 119). Music also persists through generations:

> On Domingo's mother's side, most of the men were *congueros* and *batá* drummers from way back. In Cuba, the name Quiñones was synonymous with rhythm. His uncles and cousins were in demand for the *toques*, holy ceremonies that coaxed the gods down from heaven. When their drums started talking, all available deities would stop their celestial bickering and drop in for dancing and good times (56)

Méndez explores the role of drumming and Santería as Afro-Cuban identity performance. Finally, when Domingo begins learning English in New York City, he contemplates the possibility of existing between worlds. He wonders "But did you have to dissolve one language to accommodate another?" (53). Language identity and negotiation highlights the tension that can result from cultural mixing.

While syncretic practices found in wiggle room allow agency and adaptation for characters such as Lucrecia and Chen Pan, the novel suggests that continued migration and adaptation threatens the maintenance of practices and awareness. However, even as certain elements disappear, heritage remains.

To textually represent the persistence of tradition through time, García draws upon selected texts and repeats certain images within the larger narrative. These images act to link the

character's lives and experiences through different generations and across geographical borders. The moon is one of the most prominent connecting elements of the novel. Its symbolic importance is established by its presence as a significant aspect of the selections from Chinese poetry included within the main text. Then, moon and moonlight appear repeatedly throughout all three of the main characters' narratives.

Serving as a consistent presence seen from any location on earth, the moon acts as a grounding force for the Chen family as they confront many challenges. Lunar imagery especially appears during important life events or in the backdrop of moments during which the characters contemplate a faraway home. In the first chapter, the moon is present during Chen Pan's journey to Cuba when Chinese men aboard the ship recall a traditional Chinese poem:

> When they forgot their shipwrecks, the men spoke longingly of home. The lowliest *chino* in Cuba knew by heart Li Po's poem:
>
> *Before my bed*
>
> *there is bright moonlight*
>
> *So that it seems*
>
> *like frost on the ground:*
>
> *Lifting my head*
>
> *I watch the bright moon,*
>
> *Lowering my head*
>
> *I dream that I'm home.* (80-1)[194]

[194] Li Po (701 AD-762 AD) a poet of the Tang Dynasty whose work greatly influenced poetry during the Golden Age of China.

This passage presents the moon as a nostalgic reminder of home. The moon plays the same role in García's text. For example, Chen Pan watches the moon from the deck of the ship he takes to the Caribbean in 1857 (8). A few years later the moon reappears as part of the setting in a key moment of Chen Pan's story. As he flees servitude and hides in the wilderness, the moon contributes to the Cuban forest's eerie atmosphere, "Moonlight unsettled the trees" (41). The moon similarly follows Domingo through his global migrations, from Cuba to New York, to Vietnam. It illuminates the Vietnamese forest one night while he is on watch in the Central Highlands, reminding us of the jungle moon that accompanied Chen Pan into the wilderness decades earlier (102).[195] One evening during the war, Domingo longs for home and remembers hiking in the Cuban mountains with his uncle under the moonlight: "When Domingo was a boy, he'd loved hiking into the mountains with his uncle to cut wood for new drums. The moon had to be full "*para que no le cayeran bichos*" (116). For Domingo, who wanders the world in a state of exile, the moon serves as a reminder of the island.[196]

Similarly, the moon surfaces in Chen Fang's memories during moments of change or contemplation.[197] When she becomes pregnant, Chen Fang thinks of the child within her and feels "as though I had swallowed the moon" (99). After she gives birth, she looks upon the

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[195] "Domingo Chen was startled again by the fat floating egg of the moon. [. . .] So how could the moon stay full all summer long and nobody notice?" and ""A sickle moon played hide-and-seek through the jungle canopy" (43; 102).

[196] That same night, monkeys viciously attack Domingo Chen and his fellow soldiers. The moon seems to be a sort of premonition of the monkeys' lurking threat, "The sweat turned cold on his back. Maybe, Domingo thought, the moon was just having a bad night" (117).

[197] An example includes, "When I cannot concentrate, I stand on my balcony and watch the moon. It shines alone in the skies clear or clouded, illuminating nothing. I remember watching the same moon as a girl in the mountains. Once I had imagined it to be a magic pearl that would grant all my wishes. But what did I know then to desire" (231).

baby's face and thinks of how it is "so pale, a mysterious little moon" (100). Decades later, Chen Fang awaits death as a seventy-two-year-old prisoner who is a victim of China's Cultural Revolution. In her cell, she scours her memory to piece together fragments of poems as it "pleases [her] to reclaim a few lines" (225). She remembers the verses of a traditional poem by Meng Chiao that describe a scene much like that depicted in the text of Li Po's poem, which Chen Pan remembers earlier in the novel. Meng Chiao's lines resonate similar comforting sentiments of home:

> *A sliver of moonlight cast across the bed,*
> *walls letting wind cut through the clothes,*
> *the furthest dreams never take me far,*
> *and my frail heart returns home easily.* (225)[198]

These verses carry Chen Fang's thoughts out of the prison cell and through the years, back to the summer days of her childhood spent on the mountains of her village home. Much like Li Po's poem, an individual voice describes lying in bed at night, gazing at moonlight streaming through the darkness. As the poetic voice approaches the last moments of wakefulness before sleep, he or she thinks of home.

The repeating imagery of these two poems inspires the final scene of *Monkey Hunting*, in which García writes Chen Pan's final moments. An elderly man in 1917, Chen Pan sits in a room over his shop and watches night fall over the rooftops of Havana as he reflects upon his life. He notices that the moon seems to "shrink away to nothing" as he feels an unexpected nostalgia for the land of his upbringing, "How could he explain this sudden longing he had for home? For the way his heart clamored like a bird in its last moonlight?" (249). These closing pages conclude

[198] Meng Chiao (751 AD - 814 AD) was a poet during the Tang Dynasty.

Chen Pan's story, tying together images of the moon, feelings of nostalgia, and a final scene of sleep. His last moments remind us of the enduring ties of home, as Chen Pan feels the loss of a land he left a long time ago. A moonlit contemplation of home also reminds us of Chen Pan's journey to the island years before. The similarities between the two scenes liken Chen Pan's death to a new beginning.[199] In this way, the novel presents a text in which certain elements persist, and inform subsequent generations.

The question of what remains also considers what disappears from a culture, which recognizes García's assertion that "What isn't there, in my opinion, is as important as what remains" (*Monkey Hunting* 265). García's writes of the disappearance of beliefs as another way to explore the effects of migration. Lucrecia incorporates Chen Pan's spiritual practices with her Santería beliefs, but Chinese spiritual traditions fade from their descendants' lives.[200] While we see Santería beliefs in Domingo's narrative throughout the novel, Chen Pan's great-grandson never mentions beliefs inherited from his father's side of the family. We first see this tradition begin to disappear, as Zapata-Calle points out, with Chen Pan's son, Lorenzo:

> Esta falta de comunicación hace que el hijo ya no comparta la concepción religiosa de sus padres. Esto es importante ya que otro elemento cultural donde la transculturación se percibe en el hogar de Chen Pan, cuando Lucrecia aún vive, es

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[199] This also contributes to the cyclical feel of the novel. I discuss the structure of the novel further in the second part of chapter two.

[200] Marta J. Lysik writes that syncretic practices emerge from "coping mechanisms" as a means of cultural preservation. She discusses the suppression of African culture in Cuba in particular, "The authors of slave narratives described [. . .] the portrayal of the quotidian activities, as well as festive celebrations and religious worship. The legacy of this cultural system prevailed until the modern day" (285). She goes on to specifically cite Bridget Kevane's work on Santería, elaborating upon how this syncretic religion stems from the traditions of the African slaves (4).

> la religión, y Lorenzo Chen, por su falta de comunicación con el padre, va a cortar con esta concepción espiritual que al padre le gustaría transmitirle sin lograrlo. (181-182)

Although Lorenzo embraces his Chinese heritage, the scene on the train exposes a lack of understanding between father and son and differing worldviews. Hints within the text suggest a distance between them, even if Chen Pan "couldn't bear to be apart from [Lorenzo] for so long" (192). For instance, Chen Pan would like to talk with Lorenzo, but instead reads his grandson a book: "His son had returned to Havana a stranger after being a foreigner abroad," and Chen Pan does not understand Lorenzo's "way of doing business" (191; 191; 200). On this same ride, Chen Pan contemplates his grandson, Domingo's father, and what the boy will face in his future.

Domingo visits Saigon's Giác Lâm Pagoda with Tham Thanh Lan in a scene that illustrates the extent to which Chen Pan's beliefs are lost through generations. Despite Lucrecia's acceptance and incorporation of Buddha into her household and practices, these traditions all but disappear by Domingo's generation. When Domingo watches Tham Thanh Lan enter the Buddhist temple and pray, he sees everything through what is known to him—his mother's teachings of Santería:

> Candles burned everywhere, each one a little vote for change. A pot of white lilies wilted sleepily in a corner. Domingo recalled all the petitions buried by the roots of the ceiba tree in Parque Martí, a myriad of wishes and talismans. His mother always prayed under the sacred tree before going to work. *Araba iya o*, she'd greet the mother ceiba, and ask it for blessings in bringing forth life. On her way home, she'd give the ceiba thanks for another job well done. (216)

Instead of remembering his great-grandfather's heritage, Domingo relates this visit to the temple with his mother's beliefs, a reaction that suggests unfamiliarity with Buddhism. When Tham Thanh Lan asks Domingo to pray with her, he "began to pray—not to the Buddha but to Ochún, on account of the god's yellow robes: *Madre mía, dueña de todos los ríos del mundo / donde todo hijo de santo va* [*sic*] *bañarse para / recibir la bendición del agua dulce* " (217). In this moment, Domingo chooses to turn to the figures of his mother's religion. Off the island, he prays to the orishas of his home.

This final episode of Domingo's story represents his inability to establish a home for himself in Vietnam. He spends his last day with Tham Thanh Lan at the temple where he thinks "he needed to go away, to leave her like another country" (217). As we have seen, spiritual practices can act as a force of connection. Domingo's rejection of Tham Thanh Lan's invitation to pray with her, to "swear his loyalty to her, with this god as her witness" signals Domingo's inability to fully commit to her and lack of openness to her way of life. Domingo has already decided to leave Tham Thanh Lam and his unborn child. In this scene, we see that instead of finding a wiggle room to connect with Tham Thanh Lan, he chooses to turn to the past, recall the customs of his childhood, and continue to search for a home that he has lost.

Whereas hybrid beliefs systems facilitate adaptation to a new community without the complete loss of tradition for the migrant, practices fade from the lives of future generations. Wiggle room allows for complex identities to find agency through openness, connection, and the spiritual. This initially allows for an individual's creative agency, but results in the disappearance of tradition over time. The novel's portrayal of Cuba's multicultural roots centers upon different generations' struggles to understand their identities, and explores the loss that such mixing incurs

over time, especially without a community of practice.[201] García's text teases out the intricate layers of migrant identity that refuse or are unable to adhere solely to a single community.[202] Ultimately, Domingo's character represents how continued migration results in the loss of self.

V. Conclusions

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[201] Much of the critical literature on *Monkey Hunting* thus far examines the multicultural elements of the novel through a discussion of the characters' identity formation. Gustavo Geirola, for example, identifies García's characters as having plural identities, ones that "go beyond the hyphen" (119). He writes, "Las novelas abordan así la identidad en términos de lo que, en su reciente libro, Eleanor Ty and Donald C. Goellnicht han denominado "beyond the hyphen" o, como lo denominan Jean Vengua Gier and Carla Alicia Tejeda en su entrevista con [Karen] Yamashita, "the question of hybrid identity and the politics of mobility" (119). Alfonso-Forero argues that García's representation of Africans on the island is problematic, "While certain African characteristics make their way into the text in the form of religion and music as a part of the self-chosen hybrid identities characters like Lucretia [*sic*] and Domingo attempt to adopt, García's inclusion of the African in what defines Cubanness seems somewhat limited. Her use of hybridity proves somewhat problematic because in celebrating mixed identities over pure ones the novel tends towards treating Chinese and African culture in a way that might reinforce negative stereotypes. Lucretia's [*sic*] and Chen Pan's exceptionalism raises interesting questions about the novel's racial politics even while it allows them to subvert racial hierarchies that are well-established both on the island and in the region" (7). It is worthwhile to consider how writing the stories of exceptional characters counteracts the presentation of lost histories and may reinforce stereotypes. However, in the case of this novel, García specifically writes to explore hybrid cultures. And while her novel is rich with details that are historically accurate, the text aims to present these "mixed identities," question and celebrate them more so than to exactly depict the reality of thousands of migrants.

[202] Chen Pan's continual process of negotiating who he is and his questioning of where he belongs presents a realistic portrayal of the mutable nature of identity. For instance, after so much time in Cuba, Chen Pan feels more a part of the island community than a part of China, "Over the years, other friends of Chen Pan's had returned to China. [. . .] It was an expensive trip, but Chen Pan could have afforded it. Lorenzo had promised to accompany him if he ever decided to go. But where would he go? Whom would he visit? Why would he travel so far just to scratch a bit of long-depleted earth?" (238). And, "Long ago he'd lived in China, known all of its customs and manners. How useless these had been outside their own geography! Still, it was easier for him to be Cuban than to try to become Chinese again" (245). However, at other times, such as during the hours preceding his death, Chen Pan feels a longing for a home that he recognizes as China (249).

La isla de los amores infinitos and *Monkey Hunting* portray Cuban history and culture as rich with diversity and defined by migration and change. Generations of Cuban families, with roots all over the world, fill the pages of these two novels. Their characters move from one place to another. In the new, unfamiliar place, they find that many social structures are unlike those of their homeland. Laws and norms that govern their new surroundings revolve around race, religion, class, and political ideologies (among others factors) and differ from those they know and understand. Separated from the culture of their upbringing, the migrant characters figure out how to belong to an unfamiliar place. At the same time, they do not completely assimilate to the new society's mainstream culture, but instead find commonalities and creative agency within wiggle room. This wiggle room opens between the rigid social forces that differentiate the immigrant's cultural background from that of a majority population and threaten to relegate her or him to social margins. Within this wiggle space, the spiritual emerges to help characters of both novels negotiate, adapt, and develop "creative culture" as a means of simultaneously preserving cultural practices and relating to different people. These connections prompt the creative production of bridging, syncretic practices, which often exist in contradiction to hegemonic norms. In this way, connection across differences develops new forms of culture within a community. In the texts, this happens in the multicultural, *ajiaco*-like Cuban society. This ever-changing quality makes Cuban culture particularly open to the creative agency exercised in hybrid, spiritual practices.

The agency found in wiggle room responds to a shared central concern of both novels: the loss of cultural identity. The stories explore how tradition and heritage are maintained or loss through time. This challenge is especially difficult when generations migrate, and thus separate future descendants from an ancestral homeland. In the novels, the characters adapt to their new

social contexts while also maintaining certain aspects of their heritage. They often do so through hybrid practices.

However, Chaviano's and García's treatments of this topic differ significantly in their conclusions. In Chaviano's novel, Cecilia struggles with exile because she feels like she has lost her home and, with it, who she is. With the aid of spiritual presences, she comes to understand that home is something that can exist within her, outside of a fixed location. The knowledge that her ghosts—and thus her past and heritage—accompany Cecilia in her life in Miami heals the wounds of exile and brings her peace. Whereas she once felt that she had lost her Cuban identity, Cecilia reestablishes herself as a Cuban who lives in Miami. Her ability to do so suggests that "Cubanness" can change, adapt, and transform. This quality allows for the safekeeping of Cuban culture away from the island. There, Cecilia believes that Cuban tradition and history may disappear, forgotten in the wake of Cuba's current regime. *La isla de los amores infinitos* asserts that, in the face of exile, Cuban identity can exist off the island and Cuban culture can be preserved by a Cuban community abroad.[203]

In contrast, García's exploration of exile and the loss of heritage examines the possible negative consequences of repeated migrations. Domingo's story tells of his struggles to negotiate his multiple heritages and the loss of his home country. As he wanders across continents as an aimless exile, we read of his inability to find himself or establish new home. Traditions inherited from Chen Pan linger in Domingo's life, but the details of his great-grandfather's story and culture are lost. We see this disappearance of tradition begin with Chen Pan's children, as each

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[203] This recognition of being Cuban follows Ortiz's definition of *cubanía.* He defines *cubanía* as the awareness of a Cuban culture and a sense attachment to the identity stemming from it. He believes *cubanía* originated in the black and lower class communities of the island. Importantly, he differentiates *cubanía* from *cubanidad*, describing the latter as Cuba's singular culture.

identifies with their Chinese heritage in varying degrees. Through the novel's depictions of generations of Chen Pan's family, we see how migration disrupts the continuation of culture. In some ways, Domingo's story may be seen as a forewarning for Cuban culture: just as he knows little of his Chinese heritage, perhaps Cuban culture will fade from the lives of the descendants of exile. Domingo's story studies such effects of exile as it explores how migration separates the migrant from place, heritage, and, potentially, from one's understanding of his or herself.

La isla de los amores infinitos and *Monkey Hunting* dialogue with the long-term effects of exile and migration. Through the stories of their characters, these novels depict how migration impacts individual cultural identity. Both narratives engage with questions regarding the continuation of heritage and tradition in places other than the homeland. They address the possibility of a tradition's persistence in the face of different mainstream cultures. Wiggle room allows for spiritual presences and practices to appear. They seem to supply an immediate answer for the immigrants to adapt. Yet as the texts consider future generations, each comes to differing conclusion. These novels span decades of time and oceans of space to follow migrants and provide distinct portrayals of how culture influences an exile's identity.

Chapter Four:

Chen Fang and the Women of Cristina García's *Monkey Hunting*

"Where did history go, I asked myself, if it could not be retold?"
–Chen Fang (144)

In this final chapter, I turn to *Monkey Hunting* (2003) and address a question that nagged me since I first finished Cristina García's novel: What does Chen Fang's story contribute to the work as a whole? In a novel centered upon men and their migrations, how does the character of Chen Fang, a woman who never leaves China, function within the narrative?[204] Without understanding why Chen Fang's story differs from those of Chen Pan and Domingo Chen, her three sections almost perturbingly stand out from the rest of the text.

Chen Fang's narrative contrasts with the other two main characters' stories in striking ways. Perhaps most readily apparent is the narration: her sections make up the only text told through a first-person voice. In contrast, an omniscient narrator follows the male characters as they move internationally in search of opportunities and better lives. The men's travels dialogue with overarching themes of the novel that interrogate issues of displacement, migration, and cultural negotiation. Chen Fang, however, stays in China until her final days, never once leaving her home country. While Chen Fang's life trajectory differs significantly from her male relatives' in that she does not travel, her textual presence is also comparatively small: her story consists of significantly less text than that of her grandfather, Chen Pan, or of Chen Pan's great-grandson by a separate family line, Domingo Chen.[205] The telling of Chen Pan's life comprises over half of

[204] For the purposes of this essay, I follow the selected novel's usage of cisgender binaries male/female and man/woman.

[205] The page breakdown is as follows: Chen Pan's story is 140/248 pages or 56% of the total text. Domingo Chen's page count is 72/248 (29%) and Chen Fang's is 36/248 (15%).

the text and Domingo Chen's story follows in quantity with about 30%. The novel grants Chen Fang's life the least amount of textual space with a total of only three chapters—one per section—or about 15% of the main text.

This emphasis on male characters marks a change from Cristina García's previous fiction, which has often been viewed through lenses of feminism and women's studies.[206] Her first two novels, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and *The Agüero Sisters* (1997), focus on female characters and their families, the depiction of their lives creating texts stemming from the experiences of women. *Monkey Hunting* departs from this mold, as García tells of the Chen family primarily through the lives of Chen Pan and Domingo. In this context of a male-oriented story and a travel-driven narrative, Chen Fang's presence appears unexpectedly, hence sparking my desire to understand this character's story and offer a critical reading of how her character acts as a part of García's third novel.

I explore Chen Fang's story and suggest that her narrative can offer a distinctly feminist reading of the García's third novel. In doing so, I aim to fill a gap in current criticism. Some of the critical work published thus far on *Monkey Hunting* includes, within the scope of their theses, analyses supportive of the following research and I engage with their findings throughout the chapter. However, while this work touches upon peripherally related topics, I found that the questions catalyzing this chapter had yet to be fully answered.[207]

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[206] See: Rocío G. Davis, Teresa Derrickson, Laura Gillman, Laura Halperin, Yolanda Pampín Martínez ("Politics"), Inger Pettersson, Julee Tate, and Maite Zubiaurre, amongst others.

[207] Most significantly for this chapter, I draw upon multiple insightful points that Yu-Fang Cho outlines in her article investigating *Monkey Hunting* "as a critical response to [. . .] Euro-American travel writings and Orientalist narratives" and those made in Ana Zapata-Calle's work on the novel and diaspora (2).

My reading of Chen Fang's life identifies aspects of her experience that connect her story with those of other women characters who appear throughout the novel. I outline and discuss these similarities to demonstrate how Chen Fang's presence asks us to remember these women, even after they disappear from the text. While I focus on how episodes in their lives overlap, I also work to resist the temptation to strictly distinguish experiences based upon gender identity or to draw clean lines that would categorize characters.[208] Any attempt to do so would ignore one of the most impressive elements of García's novel: the social intricacies and complex structures of privilege created within the text. The work's diverse representation of women's experiences and the inclusion of Chen Fang's character emphasize a resistance to impose a "monolithic essence" to the feminine experience, which Rosi Braidotti warns against: "the subject 'woman' is not a monolithic essence defined once and for all but rather the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference, and others" (4).[209]

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[208] Adrienne Rich discusses the woman's marginalized position within a patriarchal society, "The power of the fathers has been difficult to grasp because it permeates everything, even the language in which we try to describe it. It is diffuse and concrete; symbolic and literal; universal and expressed with local variations which obscure its universality. [. . .] whatever my status or situation, my derived economic class, or my sexual preference, I live under the power of the fathers, and I have access only to so much of privilege or influence as the patriarchy is willing to accede to me, and only for as long as I will pay the price of male approval" (57-8). Rich recognizes intersectional realities while also addressing an umbrella of oppression. With these ideas in mind, we can see Chen Fang's limited opportunity and movement within her society in comparison to Chen Pan and Domingo while also acknowledging differences in her situation and those of other women in the novel.

[209] Rosi Braidotti writes the quoted text in relation to her concept of reading as a nomad. She states that nomadic readers can unfix culturally imposed borders and create dialogue and understanding across social divisions.

In this way, García's work acknowledges intersectional identities.[210] Just as no two women's experiences are the same, her characters live unique lives.[211] At the same time, overlapping similarities create trends that initiate discussion of the novel and aid in answering the driving questions of this chapter. Still, to do justice to *Money Hunting*'s fictional reality, I specifically mention any exceptions or counterexamples when I discuss notable similarities among characters. I strive to avoid any generalizations that might be perceived as speaking for all of the women at once.

Thus, I first examine the portrayal of Chen Fang, concluding that her story purposefully gives voice to an existence that would otherwise be lost in the omniscient narrations of the male characters' lives. Her presence in the novel switches the male-oriented angle of the rest of the novel to focus on a woman whose life would otherwise fall into the background. I study how these conclusions can illuminate the roles of secondary and minor women characters in the novel, highlighting how women in positions similar to that of Chen Fang fade without question from the stories of Chen Pan and Domingo. The stories of the male protagonists frequently involve women characters as a means of developing the primary narrative, only to leave the women behind after they serve this purpose. Yet while the women characters disappear from the men's lives, Chen Fang's story provokes our consideration of why these sections dismiss them.

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[210] Kimberlé Williams Cremshaw first introduced the term "intersectionality" to discuss the complicated realities of privilege that stem from various intersecting social factors. These factors include gender identity, social class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and physical ability, amongst many others. Cremshaw focuses on the marginalization faced by women of color that had gone unrecognized by previous feminist movements, as race and gender were long treated as mutually exclusive (139).

[211] Ann Rosalind Jones and Judith Butler also highlight race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture as aspects that prohibit the idea of one feminist voice (Butler 6; Jones 363).

She represents those women who are left behind. As a woman whose stationary life does not immediately fit into a novel about men and migration, Chen Fang's narrative challenges the perspective of the men's stories. The inclusion of her self-voiced narrative asks us to recognize the women who fall silent in the stories of Chen Pan and Domingo. I draw parallels between these characters and Chen Fang, suggesting that the women in the novel often appear as tied to their countries and, in this way, are immobile in contrast to the male migrants around them. Chen Fang's short but powerful narration asks us to consider how and why the stories of the men portray women indifferently.

The novel emphasizes the stories of men who migrate. At the same time, the narrative refuses to forget its left-behind women—women who represent a historical reality of those who stay home while men go abroad in search of economic opportunity. Contemporary studies respond to this reality by recognizing the male-out migration trend that continues in many societies.[212] They examine how men's movement from rural to urban areas in search of work affects the women they leave behind.[213] Their research addresses a gap opened by the

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[212] See: Huifang Wu and Jingzhong Ye (China); Charlotte Wrigley-Asante and John Baptist A. Agandin (Ghana); Christine Binzel and Ragui Assaad (Egypt); Rebecca M. Torres and Lindsey Carte (Mexico); Thelma Paris, et al. (India); Mary Elaine Hegland (Tajikistan); among others.

[213] The second half of the twentieth century has seen the "feminization of migration," noting the increase of women migrating for employment during the last five decades as demand for gendered labor (primarily as domestic laborers, nurses, and sex workers) increased (Chammartin 41). Yet the numbers of women migrating from 1965-1990 increased by only two percent: from forty-seven to forty-nine percent (*Caritas* 1). Thus, the numbers of women migrating have not changed, but their opportunities and circumstances have such that we see women moving from a passive role of following or joining a male to independently seeking work for herself (Schrover 130; *Caritas* 1-2). Furthermore, see Marlou Schrover's and Sara R. Curran and Abigail C. Saguy's discussions of gendered migration, which include significant variations in different cultures' migration patterns (71-2). Similarly, Schrover provides dissimilar statistics from all over the world. Thus, claims relating gender and global migration patterns may be misleading without thorough explanation.

"surprisingly little attention […] directed to women who are not migrants themselves but are deeply affected by the migration process: women whose husbands have migrated in search of work leaving them behind" (Desai and Banerji 1).[214] Such research illuminates the experiences of women who stay while men migrate, an area previously understudied. Similarly, the novel's focus on the lives of its men aligns with Aleida Assman assertion that "At every social level, women form the anonymous background against which male glory shines all the more brightly. As long as entry into the cultural memory is conditioned by heroism or canonization, women systematically disappear into cultural oblivion. It is a classic case of structural amnesia" (52). The men who travel in search of opportunity act as the agents of the story, as the women of the novel fade into the backdrop of a left-behind homeland. Chen Fang's narrative asks us to recognize the stories of these women.

Ultimately, I argue that the women in *Monkey Hunting* present a deeply contemplative portrayal of gender and marginalization. Chen Fang's insertion into the novel challenges the dominant narrative, producing a text that represents quieted women. Her presence insists upon the reader's acknowledgment of the other women characters and their often-dismissed existences.

I. Chen Fang

The lives of the three main characters create a sequence that offer three distinct endings. "Origins," "Traveling through the Flesh" and "Last Rights" make up the sections that structure

[214] They also note studies of gendered migration in the 1970s and the increase in research on women migrants from the 1990s through the present (Desai and Banerji 1).

the novel and create an arc that loosely connects the Chens' experiences.[215] The first section introduces us to the characters. Chen Pan journeys to Cuba, Chen Fang grows up in China, and Domingo leaves for New York City and then joins United States' military forces in the Vietnam War. The second section includes the only moments of happiness Chen Fang experiences, the end of this brief joyful period, and her ensuing heartbreak. Similarly, the episodes of Chen Pan and Domingo's that this part of the novel relates tell of the "middle" of the characters' stories, all of which are shaped by the love of a woman. We see Chen Pan establish his life in Havana, marry Lucrecia, and endure the heartbreak of her death. The section closes as a middle-aged Chen Pan returns to bachelorhood and spends time with his son, Lorenzo, and his grandchildren. The section picks up Domingo's story as he turns twenty-years-old and is discharged from a hospital in Vietnam. We witness his relationship with Tham Thanh Lan and how it ends with his abandonment of her and his unborn son. This middle section of the novel concludes his story. Thus, we leave Domingo as a young man, and "Last Rites," the third part of the novel, tells only the final days of Chen Pan and Chen Fang.[216] Chen Pan dies peacefully and finds immortality, while Chen Fang awaits her death imprisoned by Mao's government under accusations of espionage.[217]

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[215] The chapters of "Origins" (1-7) follow this structure: Chen Pan – Chen Pan – Chen Pan – Domingo Chen – Chen Pan – Chen Fang – Domingo Chen. The chapters of "Traveling through the Flesh" (8-13) follow this structure: Chen Pan – Chen Fang – Domingo Chen – Chen Pan – Chen Pan – Domingo Chen. As I argue in the previous chapter, his exclusion from the third section purposefully and hopefully leaves his fate unresolved.

[216] "Last Rites" consists of two chapters (14 and 15), first Chen Fang's and then Chen Pan's.

[217] Toral Aleman studies Chen Pan's immortal end through Taoism: "La eternidad que Chen Pan califica de <<blank>> and <<endless>> refleja la noción taoísta y budista de <<eternidad>> y de <<vacuidad>>" (93).

This structuring of the novel aligns phases in the main characters' lives, but their life trajectories represent three different possibilities of migration. Chen Pan is a man who crosses oceans in search of opportunity and achieves a fulfilled life in a new land. Domingo Chen enters exile and wanders aimlessly throughout his story, not yet finding another home to call his own. Chen Fang never leaves her country, and lives trapped within a society that mutes her existence until her final days. Chen Pan experiences migration as a means of establishing a full and happy life. In contrast, for Chen Fang migration is an impossible dream and she awaits death after years of isolation and suffering. Domingo, whom the novel leaves as a young man, still has much of his life to live, but when we last see him, he is yet to find a home or any feeling of fulfillment.

These characters' differing stories respond to questions of migration and identity in distinct ways. Their similar hardships and experiences—leaving family and falling in love, for example—offer aspects of their lives which correspond with each another. At the same time, each character offers a contrasting relationship with these principal themes of the novel. Migration informs Chen Pan's accomplishments and Domingo's failures, while immobility defines Chen Fang's suffering. Notably, both Chen Fang and Domingo's stories end in Asia during the year of 1970. Chen Fang narrates from Shanghai and Domingo leaves Tham Thanh Lan in Saigon. Significantly, Amoy, the city from which Chen Pan departs for Cuba, lies between these two cities. These paralleling factors cyclically blend a family's destination with their origins, connecting different generations by intertwining the place of their heritage with their presents, reminding us that their separate lives are bound by a shared past.

A. Chen Fang's Voice and the Threat of Forgetting

Chen Fang's first-person narrative immediately differentiates her story and purposefully functions to disrupt our reading of the novel. A third-person narration tells the stories of Chen Pan and Domingo Chen, relaying their experiences through a neutral, all-knowing voice. However, the text allows Chen Fang the only first-person narration so that she can tell her own story. She does "*not* 'fit in'" to "the overwhelmingly and essentially male literary history", as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan D. Gubar write (668). Rather, her text differs from the rest of the novel in order to enable Chen Fang to freely represent her own experience.[218] Unlike the other characters, Chen Fang is not relegated to a passive description—she speaks directly to us, describing her life and creating her own existence on the page. Her presence follows Gilbert and Gubar's assertion in that Chen Fang voices her story against a patriarchal reading of her existence by "redefin[ing] the terms of her socialization" through her own words (668).[219] In this way, Chen Fang defines her existence.

Chen Fang's position as the sole first-person narrator subverts her character's subaltern position by privileging her voice above that of the male characters—the male characters whose stories fill the majority of the novel. Within the limited space allotted to her, Chen Fang becomes an active voice within the novel, communicating her own story against the prescribed passivity that Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément declare sustains male privilege (655).[220] Within these few chapters, Chen Fang relates the constant silencing by and suffering she endures from the

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[218] One reviewer claims, "the novel jumps abruptly" and "reads jerkily" (Cobb E3).

[219] They cite Harold Bloom's work on the male-dominated, patriarchal history of canonical literature (667-8).

[220] Hélène Cixous calls women to speak against phallocentrism by writing the body for each other. She declares to women: "Your body must be heard" and "Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman" (338; 339).

society around her, much of which (as I discuss in the following section) stems from her sexual identity. We can, therefore, read Chen Fang's narrative as representative of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that "the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant" with result that "sexual difference is doubly effaced" (524).[221] In accordance with this idea, Yu-Fang Cho recognizes how male privilege acts within *Monkey Hunting* to render female voices silent: "Chen Pan and Domingo are both victims of racism in Spanish Cuba and in white supremacist United States, but their exercise of male privilege also causes the suffering of the women whom they abandon, who often remain invisible and voiceless" (5). The text of the novel gives Chen Fang the opportunity to express herself in a way unavailable to her during her lifetime. The privileging of a historically underprivileged voice challenges centuries of colonial and patriarchal discourse that have rendered women, especially women of color, invisible.

The threat of forgetting and the creation of memory are prominent themes within the novel. Chen Pan's legacy lingers in the lives of Domingo and Chen Fang. They remember him at different times during their own stories, wondering how their ancestor's experience contributes to their own existences. His memory weaves through their narratives to connect generations of family, but many other characters disappear from the text as they are forgotten. With their disappearances, the text asks us to consider the obscured destinies and lost traditions of those whose stories are not recorded. Dying alone without family or friends to remember her, Chen Fang contemplates the culture lost in Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution and those whose lives disappear without a trace: "Where did history go, I asked myself, if it could not be retold?"

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[221] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes the appropriation of the subaltern experience when First World elites speak for the Other. García's novel is a work of creative fiction in which she purposefully highlights Chinese culture in an attempt to exhibit Chinese contributions to Cuban culture. Her choice to give Chen Fang an individual voice could also be seen as an attempt to avoid "speaking for" her characters.

(144). Similarly, bandits behead Chen Pan's father after he protests their rape of a young girl, an act of heroism that will be forgotten: "[Chen Pan] thought of his father, who'd been a hero for a few brief weeks after his death. Who besides Chen Pan would ever remember this?" (18, 75; 174). A last example occurs when Domingo speaks with his fellow soldier, Emory, who is an American Indian. Emory tells of his father, a stargazer in New Mexico: "Emory said he wished that he'd paid more attention when his father had talked about starlight. Now his old man was dead a year and who understood anything about their lives?" (210).

Texts and records, however, provide a direct link to the past and in this way, a means of saving histories. The novel underscores this idea when a female guard asks Chen Fang to compose a poem for her son's birth, saying, "This way I'll remember you when you're gone" (226). Following these ideas, the narrative presents the three stories of its main characters to prevent their disappearance.

To create these histories and interrogate the representation of history, *Monkey Hunting* interweaves the stories of the three main characters, creating different perspectives as a means of better representing a "truthful" reality. In the following quote, García discusses her use of this narrative structure:

> As much as I've enjoyed the great nineteenth-century novels written in the stentorian voice of the authorial omniscient, I mistrust it. I don't believe any one voice can tell the whole truth of a story. In my opinion, you need several people, at minimum, to even begin to approach something resembling the truth. To me, a story is always subject to competing realities. I try to capture something of that in the way I write my books. Ambiguity is generally more honest than absolutes. (*Monkey* 265)

Thus, at the heart of this novel lies García's exploration of the subjectivity underlying an individual's experience. If, as García suggests, a diversity of perspectives aids the creation of a more truthful depiction, then realistic construction of experience necessitates plural voices.

This view of representing truth coincides with Mikhail Bakhtin's writings on language, discourse, and the novel. Bakhtin questions a monologic perspective that would represent only one, dominant way of viewing a situation ("Discourse" 274). In "Discourse in the Novel" (1940), he suggests that the novel can uniquely represent multiple voices through dialoguism, a discourse that represents diverse social frameworks and perspectives and interacts with both past and present contexts while anticipating the future. In opposition to a monologic perspective, dialoguism creates an "intense interanimation and struggle between one's own and another's word" and through this interplay offers a far better means of approximating reality ("Discourse" 354).

These concepts of the novel intersect with Bakhtin's ideas of heteroglossia and the carnivalesque as oppositional to official discourse. Heteroglossia presents the diversity of language and allows for a variety of registers, dialects, and experiences to be heard. While a dominant "unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization [. . .] heteroglossia can challenge the official, centralizing language of the time" ("Discourse" 271). Similarly, he draws upon the event of carnival to describe a toppling or inversion of social hierarchies. He states that the carnivalesque in literature allows those who would otherwise be silenced to speak ("Problems" 166-7).

In accordance with these ideas, we can read the differing narrations of *Monkey Hunting* as a rejection of the presentation of one voice as the teller of truth. Instead, multiple stories come together to present individual, ambiguous truths. The different voices originate in shifting

perspectives, creating a dialogic reality. This variety counteracts any attempt to depict truth through a single lens and accepts Chen Fang's story as a representative of her experience. Unquestionably subjective, her first-person narrative prompts us to wonder about her reliability and if any lack of factual truthfulness in her story matters. After all, a subaltern voice offers an alternative viewpoint, a perspective rendered silent in many histories. In his reading of the novel, Sean Moiles suggests that "The multiple voices of *Monkey Hunting* counter authoritarian regimes that demand obedience to monological visions of the world" (171). His statement aligns with Bakhtin's assertion that "forces that struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language, forces that unite and centralize verbal-ideological thought, creating within a heteroglot national language the firm, stable linguistic nucleus of an officially recognized literary language, encourage[e] the reader to contemplate overarching representations of peoples and places" (270-1). The distinct perspectives and experiences written into the novel create a heteroglossic text that represents different facets of reality.

García utilizes two distinct types of narration, at once positioning the omniscient narrator as all-seeing and privileging Chen Fang's first-person voice.[222] This transference of narration destabilizes the omniscient narrator as the sole authoritative voice. This again reminds us of Bakhtin, as it suggests a carnivalesque leveling of a narrative hierarchy by combining "languages and styles into a higher unity" ("Discourse" 263). The text puts forth these two voices—one as all-seeing and one as individual—on the same platform, which not only gives Chen Fang agency, but also undermines the traditional omniscient narrative's claim to absolute authority. Chen

[222] As far as we know, Chen Fang is also the only character who receives an advanced education and considers herself an intellectual and a teacher. This could also be considered as a contributing factor to García's choice of allowing her to speak for herself—the voices of Chen Pan and Domingo Chen may not have been so eloquently incorporated into the novel.

Fang's individual expression allows her to act with the same authority as the unquestioned, omniscient narrator. She tells her own story, and in doing so, holds a unique power not afforded to the other characters. Chen Fang's testimony complicates the truth asserted by an omniscient narration and situates her undeniably subjective experience as equally valuable to those deemed worthy of recording by an outside perspective.

The little space that Chen Fang's life occupies within the novel emphasizes the minimal voice women have had in the telling of history. In this way, the work as a whole portrays a reality in which men dominate and have dominated discourse. At the same time, the depiction of reality and the shifting of narrative authority undermines traditional narrative's claim to truth and questions the limited scope of recorded history as it has often dismissed large groups of people as unimportant. In an interview, the author speaks to this idea: "traditional history, the way it has been written, interpreted and recorded, obviates women and the evolution of home, family, and society, and basically becomes a recording of battles and wars and dubious accomplishments of men" ("And There" 610). Through first-person narration, Chen Fang's story counteracts these "official" histories that have long silenced subaltern identities. She adds a truth to history, telling of a seemingly traceless life that would otherwise be all but erased from records.

B. Gender and Marginalization

Chen Fang's first-person narration allows her to intimately describe aspects of her identity that society rejected during her life, specifically her gender fluidity. Because she is born female, Chen Fang confronts oppression in ways that Chen Pan and Domingo do not, and her story tells of struggles unlike any faced by her male relatives. Complicating her marginalization,

Chen Fang's gender identity does not fall within the socially imposed binary.[223] While she is the only woman character in the novel, Chen Fang's mother raises her as a male child and this upbringing greatly influences who she is. Neither is Chen Fang heterosexual, as she loves a woman.[224] Chen Fang expresses this feeling of living "outside" the hegemonic social structures and the isolation incurred by her marginal status,

> As a woman alone, a teacher of literature, I lived simply learning to endure absence like a continued thirst. I longed for my father in Cuba, for my kind older sisters, for the touch of my beloved Dauphine. In China women do not stand alone. They obey fathers, husbands, their eldest sons. I lived outside the dictates of men, and so my life proved as unsteady as an egg on an ox. (226)

Chen Fang's life lacks love and acceptance. The absence of intimate friends or family who support her nonconforming identity enhances her seclusion from her larger community.

Chen Fang's alienation from society commences at birth as she immediately enters a life-long existence of having to disguise who she really is. She tells us she was born "not like my sisters" and that upon her birth, the midwife announced, "Another mouth for rice!" to indicate disappointment at the arrival of a third daughter (89). When her mother learns of her female gender, she "was so distraught that she dropped me on my head. [. . .] The same evening, my

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[223] Gustavo Geirola insightfully suggests a comparison between Chen Fang and Sor Juana, "sería enormemente atractivo un cotejo del episodio del personaje lesbiano Chen Fang con la Carta a Sor Filotea de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. [. . .] El episodio es interesante porque va más allá de Sor Juana, más allá de su modelo escriturario [. . .]" (125).

[224] Sean Moiles writes, "Chen Fang's characterization implies, as Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*, that gender and sexuality are performances—constructs that becomes [*sic*] naturalized through repetition" (176).

grandmother died. Mother thought me an evil presence and refused to nurse me" (89). Unwanted by her mother, Chen Fang is further ostracized by her surrounding community. Following her mother's cue, the villagers come together to participate in the deception of Chen Fang's father by pretending she is a baby boy. Chen Fang's social exclusion continues as she confronts bullying from other children because of her Cuban heritage (91).[225] Her absent father, Lorenzo, comes from a strange country and has a Cuban mother, all of which make Chen Fang an object of gossip and ridicule. Isolation from society and hiding who she really is defines Chen Fang's life, including her adolescence spent disguised as a male student and her adulthood when, as a single woman, she claims to be a childless widow "so people do not concern themselves with my life" (101). During her entire life, Chen Fang must perform according to the expectations of others, never fully able to express who she is.

After years of requiring her daughter to attend school as a boy, Chen Fang's mother demands Chen Fang change her gender presentation so that Chen Fang can marry. Yet Chen Fang has become accustomed to living as a male. As a student, she adopts certain dress and mannerisms, "It was not easy to disguise my sex. I kept my hair cropped short and affected a gruff manner, but my hands and neck were too delicate for a boy. My size helped. I was a head taller than most of the other students and I was not afraid to fight" (92). Urbistondo recognizes Chen Fang's performance as echoing Judith Butler's discussion of gender in that "...the repeated

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[225] Chen Fang tells us, "The villagers gossiped about his mother [Lucrecia], who had been a slave in Cuba before ensnaring a full-blooded Chinese. They said that all the slaves there worked the sugarcane fields harder than any beast, that they boiled human flesh on feast days, then gathered around their simmering kettles and banged on a hundred drums. There were other tales about Cuba. How fish that rained from the sky during thunderstorms had to be shoveled off the roads before they rotted" (91-2). In Chen Pan's story, Lucrecia describes hearing of how *chinos* feasted on newborns in winter" (125). The response of the Chinese villagers Chen Fang's Cuban father coupled with rumors on the island regarding the Chinese immigrants reminds us of Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* and the subjectivity of Otherness.

stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Urbistondo 68; Butler 45). Yet, as Urbistondo suggests, Chen Fang does not come to feel she is a male nor continue to live as a man publically (68). Rather, Chen Fang must switch from presenting as an adolescent boy to acting as a woman. In this way, her upbringing as a male further alienates Chen Fang as she cannot adapt to the prescribed role of a woman:

> It was not easy to become a woman. I was not trained to pour tea or be graceful in the usual deferences. I could not cook, and my sewing was crooked. My hair was wavy and hard to control. Worst of all were my unbound feet. For this, my mother-in-law ridiculed me: 'We wouldn't have paid so much for you if we'd seen those clumsy hooves!' This I must say directly. There is no harder work than being a woman. I know this because I pretended to be a boy for so long. This is what men do: pretend to be men, hide their weaknesses at all costs. A man would sooner kill or die himself than suffer embarrassment. For women there are no such blusterings, only work. (96)

Chen Fang describes the gender roles that restrict her existence as she unsuccessfully attempts to transition from life as a male student to the traditional domestic role of a wife. Never educated to perform the domestic tasks expected of her as a wife, Chen Fang fails to be what others demand of her. She continues to act as something she is not and in doing so "negates the possibility of a personal identity" because even as "socially she is successful [. . .] Her long-standing performance forecloses any sense of belonging because she is performing for others" (Urbistondo 68-9). Controlled by others, Chen Fang does not determine her own identity for much of her life. After a fortune-teller tells Chen Fang to abandon her son, the mother-in-law

pays Chen Fang to leave. Chen Fang chooses to live a solitary life as a Chinese classics and modern literatures teacher in Shanghai. There she is “fortunate” because she no longer has to hide her gender, but she still maintains a falsified version of herself so as to fit in to society as she “pretended to be a widow [. . .] pretended to be childless” (101).

As an adult, Chen Fang can neither live fully as a man nor as a woman and, in her social context, these are the only two options available to her. An unmarried woman, she exists between them. Unlike most women of her time, she does not depend upon the support of a man, and so she “lives like a man, like less than a man, alone in my two rooms” (148). She finds a way to live by herself, away from the abuses of her mother and mother-in-law, but she can only have independence if she also accepts marginalization. She recognizes this would not be the reality for a single man, as his lone lifestyle would be accepted by society.

The charade of Chen Fang’s childhood also highlights the different privileges allotted according to gender, as her upbringing temporarily grants Chen Fang the experience of being male in her society. Chen Fang was forced to participate in this lie and it therefore restricts her individual identity, yet her transvestism also benefits her greatly—in some ways—as she is able to attend school and receive an education that would be otherwise available to her. As an adult woman, Chen Fang draws upon this education to support herself financially. Ultimately, however, her work causes her to be viewed as an intellectual and condemns her to imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution. Her scholastic talents at first help her to survive, but later restrict her, underscoring the impossibility of Chen Fang finding lasting happiness. She is always stuck in-between: she might achieve temporary freedom, but doing so imprisons her; she can neither fully be who she is, nor completely live as someone else.

Because she does not live within a traditionally accepted position for a woman, Chen Fang must exist on the margins as someone who does not adhere to the normative gender roles of her surrounding community. Chen Fang recognizes that she does not fit either binary gender prescription, "So where, I ask, is my place? I am neither woman nor man but a stone, a tree struck by lightning long ago. Everything that has followed since counts for nothing" (149). Unable to conform to the gender expectations of her society, Chen Fang feels as if she bears the burden of living, like the remnants of something that died long ago.

C. Immobility/Imprisonment

The character of Chen Fang interrogates a consequence of migration: what happens to those loved ones and family members who do not migrate and are left behind. In Chen Fang's life, migration never surfaces as a possible answer for escape from her suffering. Without the means or connections to leave her country, she is immobile, stuck in the margins of her community and forced to live in a society that restricts her to an essentially powerless existence. Chen Pan and Domingo survive horrible traumas, but both of these male characters have the ability to move from one society to another. Even if they do so within a marginalized space, they can travel independently from one place to another in search of something better. They are able to leave a place that offers them nothing in hopes of finding more. Chen Pan's success hinges on his decision to leave China—if he had stayed, the conditions of his country would have condemned him to poverty and a loveless, childless marriage. Instead, Chen Pan finds comfort and happiness with Lucrecia and their three children in Cuba. Likewise, Domingo's story permits hope. A woeful inability to find meaning or purpose dominates his narrative, but the novel leaves him with time and freedom so that he can search for fulfillment. Domingo has a

chance at finding a place in the world; Chen Fang never does. The ability to move and search for peace distinguishes his suffering from that of Chen Fang. Furthermore, Domingo's suffering differs in that he is nostalgic for a home he once had. Chen Pan, too, fondly remembers some aspects of his life in China. Quite differently, Chen Fang never feels at home in her country. She mourns her life's utter lack of possibility. Unable to seek a better existence, Chen Fang is tied to a place that denies her a fulfilling life.

The text emphasizes Chen Fang's immobility by immediately tying the identities of Chen Pan and Domingo to migration, whereas the entirety of Chen Fang's story occurs in China.[226] The first part of the novel relates the earliest portions of the characters' lives to which we are privy as readers. The stories of Chen Pan and Domingo begin when they are roughly the same age—young men of about nineteen and twenty—and after they have departed from their homelands in pursuit of a new life in another country. We meet Chen Pan and Domingo as migrants, uprooted from their homelands and looking for opportunities. Chen Fang's story, however, is always constrained to China. She lives through the Japanese Invasion of Manchuria and the Cultural Revolution, her suffering often paralleling that of her country. Urbistondo notes this correlation at the conclusion of Chen Fang's second chapter: "Chen Fang's emptiness mirrors the difficulties occurring in the Chinese nation-space, as she has not been paid in months and has a tough time buying food" (75-6). As we see in the second section of this paper, the connection between land/country and the immobility of women repeats in the lives of other characters.

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[226] An example that contradicts this is that Pipo Chen represents a man who migrates and whose life ends without regaining identity, but his life of exile ends in hopelessness much like Chen Fang's. Not wanting to burden his son with his increasingly worse illness, Pipo throws himself in front of a train in New York City.

In comparison with the lives of the other main characters, Chen Fang's story reads more as autobiographical, both because it is told through a first-person narration and because it begins with her birth. Her retrospective narrative recalls her childhood in a mountain village, her studies at an all-male school, her arranged marriage, and departure for Shanghai—all of which happen in China. Although we do not realize her present situation until her last contribution to the novel, her voice, and thus her entire story, comes to us from imprisonment. She tells her entire story as a prisoner awaiting death within a cell. The situation from which her words reach us underscores the constraint and impossibility she feels during her entire life.

The conclusions of Chen Pan and Chen Fang's lives differ strikingly.[227] Chen Pan spends his last hours gazing out into the horizon and over the rooftops of Havana. With a view of the whole city, Chen Pan contemplates his life, remembering his youth and thinking of the changing of the world as he loses himself in a wine-influenced, dreamlike state. At first he feels the impulse to live longer, but as his perception of time escapes a linear flow, he embraces his final moments: "Everything had vanished in the breeze. Yes, a man lived less than a hundred years, but he harbored cares for a thousand. [. . .] When Chen Pan drank his red wine, he smiled and became immortal" (251). These words emphasize Chen Pan's satisfied readiness for death. In his last moments, he feels his life as fully realized. For him, death is a next step after a fulfilling life.

Our last image of Chen Pan's story contrasts significantly from that of Chen Fang's final moments, in which we see her completely shut off from the world and suffering in a dirty cell. This cell acts as a metaphor for her entire life: she is inhibited by a society that relegates her to a limited existence. With no possibility to move elsewhere, she must live sequestered to the periphery of society, alone in solitude. For Chen Fang, then, life is a prison. She feels so trapped

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[227] Domingo leaves the narrative in the second part of the novel.

that death seems a peaceful escape: “My tormentors parade death before me, thinking this would frighten me. They do not realize how much more tempting it is to die than to stay alive” (224).

She contemplates death in this way throughout her life, including when she sees a boy who has committed suicide: “I remember how peaceful he had looked swaying in the wind. I imagined climbing onto the same branch, rope in hand, summoning dead spirits to strengthen me. Then the sudden pressure around my neck, a last gasp of breath, the blackening release” (95-6). This boy’s suicide does not elicit a reaction of fear or sadness in Chen Fang, but rather impresses upon her a sense of peace. She understands the desire to escape the pain of life. After Chen Fang suffers the heartbreaking end of her relationship with Dauphine, she collects funeral urns, although she does not fully understand why she has become “so taken with ornaments of death” (147). During this time she feels especially lost and helplessly entrapped in grief, as her only happiness has vanished. In this state, Chen Fang unwittingly surrounds herself with objects that represent the freedom she hopes for in death. As her body deteriorates in prison, Chen Fang again associates death with escape, thinking that after she passes away, she will find comfort: “Perhaps there is someone on the other side already calling for me: Come along now, Chen Fang. We are waiting for you. Everything is better here” (224-5). However, we do not witness her death.

The novel’s portrayal of her life denies Chen Fang the ease of suffering that she believes death would bring. We see her final days, but not her actual death. The absence of such a scene can be attributed to the first-person narrative, as she cannot realistically tell us of her passing. Her words serve as a sort of last testament, related to the reader before she dies. Still, we acutely feel the emptiness left by the lack of resolution that death would bring, especially when we read her final words side-by-side with Chen Pan’s final moments. Never seeing Chen Fang finally

freed from her endless hardship stresses the lack of finality felt in Chen Fang's life and emphasizes her experience as incomplete. Her last thoughts recall the precious few memories of happiness she shared with Dauphine, but mostly Chen Fang lamentingly recognizes how factors beyond her control have restricted her existence. Above all, in her last words to the reader, she expresses her desire for another opportunity to experience the full life denied her: "Listen to me. I am old and very weak, but I want to live in the world again" (232). She imagines looking out over the Caribbean Sea from a balcony, no longer entrapped in a cell but free to embrace the wide, open spaces around her. Her final words envision this life in Cuba where she can find a different presence, one filled with possibility.

Chen Fang cannot escape the imprisonment of her life through death or migration. Her inability to leave her marginalized existence emphasizes the impossibility of escape and ties her isolation to China. In contrast, Cuba acts as a place antithetical to China for Chen Fang, "China is an unbearable place plagued with gender, sexual, and political oppressions and on the contrary Cuba represents infinite possibilities of freedom" (Cho 7). Throughout her life, Chen Fang imagines Cuba as a place of refuge and opportunity where she might correct the regrets of her current life.[228] Although never a true possibility, Chen Fang dreams of leaving China and beginning again in Cuba. She attaches a fanciful hope to a place that, unlike her grandfather and father, she is never able to see. Chen Pan and Lorenzo become almost mythic figures for Chen Fang and she imagines their lives as alternative to her reality. She hears tales of Cuba that describe a land of gold and promise, where "the women chose whom they would marry and

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[228] Cho links Chen Fang's fantasy of Cuba to her gender nonconformity, "[Cuba] is where her male ancestors have proven their masculinity — the quality she possesses but is not allowed to fully develop and put to use" (7).

when. Everything I heard about Cuba made my head revolve with dreams! How badly I wanted to go!" (92). Significantly, the rumors of the island that most intrigue Chen Fang promise a woman's freedom to choose how she lives her life and whom she loves. In another moment, Chen Fang reminds us of the impossibility of these dreams, "Again I thought of escaping to Cuba, but I had no money and my father knew only that I was an intelligent boy" (95). The dreams she attaches to the island remind us of Chen Pan's aspirations six decades earlier. Although the first years of his time on the island were undeniably horrific as he labored in the sugarcane fields, Chen Pan was able to pursue a life outside of China. In contrast, Chen Fang's Cuba remains an unattainable dream.

D. Family Lineage

Chen Fang has no memorable presence in her family lineage and thus would most likely disappear from the records of her family. Chen Fang's father, Lorenzo Chen, never knows of Chen Fang's true identity, believing instead that she is a son with whom he loses contact. Chen Fang does not maintain relationships with her siblings or any other family member in China. Her opium-addicted mother cares so little for her daughter that she trades Chen Fang for a dowry. While Chen Fang lives with her in-laws, her husband, without explanation, tries to kill their unborn baby. He is sent away, and after the birth of their child, her mother-in-law expels Chen Fang from the family too, cutting Chen Fang off from her only son. Chen Fang lives with no direct communication with or ties to her parents, her siblings, her in-laws, or her child. She recognizes her lack of traditional social value and her erasable spot in history when she states, "In China they say the greatest glory for a woman is to bear and raise sons for the future" (149). Having not fulfilled her role of raising a family, she questions the purpose of her existence.

The family tree represents a microcosm of the patriarchal society into which Chen Fang does not fit, but Chen Fang's presence in the novel firmly places her within in Chen Pan's family's story, and the family tree preceding the prologue pointedly includes her name. Complicating the overall appearance of the family tree, Chen Fang appears next to her two older sisters on the branch stemming from Lorenzo's "first wife." While these other women remain unnamed, they too are represented and granted space. All appear on the page the same as any of Chen Pan's descendants. Chen Fang's presence on the tree firmly inserts her family's branch and reinforces her right to be in a novel about her grandfather's family.

This position on the family tree both insists upon Chen Fang's place within Chen Pan's family and visibly represents her isolation from her relatives. She appears directly beneath a father whom she never knew and a mother who mistreated her. Her name follows those of two unnamed sisters, both of whom she does not know in adulthood. She is represented above the name of her son, Lu Chih-mo, who becomes a pillar of the society that rejects her. His presence reminds her of the regret she feels from not fighting for her son and not experiencing motherhood. Her pain deepens when, years later, she learns of Lu Chih-mo's fate and realizes the suffering her descendant wreaks upon the country:

> I finally know of my son. I read about him in the Party newspaper they distribute to the prisoners. Lu Chih-mo has made his reputation running an important southern province. A reputation, no doubt, built on corpses. Of what use, I think now, was it for me to educate so many children when my own son has turned out a barbarian? (230)

Chen Fang's son grows to become a powerful man with ties to the Cultural Revolution. He leads the forces that punish and torture intellectuals, including Chen Fang. His work encourages the

systematic denial of human rights and implementation of forced labor and torture. Upon hearing of his fate, Chen Fang feels that her son's evil erases any good she has accomplished through teaching. She believes her son destroys any positive trace that she might have left upon the world, and in this way, his presence contributes to society's brushing away of Chen Fang's life into invisibility.

Ostracized in a country to which she is bound, Chen Fang experiences social displacement within her own community and lives without possibility of finding a new home. Her story explores the feeling of being an outsider in one's own culture, of being trapped without possibility for a better life. For Chen Fang, both conformity and escape are impossible. When the narratives of Chen Pan and Domingo grant little attention to women with stories similar to Chen Fang's, we see how dominant discourse overlooks such marginalized existences. As Cho recognizes, "the novel insists [upon] the forgotten stories of those who are 'left behind,' the stories of those who are rendered immobile to make others' mobility possible, and very many other lost stories" (5). To counteract the silencing of those so marginalized by society that they are not afforded memory or any kind of recorded permanency, Chen Fang speaks with her own voice in the novel.[229] Doing so not only gives space to Chen Fang's life, but incites the reader to remember the women who are left behind in the stories of the male migrants.

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[229] García includes the lines of the following poem when describing Chen Fang's entry into domestic life:

> *How sad it is to be a woman!*
> *Nothing on earth is held so cheap.*
> *Boys stand leaning at the door*
> *Like Gods fallen out of Heaven*. (96)

These verses help describe how valueless Chen Fang feels as a young wife in an arranged marriage. They are taken from the famous poem by Fu Xuan, "Woman." Fu Xuan was a prominent intellectual, politician, and writer from 217-278 AD.

II. Secondary Women Characters

Apart from Chen Fang, the most developed female characters in *Monkey Hunting* are the three main characters' romantic partners: Chen Pan's wife, Lucrecia; Chen Fang's lover, Dauphine de Möet; and the mother of Domingo's unborn child, Tham Thanh Lan. The novel contains Chen Fang's story within a limited space but grants it a subversively privileged voice. Her story prompts my exploration of how the other women characters contribute to the novel, especially because certain elements of Chen Fang's story repeat in their lives. For instance, the violence that Chen Fang confronts as a wife and as a prisoner repeats in the stories of Lucrecia and Tham Thanh Lan. Likewise, the immobility that characterizes Chen Fang's narrative similarly limits most of the women in the novel. Considering how such elements overlap in the women's different stories, Cho recognizes the text's complex layers of migration, social forces, and gendered and racial violence:

> The juxtaposition of specific gendered forms of violence [. . .] illuminates both the hidden connections between different forms of movement and the relationship between mobility and immobility. [. . . portraying] on the one hand, physical violence specifically directed at male racialized subjects by colonial and imperial regimes; on the other hand, sexual violence against women committed not only by external forces, but also by their family members. (5)

In this section, I look at the novel's stories of secondary women, considering how their experiences inform each other's lives. While their stories differ significantly, reflecting upon similarities reveals how Chen Fang's story illuminates their smaller roles in the novel.

A. Lucrecia Chen Through the Eyes of Chen Pan

The novel introduces Lucrecia through a newspaper advertisement placed for her sale, and so we first see her within the text as an object being bought and sold. Many aspects of the scene of her purchase reiterate the power structures of Cuban society. Ana Zapata-Calle recognizes this episode's importance as a metaphor for the increasingly multicultural nation, noting the intricate racial and social tensions presented (178).[230] Chen Pan, a legally free man, is able to buy Lucrecia, but when he does so, he endures the hateful racism of her owner, Don Joaquín Alomá. After the sale, Don Joaquín shoos Chen Pan out the door, calling him a "dirty *chino*," his words acting as a reminder of Chen Pan's "place" in Havana society (68). Furthermore, Chen Pan's position has only recently bettered from that of an indentured servant. This episode reminds us of his arrival to the island, as Don Joaquín treats Lucrecia as if she were an animal just as Chen Pan was stripped "like horses or oxen" when he was sold to a plantation (67; 21).[231] Notably, Lucrecia does not speak a single word until she leaves the slave owner's home. Her silence emphasizes her complete lack of say in her future. She later gains significant agency in Cuban society as a free woman. However, this initial absence of voice and the fact that we do not meet Lucrecia until Chen Pan purchases her underscores her presence as a part of Chen Pan's story.

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[230] "Es interesante que el intercambio se realice en el umbral de la casa de Don Joaquín, ya que, entendiendo la casa como una metáfora de la incipiente nación criolla cubana y teniendo en cuenta que la isla por los años 60 todavía formaba parte de los territorios de España, el blanco no permite al chino pasar adentro de ella, como no le permite representación en el discurso político, sino que hace salir afuera a la esclava. La hegemonía occidental ve al chino como a un elemento foráneo al que rechaza y al negro como a un objeto al que somete" (Zapata-Calle 178).

[231] As Chen Pan buys Lucrecia, he notes the worth of Don Joaquín's table as half the price of Lucrecia. This detail emphasizes Lucrecia's position as an object in the house (68).

Don Joaquín represents horrifying abuses that form part of Cuba's colonial history. Lucrecia's memories, which the omniscient narrator includes in the text, detail his cruelty. Before Don Joaquín abuses Lucrecia, he rapes her mother. He enslaves and uses them both, their experiences symbolizing the colonizers' overtaking of the island, stripping of its resources, and massacring of its people.[232] María Lugones writes of the connection between bodies of the marginalized and colonialization: "The colonial "civilizing mission" was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people's bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systematic terror (feeding people alive to dogs or making pouches and hats from the vaginas of brutally killed indigenous females, for example)" (744). Supporting this correlation, Lorenzo notes that "History is like the human body" (244). Within the novel specifically, however, the suffering of Lucrecia and her mother directly connects to the land in a way that male bodies do not. Emma R. Garcia agrees:

> The incestuous rape she endures from her biological father symbolizes the troubled destruction Cuba suffers at the hands of colonizers. Lucrecia comes to represent the land that was invaded and raped by the colonizer in order to reap economic benefits [. . . her father depicts how] natives are objects to be used, abused, and disposed of. (165)

When Chen Pan buys Lucrecia and frees her, he ends the generational transference of violence that Don Joaquín imposed upon the family, "It took Lucrecia many years to realize that she was his daughter [. . .] That what her mother had suffered, she was now suffering" (133). Furthermore, Lucrecia's first son is born of rape by Don Joaquín. When this son dies, Don

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[232] Tying the women to the land and their rape to colonization further supports my reading of social criticism within the novel that I put forth in chapter two.

Joaquín's incestuous line ends and a different, multiracial family begins with Lucrecia and Chen Pan's three children (Martínez, "Search" 86; Zapata-Calle 178).

Later on, Chen Pan dreams of inverting the island's colonially inherited power dynamics when he imagines buying the plantation where he labored as a servant. Doing so would symbolically gesture a taking back of what once imprisoned him. Although he never purchases the land, he breaks one thread in slavery's influence by freeing Lucrecia and empowering her to actively participate in the workings of the capitalist society around her.

That someone in a more powerful position must provide the first step toward economic advancement repeats in the novel and underscores the challenges of creating a new life in an unfamiliar society. Only after Chen Pan establishes himself economically can he offer Lucrecia a means of a better life. He is able to purchase Lucrecia's freedom because of the success he has achieved, yet this is only possible because others aided him. Cabeza de Piña, a slave who is noted for his strength, watches over and protects Chen Pan on the plantation. Likewise, in Havana, Chen Pan obtains security through the protection of Count de Santovenia. Before he can offer Lucrecia a way to a better life, Chen Pan must first better his social position. Doing so requires the assistance of someone with a more privileged status.

Lucrecia establishes economic independence as she sells candles and operates the family business. She realizes talents and skills as a storekeeper and businesswoman and is eventually able to repay Chen Pan the one-thousand-peso price charged for her purchase by Don Joaquín. In spite of her accomplishments, Lucrecia's social status remains limited in comparison to those who are innately privileged by race, class, gender etc. Urbistondo discusses Lucrecia's role in Cuban society, writing that her "ambiguous social position [. . .] grants her a sense of autonomy within her heteronormative, maternal life, something Chen Fang never experiences" (49). Her

observation critiques Martínez's likening of Lucrecia and Chen Fang as simplified (Martínez, "Search" 86). Indeed, the two women's positions are very different as Lucrecia finds a means of significantly improving her situation, even from her marginalized position.

Lucrecia does not travel from one country to another, but instead migrates between cultures on the island, creating social connections. In this role, she facilitates Chen Pan's adaptation to Havana society. Zapata-Calle writes, "Lucrecia se había hecho famosa en La Habana por las velas que ella misma fabricaba y vendía fuera de los límites del Barrio Chino, ella constituía la proyección de Chen Pan o del Barrio Chino hacia otros barrios, o el puente intercultural" (182). A cross-cultural bridge, Lucrecia develops Chen Pan's relationships with communities outside of Chinatown, strengthening his ties and business ventures. Lucrecia's cultural flexibility closes social divisions faced by Chen Pan.

Lucrecia's joy of gardening and growing things in the earth underscore her tie to the land around her, "How Lucrecia loved her garden! [. . .] Who would take care of it all when she was gone? [. . .] At night, the scent of her flowers had mingled with those of the wheat fields and river weeds" (168). Part of Cuba's land, her garden grows herbs, trees, and flowers that contribute and mix with the surrounding fauna. Chen Pan wonders who will care for her garden after Lucrecia's death, just as he worries who will care for him in her absence.[233]

Lucrecia's connection with the earth encourages Chen Pan's rooting in island society. She helps "plant" Chen Pan in Cuba by connecting him to his new home, much like she cultivates a garden in the earth of the island. Lucrecia cares and tends for the plants of her garden

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[233] Intriguingly, the "personal campaign" of Chen Fang's villainous son in China is "to destroy the country's ornamental flowers" (231). Here, we again see a connection between the earth and culture.

that grow in Cuban soil. Similarly, tends to Chen Pan's growing on the island as she bridges cultural divides and makes him feel at home. Lucrecia's death further clarifies her role as Chen Pan's anchor to the island. When she passes away, Chen Pan's Cuban identity begins to fade as he returns to the land of his birth through memories, "Una vez muerta, Chen Pan se aísla de nuevo en su realidad china, recordando y amando a una mujer o a una madre patria muerta" (Zapata-Calle 182). In an interview, García confirms Lucrecia's role as uniting Chen Pan with the island community:

> At the end of the book, Chen Pan talks about belonging neither to China nor to Cuba entirely. He's lost most of his Chinese and yet his Spanish is still quite fractured and heavily accented. He belongs somewhere between worlds, but probably a little closer to Cuba. In the end, I think he gave his heart to Cuba (partly through the love of his wife) and that's where his legacy remains. (*Monkey* 262)

The text describes Lucrecia's death as causing Chen Pan to feel increasingly less attached to Cuba. When she first falls ill, his impending loss seems to present him with a journey to an unknown place, "Lucrecia's impending death felt like a voyage he was preparing to take to a foreign land" (167). Without Lucrecia and the roots to Cuba that she offers him, Chen Pan again feels like a migrant.

A still deeper look at Lucrecia's story reveals why her marriage to Chen Pan, unlike the other relationships in the novel, succeeds. During their lives together, the text notes how Lucrecia briefly fulfills a savior role for Chen Pan when she keeps him alive after he is wounded during the Ten Years' War, "When he'd returned from delivering his machetes to Commander Sian in 1869, Chen Pan had been prepared to die. It was Lucrecia who saved him. She bathed

him, cleaning out a festering wound that kept him limping to this day. 'You're lucky you don't have to cut off your leg altogether,' she scolded" (178). The brevity of this dynamic in their relationship is especially notable because, as we will later see, the woman's role as savior repeats more strongly in Tham Thanh Lan's character. Lucrecia offers similar care to Chen Pan, but her care for him does not define their relationship, unlike the way it does for Tham Thanh Lan's position in Domingo's life.[234] Instead, Chen Pan and Lucrecia grow to love and respect each other. They also depend upon one another and help each other better their lives. In this way, Lucrecia's position within their relationship is very different from the unequal dynamic between Tham Thanh Lan and Domingo.

Like Chen Fang, Lucrecia does not move across national borders.[235] She remains in Cuba, reminding us of Chen Fang's immobility. However, while Chen Fang was tied to China, her country was never her home. Lucrecia, however, is both tied to the island and an active part of its society. Lucrecia too faces great marginalization, but also makes great advances, in part because her identity better aligns with the gender norms of the community that surrounds her. Additionally, Lucrecia is able to be culturally flexible in ways that greatly aid her life with Chen Pan.

Lucrecia's economic achievements correlate with an acceptance of multiculturalism and social change. Although Lucrecia acts as an anchor to Cuba for Chen Pan, she also unquestioningly embraces her partner's Chinese traditions. As Moiles points out, Lucrecia

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[234] Domingo needs Tham Thanh Lan to rescue him from his wandering. This does not occur, in great part, because Domingo is not ready to be saved.

[235] Another example of women staying connected to the land/their society while men migrate is Domingo's mother. She fully supports the Communist Revolution while her husband and son leave in exile for New York City.

"especially complicates notions of racial identity because she chooses to identify herself not as African or Cuban but as Chinese" (178). While Chen Pan experiences the same social pressures of assimilation, he struggles indefinitely between his two cultures. Lucrecia, however, maintains certain syncretic practices, but "tried everything to please [Chen Pan's] Chinese side until slowly she'd become Chinese herself" identifying as "Chinese in her liver, Chinese in her heart" (245; 138). Importantly, Lucrecia chooses this identity for herself, but her decision is also a direct result of being Chen Pan's life partner. She accepts Chen Pan and his culture, even adopting her last name despite never officially marrying him. By mixing her culture with Chen Pan's traditional practices, Lucrecia enables her own adaption to Chinatown and aids Chen Pan's success. Still, Lucrecia's achievements demand more social malleability than Chen Pan's, as she lives in his house, runs his business, and completely accepts his traditions.

B. Tham Thanh Lan Through the Eyes of Domingo Chen

Much like Lucrecia and Chen Fang, Tham Thanh Lan appears connected to her country. During her relationship with Domingo, she offers him a home and briefly provides him a link to Vietnam. Yet Domingo ultimately surrenders himself to wandering. Although they find temporary comfort in each other, Tham Thanh Lan and Domingo are unable to permanently establish a life together in Saigon, unlike Lucrecia and Chen Pan's success decades before in Havana.[236] The burden of nostalgia greatly contributes to Domingo's inability to stay with Tham

[236] Zapata-Calle invokes race to indirectly explain Chen Pan's devotion to Lucrecia "generación tras generación, los sino-cubanos van a abandonar una y otra vez a sus mujeres asiáticas por vivir en tierras cubanas, adonde sienten que está su verdadera patria" (176). She identifies all of the women who are abandoned by generations of the Chen family as Asian, suggesting Lucrecia's Cuban identity as a key factor in their sustaining marriage. This idea further supports viewing the women as associated with the society around them—the Chen men desert the women when leaving the countries.

Thanh Lan. He loves her through a lens of nostalgia because she reminds him of Cuba. The text notes this familiarity when Domingo first meets Tham Thanh Lan: "She seemed familiar to Domingo, like he'd known her as a child" (155). She provides Domingo with vague comforts of home, reminding him of his childhood home, the place he impossibly hopes to recover. He cares for her, but only through memories of what he has lost. Domingo remains emotionally attached to his lost island, searching for what he will never find. As long as he remains fixated on the past, he cannot build a future with Tham Thanh Lan.

Domingo's nostalgia for Cuba imbues even the couple's most intimate moments. He looks at Tham Thanh Lan while they lay in bed "and wondered what love had to do with memory" (162). His feelings for her tempt Domingo to stay for a little while as "For the first time since leaving Cuba, Domingo had no wish but to remain exactly where he was," but in the end, Domingo is too lost to create a home with Tham Thanh Lan (161). She does not tie him to a country and help him establish himself there, but rather reminds him of a home to which he cannot return. When Domingo leaves Vietnam, he also leaves her.[237]

Like Chen Fang, Tham Thanh Lan's immobility limits her to a place where she suffers greatly. The society around her faces burdens analogous to her pain. Sold by her father into prostitution, Tham Thanh Lan endures years of sexual exploitation and abuse. When Domingo meets her, she supports herself as a sex worker. Without any means of economic advancement, Tham Thanh Lan is caught in the margins of society. As Lucrecia's suffering reminds us of colonialism's effects on Cuba, the violence Tham

[237] Urbistondo writes, "In abandoning [Tham Thanh Lan], Domingo Chen manifests a selfish mode of survival [. . .] one can view his actions while in combat as a moment of sacral connection while his potential for the same with Tham Thanh Lan is frustrated by self-serving pursuits" (64).

Thanh Lan endures reflects the effects of war on her country. Urbistondo writes, "Tham Thanh Lan [. . .] functions as a one-dimensional character that is more a representation of the social conditions and dilemmas facing oppressed third world women than a concrete multi-dimensional protagonist [. . .] politically her predicament represents the underlying sexual exploitations available within uneven transnational contact zones like warfare" (65). Permanent traces and scars on her body make visible her trauma. These marks physically represent the aftermath of violence. Her flesh reveals where a dagger was forced into her body and the skin inside of her thighs is tattooed with numbers marking her as property (159-60). Tham Thanh Lan's body is used, violated, and damaged. The land around her suffers from the war in a similar way: "the wildflowers in Vietnam had changed colors from one spring to the next [. . .] the river fish were bloating pink with chemicals, the hills wearied to nothing by napalm" (116). The little we learn of Tham Thanh Lan's tormentor underscores the link between her suffering and the damage of the land around her: he was a powerful military leader.

Domingo seeks forgiveness for his wrongdoings in Tham Thanh Lan's body (160). After his military service, he searches out Tham Thanh Lan and they relate to one another through shared trauma, searching for healing in one another. Both find some fleeting relief in their relationship. Domingo gains closeness and intimacy for the first time in his narrative and Tham Thanh Lan becomes pregnant with his child. She was previously unable to conceive as a consequence of the General's mutilations. Domingo almost miraculously gives her a son, but then leaves her to raise the child alone. Following Susan C. Méndez, Domingo's

> involvement with Tham is just another exploitative inevitability of the United States' imperialistic relations with poorer nations of the east and west; he

> colonizes Tham's body through pregnancy and leaves her alone to deal with the costly process of raising a child. [. . . He is] a patriarchal figure that discards women, for whatever reason, when they become inconvenient. (148)

Urbistondo describes Domingo's relationship with Tham Thanh Lan from a similar perspective, pointing out that despite all of his suffering, he turns his back on hers, "Her consumption and exploitation [. . .] serve[s] to rebuke Domingo Chen's self proclaimed [*sic*] victimhood. Although Domingo possesses a sensibility for the anonymous victimized other, he is blind to the harm he causes Tham Thanh Lan, an embodied other" (65). When he leaves her, the text directly associates Tham Thanh Lan with Vietnam. Domingo decides "he needed to go away, to leave her like another country" (217). He abandons Tham Thanh Lan, reminding us of how Chen Pan leaves his first wife, Lorenzo leaves Chen Fang's mother, and Dauphine leaves Chen Fang.

When Chen Fang tells her story of abandonment, she gives voice to women like Tham Thanh Lan who are otherwise discarded from the text when their men leave them. The omniscient narrator follows Domingo, leaving Tham Thanh Lan's story unresolved. Yet Chen Fang's narrative grants us insight into the lives of those whose stories are not told. The presence of Chen Fang's story asks us to more deeply consider Tham Thanh Lan's life after Domingo abandons her.

C. Dauphine de Möet Through the Voice of Chen Fang

Chen Fang's affair with Dauphine offers us a reversed perspective of the various circumstances in the novel in which a migrant abandons a lover upon leaving a country. When Dauphine returns to France with her husband, we read the experience through Chen Fang's eyes. Her story presents the side of the experience which is lost when the narrative follows the

journeyer, only to forget those left behind. Unlike the women whom the text mentions very briefly and then seems to forget, Chen Fang's voice tells the pain of being forgotten.

In the chapter "Middle Kingdom," Chen Fang moves from a rural area to the city and finds temporary happiness with Dauphine. Marginalized within a society that forbids her from acting upon her romantic desires, Chen Fang experiences her sole moments of joy because of this small migration when she falls in love with Dauphine: "The hardships of the times receded for me. Our lives became hidden as if in a thousand-year dream" (143). Although Chen Fang loves Dauphine and the latter's intentions never seem malicious, Dauphine discards Chen Fang when she returns to France. Chen Fang never hears from her again.

Dauphine is one of the very few women who travel internationally in the novel. As the European wife of an ex-diplomat turned businessman, Dauphine is wealthy, sophisticated, and educated. Thus, she is also the only woman character with significant privilege. Her relationship with Chen Fang reaches across boundaries of class, culture, and geography. Yet an uncomfortable power imbalance strains the relationship. The text underscores the vast difference between the two women's social statuses by referring to Chen Fang's lover as Dauphine, a name previously used as an elite title by French royalty.[238] In this way, her name immediately associates Dauphine with privilege and status. After their relationship begins, Chen Fang tells us that "I knew, listening to her, that I knew nothing at all" (142). These thoughts are of a woman in love, but Chen Fang's awe conveys something more—a minimizing of her own education and intellectual value. Together, the women share tender moments of dance and celebration for Chen Fang's birthday, but when their relationship ends, we feel the discrepancy of their privilege

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[238] Dauphine is the character's first name, as the title (given to the heir to the French crown) was no longer used after 1830.

acutely. While Dauphine goes to France to carry on with her life, Chen Fang's fleeting happiness completely disappears, and she returns to a life of utter isolation.[239]

According to Chen Fang's limited account of their parting, Dauphine does not convey the same devastation as Chen Fang does over their breakup. Chen Fang describes her last moments with Dauphine somewhat distantly, failing to mention any emotions on the part of her lover. However, the affair's end leaves Chen Fang heartbroken and wanting to forget her short-lived happiness so as not to suffer the pains of its loss. She ponders, "So was this my life's allotment? To have rejoiced in one brief love?" (146).[240] Dauphine offered Chen Fang a love prohibited by society. Without her, Chen Fang returns to a totally inhibited state, enduring the absence of affection and intimacy for the rest of her life. She feels this emptiness "like a continual thirst" (226).

Dauphine shares her knowledge of Cuba with Chen Fang, who, in turn, begins to better understand herself through Dauphine's tales of the island.[241] Having lived there for some time, Dauphine provides Chen Fang a connection to her heritage:

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[239] We do not know of Dauphine's emotional state after she leaves Chen Fang, and it is possible that Dauphine truly loved Chen Fang and their moments together were just as prized by her as they were by Chen Fang. However, the fact remains that after leaving Chen Fang, Dauphine continued a privileged existence while Chen Fang lived poor and alone in China. We do not know Dauphine's fate, reversing the dynamics of the other stories in which we only follow the migrant's story. In this way, the text dismisses any concern for the women they abandon by limiting the narrative to the perspective of the male characters. With Chen Fang, we experience the opposite—the text relays no information about Dauphine's future and thus all of our attention follows Chen Fang's pain of abandonment.

[240] In comparison, as Lucrecia awaits death she remarks on her unlikely luck: "Lucrecia stared at him a long time. 'More than half my life has been happy,' she said softly. 'How many people can say that?'" (180).

[241] Geirola draws upon this episode to propose similarities between Chen Fang and Sor Juana: "En la cárcel, hundida en el silencio, como Sor Juana, Chen Fang sueña con Dauphine y con

> Dauphine had many photographs of Havana, including one of an old Chinese man in a doorway smoking an opium pipe. I liked to imagine that this man might have known my father or grandfather. She played Cuban records on her phonograph, too [. . .] Dauphine showed me how to dance like the Cubans, clasping me tightly and making me swing my hips. (141)

Dauphine's association with Cuba reinforces Chen Fang's correlation of the island with escape. She clings to the photograph of a Chinese man as it gives her a visible possibility of tying her family to the place. The photo seems to strengthen her tenuous ties to Cuba, as it aids tying herself to the island and picturing herself as part of its community. Conversations with Dauphine fortify Chen Fang's idealized image of the island, "It was the time of the Dance of Millions, [Dauphine] explained, when Cubans made overnight fortunes in sugar. Palaces lined the boulevards, and fancy cars cruised up and down the city's seawall…" (141).[242] In this description, Cuba seems to be the land of promise, replete with wealth and opportunity. Not only does Chen Fang's idealized Cuba allow for financial possibility, it also promises Chen Fang freedom to express her sexuality, "There was a club in Old Havana, Dauphine told me, where women wore men's evening clothes and kissed each other on the lips. They drank rum punch, lit their lovers' cigars, picked their teeth clean with silver toothpicks" (142). As Dauphine describes

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volver a Cuba, aprender el español, ver el mar y fumarse un puro cubano. En cierta forma, el episodio re-escribe la *Carta a Sor Filotea* y la excede, haciéndose cargo de lo que en Sor Juana y en la colonia era todavía inescribible" (125).

[242] Likewise, stories give Chen Fang some comfort as she suffers in prison: "Reading is my one luxury. It does not save me from want, nor will it free me from death. Certainly, it prevents me from getting a full night's sleep. But immersed in the shadows of other worlds, I find a measure of peace" (149).

Cuban culture through books, photographs, music, and dance, these details strengthen Chen Fang's image of the island—a place where she could be herself and define her own existence.

Dauphine's words grant Chen Fang brief escape from her immobile existence, granting her a limited means of experiencing a faraway place. On her deathbed, Chen Fang recalls those moments and the fleeting joy they offered as she longs for another chance at life. She sings a *bolero* [sic] that Dauphine taught her:[243]

> *Fuí* [*sic*] *la ilusión de la vida*
>
> *Un día lejano ya*
>
> *Hoy represento el pasado*
>
> *No me puedo conformar* (232)

The song provides an escape from her misery to her memories of happiness, the lyrics underscoring how Chen Fang has been marginalized to obscurity, how her life is almost an illusion of an existence. Her inability to exist as society dictates imprisons her from her first breaths to her last moments.

Dauphine de Möet is a privileged character who migrates, yet we know nothing of her life beyond the time she spends with Chen Fang. Even in her privileged position, we are reminded of Dauphine's subservience to her husband's wishes. The text clearly portrays Dauphines move to France as her husband's decision as he actively takes *his* family with him: "That autumn, Dauphine's husband took his family back to France" (143). Their departure is not a decision made together, nor is the family "theirs," emphasizing her lack of influence in their

[243] The novel suggests these lyrics are from a *bolero*, but they appear in the *danzón* "Veinte años."

shared life. Dauphine's position in the novel emphasizes the complicated situation of even elite women.

III. Other Women Characters

Similarly to the more developed women characters in the novel, the women who are merely mentioned appear in connection with the places they live. They primarily serve to enhance the stories of the male characters. The novel's stories follow specific characters and thus the secondary and minor male characters in the novel also appear to develop our understanding of the experiences of Chen Pan, Domingo, and Chen Fang. However, the male characters are more likely to be included to describe a setting, give backstories, or interact with each other to progress a storyline in a way the women are not. For instance, the men on the ship and on the plantation add to the ambiences of these spaces. Domingo's fellow soldiers offer him some companionship in Vietnam, and the text grants them families and backgrounds, much as they do Lorenzo. Minor male characters are in and out of the main storylines, but they occupy a number of capacities. The women, on the other hand, mostly act (with a few exceptions) within limited roles meant to forward the men's stories. They are almost consistently used by others and many enter the text as controlling mothers, prostitutes, or suffering servants. This is all the more notable when identifying similarities between the women's stories.

Chen Pan's wife and mother represent his connection to China. Through his memories, we learn of his mother's controlling nature and her mistreatment of his father. His Chinese wife is infertile, indicating Chen Pan's lack of opportunity in China. These two-dimensional women become disposable ties meant to be cut, symbols of a past life left behind. His unattractive

mother is uneducated, belligerent, and unable to perform physical work, as depicted by her lack of intellect and bound feet:[244]

> Chen Pan's mother ridiculed her husband as she hobbled from room to room on her lotus feet. 'Ha! Everyone calls him a scholar, but he hasn't found a position yet. And in winter he wears a threadbare robe. This is how books fool us!' Chen Pan's mother was from a family of well-to-do farmers, and far from beautiful. She knew little poetry, but used to repeat the same line to nettle her improvident husband: *Poets mostly starve to death embracing empty mountains*! (11)[245]

This woman is completely unlikeable, which encourages the reader to support Chen Pan's decision to not return home. In contrast, he also leaves behind a beloved great-aunt in China. However, Chen Pan mentions the aunt only to enhance our understanding of his continued negotiation of identity, his memories of her serving to remind us that he misses some aspects of his former country (31). When Chen Pan recounts his life in China, he describes corrupt warlords, dwindling crops, and starvation. Considering these hardships prompts us to celebrate his unlikely success in Cuba. The text leads us to unquestioningly dismiss the women Chen Pan

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[244] Jade Tsui-yu Lee writes that the portrayal of Chen Pan's mother insists upon both her brutish nature and inutility at the cost of historical accuracy: "Conventionally, Chinese women would have their feet bound to meet the required custom, especially those from well-to-do families. However, farmers and the poor would generally ignore the practice as they need helping hands including male and female children. Hence, Chen Pan's mother becomes a mystery as she is described to come from a well-to-do family and thus with bound feet. However, she is also said to be ignorant and rustic which make her bound feet improbable" (136). I do not see these two descriptors as necessarily conflicting, as the mother's family's wealth derived from a previous generation's work in agriculture and the text notes the ongoing famine (62).

[245] And, "Weak and sallow-skinned, Mother ruled the farm from her bed, knees tucked to her chest, lotus feet curled and useless from the painful binding long ago. In her closet were three minuscule pairs of jeweled slippers, all that remained of a dowry once rich with silks and brocades" (13).

abandons to those hardships by never mentioning the again. As we follow Chen Pan to Cuba, we never pause to consider what the women are left to endure. Chen Pan's story begins after he leaves his mother and wife, stressing the lack of importance these women play in his story. Furthermore, Chen Pan meets Lucrecia after he accepts that he will never return to China. His marriage with her seems to finally erase any family that came before. In this way, the omniscient narrator presents Chen Pan's story as dismissive of the commitments of his previous life, including the women in it.

The male characters repeatedly engage in sexual relationships with women to develop our comprehension of their current situation. The text uses the presence of women to enhance the stories of men. For example, Chen Pan watches dancing girls in the port of Amoy. The scene is hazy and dreamlike as "his gambling gold slowly vanished in the arms of a lush dancing girl" (4). His tryst with this girl occurs in a room filled with smoke and vice, the liminal atmosphere of the harbor emphasizing this place as a threshold between his soon-to-be former life in China and his future in Cuba. For many of the men aboard the ship to Cuba, sexualized imagery of women amplifies their vision of Cuba as a land of opportunity: "Sometimes the men spoke wistfully of the roadside flowers who awaited them in Cuba, easy amber-colored whores who opened their legs for their own pleasure, expecting nothing in return" (19). Later, as a free man who has yet to meet Lucrecia, Chen Pan's interest in Havana's prostitutes stresses his newfound economic success: "Plump dumpling girls were what he liked now. He hated to feel any ribs whatsoever. He went for older ones, twenty-five and up. No paying two hundred pesos for a virgin like some of his friends. A waste of money, in his opinion" (71-2). Chen Pan's interaction with the prostitutes underscores his financial accomplishments and the prudent approach to spending that makes him as effective businessman.

Sexualized women develop Domingo's story in a similar way. The text presents New York City as a place of possibility filled with people from diverse backgrounds. Domingo's hope for a new life manifests through his desire for women: "Manhattan was a glorious *jardín de mujeres*. Brown girls. Pink girls. White and yellow girls in every soft-fleshed shape and size" (45). However, Domingo fails to find a sense of home or community in New York and when he sleeps with a local nurse, the woman confronts him with racist remarks: "The nurse told him that she usually dated only white men but she'd made an exception in his case" (47). This encounter depicts the reality of racism in the city and the loneliness Domingo feels there. The nurse's fleeting presence in the text helps us understand Domingo's inability to root himself in New York. As he longs for his island home, he remembers Cuban women, "[Domingo] missed the girls of Guantánamo—their stretch shorts and the tight-fitting military uniforms that showed off every curve" (207). He wants what he cannot have and the women represent the island he so horribly misses. His memories of these women appear within the novel to contribute to our understanding of Domingo's self-destructive nostalgia.

Similarly, Lorenzo brings his second wife, Jinying, to Cuba from China. His profession as a *médico chino* fuels his interest in Chinese culture and his trips abroad result in new remedies and medicines imported to the island. In some ways, Lorenzo's wife can be seen as one of his Chinese goods and thus her presence reflects his relationship with his father's culture. Jinying also serves to remind Chen Pan of how he misses China: "At one o'clock, Chen Pan's daughter-in-law arrived at the Lucky Find with sweet-corn soup and a firepot of steamed fish and vegetables for lunch. Chen Pan called her *bing xin*, pure heart, and was grateful for her visits. Around her everything smelled and tasted of China" (244-5). Jinying links Chen Pan to his

homeland, but the text does not include any of her own story, thoughts, feelings, or experiences as an immigrant.

As we see with Chen Fang, Tham Than Lan, and in Lucrecia's early life, the minor women characters frequently appear in the novel as victims to the abusive systems imprisoning them.[246] On the plantation male slaves treat women as if they are objects to win: "The fights over the women grew so bloody and bitter that someone usually ended up dead" (28). There, Chen Pan falls in love with a slave, Rita, but after her preferred lover is murdered and an overseer rapes her, Rita vanishes from the text. Chen Pan grieves for her, but promptly moves on with his life, never mentioning her again. Rita's situation describes the everyday horrors confronted by enslaved women. Because she is only briefly a part of Chen Pan's story, she is easily forgotten. In fact, the text later offhandedly mentions Chen Pan's mourning: "Chen Pan's grief over Rita made him lucky in gambling" (36). Not only is Rita's suffering readily dismissed, but we also accept, amidst Chen Pan's temporary sadness, a positive effect that her absence has upon his life.

To further construct the limited agency of women within the novel, the stories casually incorporate dominant sexist attitudes, presenting the statements or ideas of some characters as unquestioned, underlying social norms. For instance, Chen Pan speaks of his friends' treatment of women, "To them, a man with a woman was commonplace, a need of the body, nothing more" (169). Although Chen Pan disagrees with them, the narrative includes their conversations to describe the common attitudes of men in his social circles:

> His friends believed that women, by and large, were mankind's menace. How many kings and misters, sages and saints, had been ruined by the presumably

[246] One exception is the rumored "Yoruban girl who had bought her freedom by carving tortoiseshell combs" (25).

> gentler sex? Recently, they'd heard reports from China that unfaithful wives no longer jumped in wells and that widows remarried without so much as threatening to commit suicide. 'Such disrespect!' they cried. (170)

In their eyes women who do not conform to the traditional, submissive role of a wife are dangerous and disrespectful. We are never privy to any discussion between women of how men treat them. Instead, we learn of the devious nature of women. For example, on the plantation, "The women looked harmless, but they could be as wicked as their brothers. (How many innocent slaves had been put to death by these dainty ladies' accusations?)" (65). These ideas also remind us of Chen Pan and Chen Fang's mothers, cold women who take advantage of those around them.[247]

The stories of Chen Pan and Domingo dismissively include various mentions of prostitutes, but Chen Fang's visit to a brothel as a young girl creates a life-changing moment of sexual vulnerability.[248] In a coming-of-age scene, Chen Fang goes with some of the boys from her school to visit a prostitute. Taking turns, the students enter the girl's room. When Chen Fang's time comes, the girl quickly realizes that Chen Fang is not a boy. Instead of ridiculing her or reacting with horror, the two girls treat each other with tender empathy. The text describes the girl as though she too is wearing a costume and playing a role: "[The prostitute's] eyes were smeared black, her lips smudged the color of sunset" (Urbistondo 70; García 93). Chen Fang

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[247] This portrayal of mothers, however, contradicts what Rich recognizes as a "dangerous archetype [of] the Mother, source of angelic love and forgiveness in a world increasingly ruthless and impersonal; the feminine, leavening, and emotional element in a society ruled by male logic and male claims to "objective," "rational" judgment; the symbol and residue of moral values and tenderness in a world of wars, brutal competition and contempt for human weakness" (35).

[248] For example, Domingo Chen loses his virginity to a prostitute and the soldiers mention brothel visits in Vietnam.

looks at the girl with recognition, seeing herself in the other girl as she describes her as "no older than me" (Urbistondo 70; García 93). As Urbistondo asserts, "Chen Fang and the young girl are subjects, mere pawns, within a social order that casts both bodies as marginal and therefore subjected to second class status" (71).[249] Yet the girl respects Chen Fang and suggests some understanding of her situation: "To my surprise, the girl patted the bedroll beside her. 'Stay a while,' she said. 'This way the others will think you're a man.' […] She took my hand again, holding it tightly as we waited together in silence. The air smelled faintly sweet" (94). In this brief time, both of these women find respect for the other's suffering and are allowed a momentarily pause from performances. The girl's room becomes a safe space where Chen Fang finds an instant of acceptance.

Many of the minor women characters fall into stereotypical roles of women: they are prostitutes with hearts of gold, conniving older women, or supporting wives. Some of the only women who are not sexualized are the "old hags," who are completely disregarded (24).[250] However, a scene in which Domingo contemplates the Virgin Mary sacrilegiously clouds any dichotomy between reverence of epitomic purity/motherhood and his sexual desire: "he stole another glance at the Virgin. He noticed her left foot crushing the head of a hideous snake, presumably Satan. Her toes were plump and painted red. He wanted to suck them" (50-1).

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[249] Urbistondo continues, "After their personal moment which was consensual and I would argue intimate, the nameless girl returns to being sexually exploited. This scene marks a frustrated cross-cultural space where otherness remains. While both Chen Fang and the prostitute engage in a physical and psychical connection, their public lives frustrate this moment of mutual recognition between two othered subjects (72).

[250] Chen Fang describes a woman's life as having two parts, before the age of forty and after. For first forty years, a woman acts as an attractive wife, but then she becomes a mother. She follows this statement, "I say this, but my life is not a woman's life. I lie like a man, alone in my two rooms" (148).

Immediately after these thoughts, he indifferently remembers his older stepsister fondling him as a child. Incestuous overtones continue later in the novel when Domingo recalls going to a brothel to lose his virginity and purposefully choosing a prostitute who "reminded him of his mother" (159). These scenes recall Domingo's search for the comforts of his past in his sexual relationship with Tham Thanh Lan. His nostalgia for home combines with lust. For Domingo, religion and carnal impulse mix and family and sex overlap, creating a complicated relationship with home, love, and desire.

IV. Closing Thoughts

Chen Fang's disruptive narrative in *Monkey Hunting* illuminates the roles of all of the women characters in the novel. Her story not only prompts us to recall the quiet women who pass through the pages of the work, but asks us to recognize them and think about their lives. Chen Fang's story represents one woman's marginalized position in history. Her voice works to counteract centuries of silencing powers that have denied her this voice. A close examination her role reveals more about the lives of other women, most of whom appear in the text as an accessory to a male's story. They may be presented as sexual objects, annoying burdens, or loving partners, but most have no voice, relegated to roles of supporting characters who disappear after serving their purpose of developing the male character's narrative. Chen Fang's story refuses to let us forget their unrecorded presences.

The novel's women defy simplistic stereotypes or classification. Amidst like circumstances or experiences, the work's diverse portrayal of women offers a small representation of the complex layerings of privilege and intersectional identities. Just as Bakhtin calls for a novel's representation of reality to incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives, *Monkey*

Hunting interweaves complicated lives. The characters' experiences dialogue with each other, but similarities include exceptions so as not to permit a simplistic, generalized reading of the novel's women. In this way, the narrative refuses neat categorization of its characters. Most women cannot leave their countries, but Dauphine and Jinying travel. Most fall victim to a patriarchal system, but Lucrecia finds fulfillment, success, and love. Some provide their lovers with a means of finding home in the land around them, but Jinying leaves her country and Tham Thanh Lan cannot keep Domingo in hers (176).[251] Most are voiceless within the text, but Chen Fang speaks for herself. In stories of Chen Pan and Domingo, the text follows the male protagonist, leading the reader away from many of the women, allowing them to disappear altogether. At the same time, Chen Fang's narrative draws our attention to their dismissal.

When asked about the "unusually harsh" fates of the women in *Monkey Hunting*, García responded: "I think these were not unusual fates for women of these times and place—and in fact, for many women today in various parts of the world. I had no ulterior motive for making my female characters so oppressed except to stay close to their reality. I wanted very much to make their dire situations come vividly alive" (262). Certainly, the novel's women characters represent the sexism that imbues their society. Their suffering and hardship present the realities of those who stay behind when others migrate. Many of these women are linked to place and are dismissed from the text just as they are absent from stories that center upon male migrants. These women characters' limited presences depict another side of the migrant's story.

Chen Fang's narrative upsets the novel's otherwise omniscient narration. The limited but memorable presence of her life asks us to question how stories are told and whom they represent.

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[251] As Zapata-Calle writes, "Las mujeres se presentan en el relato como las posibles madres patrias de los personajes" (176).

Her voice sheds light on the lives of other women in the novel, illuminating important similarities in their roles, while also acknowledging different situations, contexts, and exceptions. Her narrative might initially seem out-of-place within *Monkey Hunting*, but the space allotted to Chen Fang counteracts the silence of those who would otherwise be left behind by official discourse.

Conclusion: Migration Today

> "At a time when so much of our politics is trying to manage this clash of cultures brought about by globalization and technology and migration, the role of stories to unify—as opposed to divide, to engage rather than to marginalize—is more important than ever."
>
> –Barack Obama[252]

The preceding chapters investigate overarching themes of migration, cultural change, and the recuperation of marginalized voices in the works of Cuban and Cuban American writers. This research aims to contribute to and expand upon ongoing conversations surrounding social issues that confront our global world. In 2015, the UN announced that 244 million people live in countries other than those of their birth.[253] With this dissertation, I strive to illuminate processes of adaptation, negotiation of identity, and experiences of marginalization that affect millions of people.

The selected literary works intimately portray struggles of leaving home, living separated from loved ones, and beginning again in unfamiliar places. Ruth Behar states in her introduction to *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* that post-Revolutionary Cuba has been depicted as either a "utopia or a backward police state" (2). These limited representations leave "little room for a more nuanced and complex vision of how Cubans on the island and in the diaspora give meaning to their lives, their identity, and their culture in the aftermath of a battle that has split the nation at the root" (2). My reading of spectral and ritual elements in the selected texts works toward

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[252] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/16/books/obamas-secret-to-surviving-the-white-house-years-books.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0

[253] This number represents 3.3% of the global population. http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/01/244-million-international-migrants-living-abroad-worldwide-new-un-statistics-reveal/

understanding the trauma of leaving a homeland, the complexity of negotiating identity in a foreign community, and the possibility of healing cultural trauma.

Questions of migration's effect on cultural preservation inform much of my research, most specifically in regards to Cuban exile communities in the United States and Chinese culture in Cuba. All of the texts, in some way, express concern for the continuation of culture after exile and migration. O'Reilly Herrera and Chaviano present Cuban heritage in exile as celebrated. It is able to endure, even off the island. While Cuban culture abroad may find ways to thrive, García's novel explores the consequences of continued migrations. Her characters reflect a cultural reality that Campilongo notes in the Chinese-Cuban poulation: despite recent efforts to recognize the Chinese in Cuba, "the Chinese legacy is fading away" (Campilongo 114).

As people continue to move across the globe in the twenty-first century, migration's impact on cultural diversity will prompt further questions of preservation, syncretism, and marginalized practices. Cuba's history of multiculturalism brought together people from around the world. As peoples mixed on the island, immigrants faced issues of adaptation and cultural negotiation that are, in many ways, similar to those confronted by Cuban exiles in the United States. Cuban exiles represent an important segment of the last century's migrant population. Worldwide, they make up a part of the current 60 million people—one of every one hundred—who are forcibly displaced.[254] Separated from a homeland, these people negotiate their homeland's culture with their present circumstances. They leave family behind whom they may never see again. Many of their children and grandchildren will inherit traditions from a place

[254] https://www.rescue.org/frequently-asked-questions-about-refugees-and-resettlement

they may not know. I hope that these chapters contribute to a larger understanding of migration and displacement and work toward the larger issue of forming community across difference.

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