

*Resolver, Bregar, Resistir: The Manichean World in the relations of Cuba & United States*

El problema de Cuba... es un problema nuevo. El mundo no había tenido muchas razones para saber que Cuba existía. Para muchos era algo así como un apéndice de Estados Unidos. Incluso para muchos ciudadanos de este país Cuba era una colonia de Estados Unidos. En el mapa no lo era; en el mapa nosotros aparecíamos con un color distinto al color de Estados Unidos. En la realidad sí lo era.<sup>1</sup> – Fidel Castro Ruz en la sede de las Naciones Unidas, el 26 de septiembre de 1960.

Introduction

This paper developed under the overarching framework of postcolonialism/postcoloniality aims at examining the sociocultural issue of resistance through the lenses of *resolver/bregar* in the context of Cuba in order to analyze the resiliency of the Cuban people. The historical trajectory of Cuba vis-à-vis the United States has been and continues to be problematic as the United States as an imperial force has influenced and implemented international mechanisms of coercion that in some cases has radically transformed the lives of Cubans. It is true that responsibility for many events in Cuban history can also be traced, assigned, and distributed to the various Cuban governments and regimes but the shadow casted over domestic and international Cuban affairs by the United States is undeniable and emerges from a long history of colonial and neocolonial relations between both countries. Equally relevant in this analysis is to assess how this Manichean construction pervades in these relationships and how these tinted interactions affects the people of Cuba in terms of resistance. In other words, this analysis will seek to apply the concept of resistance to the hectic historical relations of Cuba with the United States. Both, the recent (re)opening of diplomatic channels and official communications among the two Presidents, Raúl Castro and Barack Obama, as well as the symbolic meaning of the death of Fidel are articulated here as events that might

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<sup>1</sup> Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Ministro Del Gobierno Revolucionario, en la sede de las Naciones Unidas, Estados Unidos, el 26 de septiembre de 1960. (versión taquigráfica de las oficinas del Primer Ministro) – <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1960/esp/f260960e.html>

contribute to a larger (de)colonial process towards democratic reforms in Cuba by Cubans and for Cubans. Having said that, this argument is, as expected to be, controversial, but at the center of it I place the resiliency of the Cuban people, their agency to adapt, and how they never give up living. Subsequently, how they resist *resolviendo/bregando con la vida* regardless of the political complexities that provides character to their lives is at the core of this writing. Thus, this text will explain how notions of colonial and postcolonial relations have led to ongoing processes of resistance to colonial forces. Those processes which thoeemergences from the long history of *cubanos y cubanas que a pesar de las limitaciones diarias impuestas, “resuelven”* (Cooke 2014, 26) *su vida de una forma u otra* as well as the dialogues –with reservations in terms of expectations and future outcome– that Obama and Castro have forged over the last two years in an attempt to restore a sense of lost peace. Considering that the presidential powers of Obama are limited by Congress, then nature of these relations are, I suggest, reestablished as a symbolic metaphor, since issues like the U.S. embargo against Cuba continues to exists and the process of normalizing relationships will now be continued (or not) and decided by president elect Donald Trump as well as a Republican majority in Congress. Thus, greetings and hand shakings between Castro and Obama are in and of itself –considering the political limitations that cannot be resolved through executive orders– an act of resistance that speaks back to more than 50 years of imperial attempts to control the destiny of the Island.

### Defining the Problem: Manichean Colonialism

In her book “Talking Back”, bell hooks (1989) revels her notion of taking back: “speaking as an equal to an authority figure” (5). hooks<sup>2</sup> stresses the “daring to disagree [which] sometimes it just meant having an opinion” (5). This notion of talking back has to do with “speaking the outrages” (1) and act of writing. In this sense, the idea of ‘taking back’ or ‘writing back’ relates to a process of

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<sup>2</sup> bell hooks writes her name with no capital letters in the beginning of both words “bell” and “hooks”. Though this might count as a spelling error, I am writing her name as she does in order to respect her language resistance.

(re)inscription in which post-colonial writing ‘writes back’ to colonial texts. “Such process of ‘writing back’, far from indicating a continuing dependence, is an effective means of escaping from binary polarities implicit in the manichean construction of colonization and its practices” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 10). This binary refers to the notion of colonialism in which the construction creates a colonist and a colonizer, the powerful and the powerless, civilization and barbaric animals, in the words of Césaire (2000):

Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses...

No human contact, but relations of domination and submission... colonization = ‘thingy-fication’...

Thus, colonization represents an imperial project of social and economic forces that bring power to the imperial colonist in order to generate docile bodies through a process of domination using extreme strategies of violence and dehumanization. This ‘thingification’ transforms people “into an instrument of production” (Césaire 2000, 42) through racial differentiation and inferiority.

It is in this context in which the historical trajectory of the creation of Cuba as a nation is entangled with colonization. First, tied up to the Spanish Crown and then to the United States. Through different historical process and mechanisms Cuba has been linked to colonial power and the dark shadows of imperial suffocation: la Base Naval Guantanamo which dates back to 1900s, the political and economical linkages –formal and informal– between Havana and Miami, and the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba as a strategy to bring down the Cuban Revolutionary Government, product of the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel and El Che are just examples of the fabric that configures the tensions of these nations.

I will first conceptualizing Postcolonialism/Postcoloniality and then I will frame the notion of resistance through ‘resolver’ using the work of Cooke (2014) and ‘bregar’ described in a text by Diaz Quiñones (2003) and linked them to Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Sollar, Gleason, and Hall. For each author, I will define key concepts and ideas relevant to both the overarching framework and the said theoretical concepts and scholars.

### The Overarching Framework of Resistance: Postcolonialism/Postcoloniality

According to Go (2016) the “study of postcoloniality has taken the form of ‘postcolonial theory’” (1) which, grapples with the “persistent relations of power and the cultures of imperialism that [have historically] underpinned” (4) colonized peoples. Thus, post-colonial theory “has existed for a long time before that particular name was used to describe it (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 1). Post-colonial theory emerges as an act of self-reflection as well as “self-determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 1). The term ‘post-colonial’ “represent[s] the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges throughout this diverse range of societies, in their institutions and their discursive practices... [it resonates] with all ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates... [and] it addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of the colonial contact” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 1). In other words, post-colonial studies “are based in the ‘historical fact’ of European colonialism, and the diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise... [and has] its basis in the historical process of colonialism” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995, 2). Postcolonialism discards a binary classification of First/Third world vision as well as the idea that post-colonial “is somehow synonymous with the economically ‘underdeveloped’” (3).

The legacy of colonialism in post-colonial societies is linked to “overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination... [that] independence has not solved [as many nations are configured through neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic, or religious discrimination; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invader societies –all these testify to the fact that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction” (1-2).

Resistance-Resolver-Bregar: A Theoretical Framework from Postcolonialism/Postcoloniality

The notion of ‘talking back’ and the idea of ‘resolver’ or ‘bregar’ speak to transformations of resistance. In terms of ‘resolver’, Cooke (2014) states that the term “implies questionably legal activities, since at least one step of nearly every solution to any problem in Havana today involves the black market, and always indicates an exchange of favors” (26). I argue, however, that ‘resolver’ is not just about getting things done, but an attitude towards life itself. I claim that ‘resolver’ is about intuition for how to handle life and how to resist the deficiencies brought about into our lives. At times, it means a way to be at peace with what you cannot change. That, in and of itself, means resistance.

Díaz Quiñones (2003) defines ‘bregar’ as “una forma de estar y no estar, **un tipo preciso de lucha**, una negociación entre la ausencia y la presencia” (20, emphasis added) entre lo que se tiene y lo que no se tiene y de como se define/resiste/resuelve esa diferencia. Considering the quality of resisting implied in the notion of bregar, one can refer to it as “una acción dentro de un margen muy reducido... [implementado] con gran capacidad de maniobra y una delicada medida... [o aparece como] el anuncio de que hay una salida a la crisis” (Díaz Quiñones 2003, 21). Thus, *se resuelve la crisis, el momento de angustia, la diferencia entre lo que esta y no esta o no va poder estar.*

The postcolonial examination of colonialist relations means to actually engage in intellectual

subversion because the need to examine implies the rise of awareness that gives birth *a ese proceso contestatario anticolonial: resolver contestando, gritando, a los caceros/as si es preciso.*

According to Said, colonizers “have been required to confront themselves... as the representatives of a culture and even of races accused of crimes – crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience” (95). Perhaps, it is possible to think –or maybe only hopeful to imagine– that President Obama has engaged in a new dynamic with Cuba both as a Black person – the ancestral and historical past of slavery and marginalized people– and as the President of the United States, giving him a double and controversial positionality that confronts the colonized and the colonizer. On the one hand, as the individual the President is aware of his underpinnings as a Black person as the issue of over his citizenship can attest. No other president in history was forced to such humiliating process, which only affirms that his skin color makes him less than white presidents. On the other hand, he is the leader of one of the most powerful countries in the world which empire has been built on the back of colonial process and institutions. President Obama represents the colonized body. This representation serves well to highlight the complexities of colonialism and neocolonialism and its contemporary effects. To be sure, there are responsibilities for what the United States should be accountable but the complicity of Cuban leadership and its middle and upper level classes cannot be ignore. The historical agency of Batista and others deserves just as much attention. Further, the legacy of Fidel Castro embodied in his brother, Raúl Castro, materializes in a political system that is in tune with the notion of ‘resolver’. *El Gobierno Cubano ha tenido que resolver problemas sociopolíticos y económicos sin recurrir a la democracia como forma de gobierno perpetuando un régimen único. Al mismo tiempo, han sido los cubanos in and out of the Island quienes han resuelto de una forma u otra los desafíos diarios y lo continúan haciéndolo.* These historical disputes between the United States and Cuba have marked the Cuban experience in the Caribbean as the most unique colonial-anticolonial process of our history. Paraphrasing Fanon: it is Cuba facing the U.S. “like a

colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which [the U.S....] has not been able to find answers” (1995, 95) but the failures of the Castro administration and its leadership demonstrates that such task cannot be approached in Manichean terms. This approach is one the most important critique in the readings as these writers engage themselves in narratives that challenge the Manichean legacy of colonialism but not often with a ‘in-between’ (Anzaldúa 1987) place.

In his essay, Bhabha (1995) comments on Fanon’s view of culture as the site of and for political struggle. Fanon, Bhabha argues “describes [“culture-as-political-struggle” (1995, 156)] as “the zone of occult instability where the people dwell” (Bhabha 1995, 156). In this sense, ‘resolver’ which is embedded in the fabric of the Cuban culture is the manifestation of that dwelling because it involves uncertainty and the unforeseeable outcome of any challenge. People dwell in the ‘black market’ (Cooke 2014) *de manera de poder conseguir lo necesario para resolver un problema, una comida, una casa, las cosas de la vida. Pero resolver dichos problemas implica adaptarse a la posibilidad de que los mismos no se resuelvan y de vivir con ellos en un estado de ambivalencia hasta que las cosas se resuelvan.* The fact that life goes on and people go with it indicates two marvelous things about Cubans: their agency in moving through the struggles but also their resiliency to resist and resolve those struggles.

*Resistir es resolver es contestar y contestar –o no– se produce dentro de un contexto cultural. La protesta no nace de la nada, se produce, se aprende como consecuencia de la violencia y la opresión; la injusticia.*

Fanon describes nationalism as connected to the idea of the nation and since the nation is the site –geographical and dialectical– of resistance, this “has enabled post-colonial societies to invent a self image through which they could act to liberate themselves from imperialist oppression” (117) *y de esta forma resolver su condición colonial. Resistir para resolver, resolver resistiendo.* Fanon (1995) subscribes to the idea that “a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created

itself and keeps itself in existence” (117). A national culture allows people to find themselves in one another and bring them together in unity. Fanon understands national culture as a path to the (re)construction of the past in order to recognize the present and be able to project the future in prosperity. The ‘imagined community’, using Anderson’s concept of nation, must be concerned with the impact of colonialism in the recovery of the past. In this sense, Fanon express his point of view on colonialism and the ‘forgotten’ past:

Colonialism is not simple a content to impose its rule upon the present and the future [of the colonized]... [It] is not satisfied merely with holding people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form of content... It turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (120)

Fanon keeps in mind in his writing that national culture represents the fight against oppression toward freedom and liberty, that resisting means the recovery of the past in order to rearticulate the culture of the people. Cultural representations are then very important to the building of the nation. National production of art as a symbolic expression of the nation is an intricate development in this course. Fanon exalts “oral traditions –stories, epics, and songs of the people which formerly were filed away” (120) as fundamental narratives in the recovery of the past. This is particularly imperative as classical versions of colonial history were formed under the assumption that texts were the most essential evidence in the creation of historical records and still today testimonies are examined with some doubts. In all, *el arte resuelve los vacíos históricos y perdidos con las vidas que se fueron. La muerte de l@s marginad@s, l@s indí@s, l@s native@s, l@s aborígenes, l@s negr@s, se llevó de la tierra los testimonios de sus existencias. Los cuerpos desaparecidos, las experiencias vividas, y la sabiduría de est@s muert@s han quedado enterrad@s en un pasado que ha sido diezmado o exterminado por el colonialismo. Esas voces son las verdaderas voces subalternas*, in the sense that it is in their death that the subaltern cannot longer speak anymore for themselves. Art has the ability to look back into the past



legacy and represent symbolically a piece of what might resemble the subalterns' lost voice. Subalternity, perhaps, I argue, is the attempt to seek and bring back to life a reconstructed notion of that life in the past. The anthropological work of assembling the pieces of past memories and artifacts together by those with ancestral ties to such past might appear as the closest thing to a process of anthropological subalternity as this conveys the true agency in the recovery of a familiar voice in the distance past in a site in which the native past and hybrid-native present coincide in the search of a national identity. The production of art represents then the survival of the memory as well as the historical soul fragmented by the colonial existence.

However, Fanon (1995) is very aware of “the pitfalls of national consciousness, of its becoming an ‘empty shell’” (117) he blames this on two separately but related components. On the one hand, he claims that “in the first phase of the national struggle colonialism tries to disarm national demands by putting forward economic doctrines” (119). In this sense, Fanon (1995) criticizes how economic underdevelopment is used to delay the crystallization of national consciousness” (119). On the other hand, he states that the “national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries is not engaged in production, nor invention, nor building, nor labor” (121) insisting that the middle class does not have economic power and it is also an underdeveloped middle class. This combination of the colonial past can undermine the success of the new nations.

Said (1995) presents resistance as two distinct processes of decolonization: one ‘geographical territory’ and the other one ‘cultural territory’ (95). The first one refers to the idea of fighting against the enemy that has intruded one’s place, to take them down and out. The second one speaks of “ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a ‘shattered community, to save or restore then sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system’” (95). The success in decolonizing the land, the body, and the mind –which I suggest entails this endeavor– can lead to “the establishment of new and independent states” (95). However, Said warns us of a “partial

tragedy of resistance” (95) as the resistant project is a process that cannot erase the colonial past. Rather, it is built from recovered “forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire” (95). Thus, the resistance project must unfold those complexities and dismantle them in order to be aware of their influence and possible effects on the new nation.

Following Fanon, Said also thinks that Europe is responsible for the problems generated by its colonial greed and for which it has not presented any viable solution. This vacuum is confronted by the Third World *que debe resolver/resistir*. It falls on the minorities and the marginalized –the colonized– to face the task and (re)create a new destiny. This new destiny has to embrace three relevant aspects of ‘cultural resistance’ (97). The first one is the hidden histories of the colonized people. These histories must be incorporated into larger narratives in order to integrate the colonized experience and their historical past prior to the appropriation of colonialism. This historical method must serve to recreate “the imprisoned nation itself” (97). Once again, this idea infers to me that one must decolonized land, body and mind or spirit (or probably both). As Bob Marley sing “Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds”. This immense task carries important developments in terms of the actualization of a national culture as the backbone to shape language and cultural practices as it brings back the “communal memory” (97) from “local slave narratives, spiritual autobiographies, [and] prison memoirs” (97). These additional and necessary narratives are the “counterpoint to the Western powers’ monumental histories, official discourses and panoptic quasi-scientific viewpoint” (97). Next, Said speaks of resistance as “an alternative way of conceiving human history” (97) in order to challenge the West, its legacy of dividedness, and take down cultural boundaries among people. This is not to say that we must create a homogenous society but it is to address the potential disruptions that the politics of differentiation, as Hall (1995) sees it, might bring about in societies highly exposed to hierarchical structures of power based on systematic construction of differences. Lastly, these previous points

relate to “a more integrative view of human community and human liberation” (97). Said observes the importance of avoiding nationalist politics of separation because such division can only be a destructing veil of colonial fog. Said is very categorical in this instance as he firmly states that “throughout the imperial world during the decolonizing period, protest, resistance, and independence movements were fuelled by one or another nationalism” (97). Once again, Said cautions us to be mindful and aware of the colonial fog and its complexities, particularly in terms of placing hierarchical value over one another’s movements and their respective and perceived place in the decolonizing movements arguing for more integration instead of fragmented nationalisms which can be (re)configured as subtle replacements of colonial politics –divide-and-conquer– through social maneuvers of racial inferiority for the benefits of new leaders more concerned with their personal gains than the society they claim to lead.

In sum, the acknowledgement of marginalized people begins with (re)tracing their forgotten history back to their past before colonialism. Further, this effort must encompass lost voices of those who perished and cannot longer speak. Said names this resistance writing “the voyage in” (97) as it forces, colonized intellectuals and academic in general, *a buscar ese pasado escondido, esas voces gritando desde sus tumbas perdidas y sin ser identificadas... confrontar el resultado feroz del colonialismo significa resolver los enigmas* “[in] a trip to and into the beast” (97).

Regardless of the journey into the beast and the potential conflicts between fractured nationalist movements looking for power, Said insists that there is a conceivable discontent by Westerners because the colonized are fighting and gaining their independence. In other words, Europeans think that discourses regarding independent nations are “ill-suited to, and likely to be abused by [the other]” (98). This is not a surprise as colonizers cannot begin to imagine *como los bárbaros* –Fidel Castro in power for over 50 years and the fact that he did not fall is an example of this– can actually be in power and rule with goodness and a sense of government. However, and in

all fairness, the abuse of power in the case of Cuba since Castro can easily become a heated debate. Nevertheless, it is the long history of colonial relations of power and domination that impede colonizers to validate and legitimize the 'ethnic' government. In this sense, Said sustains that this legacy of differentiation perpetuated by these 'fixed' dual ideologies of who is the colonizer and who the colonized can only operate in spheres of isolation and lack of contact and connection with one another. Thus, Said firmly conveys that nothing but prejudice is the reason that keeps human beings divided by their "separation and distinctiveness" (98). The survival of humanity lies in their connection which implies a very simple hope of truth: let us not rule the other, let us not build human hierarchies. *Resistir en comunidad, como hermanos y hermanas, hablando, dialogando, aprendiendo de cada uno y una.*

Bhabha (1995) contributes to the distinction between cultural diversity and cultural differences as helpful in developing the idea that cultural difference "focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority" (155). Bhabha (1995) defines cultural diversity as "an epistemological object - culture as an object of empirical knowledge" (155) while "cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as 'knowledgeable', authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification... a process of signification through which statements *of* culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity." (155). Put it differently, cultural difference in practical terms names what can be knowledge from a hierarchical perspective of 'cultural supremacy' that emerges "only in the moment of differentiation" (155), which means when it is enacted or mentioned. In Bhabha's words:

The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be

repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic (1995, 156).

In searching for the past, the connections between that past and the present must be critically analyzed as this process can lead to a false past that will come to represent not a ‘real memory’ but a political strategy to create a history in order to construct particular representations of that past and therefore of those who lived in such era as well as those living the constructed legacy in the present. The problem of binary constructions as it has been demonstrated is that the complexities of a blurred past and its voices without evidence “negates our sense of the origins of the struggle” (156) as the authority vested on Western ideologies “demands that we rethink our perspective on the identity of culture” (156). Bhabha (1995) claims that cultures are not isolated units that cannot be divided, but they are not binary constructions either. Instead, Bhabha (1995) places cultures at the “intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process” (158). Similarly, to the ‘in-between’ notion *de la conciencia mestiza que articula Anzaldúa (1987) o la construcción del ‘anthropoi’ propuesta por Mignolo (2011)*, the alternative to the binary world of the Manichean thinking gives rise to a multidimensional model of 3D perspective and vision. The intervention of a Third Space, the articulation of postcolonialism at this interventional level safeguards “that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (157). The colonized can (re)invent themselves and (re)appropriate their lives, their past, and move forward to a free future.

In this work, “Who is Ethnic?” Sollors (1995) explains the differential connotations between ethnic and ethnicity. Sollors (1995) indicates through an etymological explanation that the word ‘ethnic’ has a more ‘universalist/inclusive’ use that, simply put it, implies that every social group as a

particular ethos and therefore is an 'ethnic group'. However, the word 'ethnicity' is confined to the notion of 'otherness' which "excludes dominant groups and thus establishes an 'ethnicity minus one'" (191) defining people in a negative way and contrasting it to how 'ethnic' is perceived. Sollors (1995) move from this notion of 'otherness' and the historical differences between ethnic and ethnicity to claim that in English American and therefore, in the American context, the language connotation of 'ethnic' is associated with its 'pagan memory' and "often secularized in the sense of ethnic as other, as nonstandard, or, in America, as not fully American" (191) which indicates within a binary construction of the Christian those who are the 'chosen people' and those who are not (191). Those who are not chose, those who are not defined as American by the 'real American people' are less than humans or in other words, barbaric, uncivilized, alien, or "by some derogatory term corresponding to such modern American ethnic tags as 'bohunk', 'chink', 'dago', 'frog', 'greaser', 'nigger', 'sheeny' and 'wop'" (192).

Sollors (1995) includes in his work the concept of ethnicity as interpreted by Barth in which ethnicity is seen as "mental, cultural, social, moral, aesthetic, and not necessarily territorial" (192). Furthermore and more important, Barth conceptualizes ethnicity as a "boundary-constructing processes which function as cultural markers between groups" (192). It is precisely this 'ethnic boundary' that sets the limits of inclusion/exclusion and not the cultural representations (materials, rites, ideas, narratives, etc.) that shape and form the notions of the culture. As Barth puts it: "If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion" (Said 1995, 192). Cubans both in Cuba and in the U.S. are not a political homogenous community. Their political distinctiveness is maintained as a limit that set who is in and who is not, although even this boundary is not constructed in the same way across the Cuban community and its diaspora.

As it relates to Gleason (1995), in “Identifying Identity”, he provides a historic approach to the notion of identity and its relation to ethnicity in American during the 1950s and 1960s. Gleason (1995) suggests that ‘identity’ was implemented as a way to examine “the relationship of the individual to societies that perennial problem presented itself” (194) at that time. Indeed, this notion was ideal in the search for connections between individual and society, more so considering the embedded contradictions that link individuals with “the national ideology of the values of freedom, equality, and the autonomy of the individual” (Gleason 1995, 194). At the center of society, the individual was ideologically speaking always first, always the axle that kept the narratives of “working hard” rolling. But the promised of “hard work” did not always deliver the expected outcome and this affected the answers to the questions: “Who am I?” and/or “Where I belong?” (Gleason 1995, 194).

Identity “was used in reference to, and dealt with the relationship of, the individual personality and the ensemble of social and cultural features that gave different groups their distinctive character (Gleason 1995, 194). But the character of the individual heavily centered on his/her needs clashed with the society as the American people began to analyze in the context of the 1950s and 1960s their place in the American society as well as where the society has placed them (both historically and looking into the future). This questioning was much endured by minorities who dwelled with marginalization and their placement by the majority of society. Thus, the individual realization was always greatly undermined by factors that did not relate to him/her. In sum, ‘freedom, equality, and the autonomy of the individual’ were not given to all. Some (or many) coerced others from attaining those ideals and a cohesive society. Surviving in a mass society that was growing and changing exponentially along with the issues mentioned earlier provoked an ‘identity crisis’. However, Gleason (1995) indicates through the writing of Erikson that the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘identity crisis’ were better suited to “the experience of the experience of emigration,

immigration, and Americanization’ (Erikson 1950: 242; Erikson 1975: 43)” (195) as this concepts dealt with issues of identity, belonging, and notions of crisis by the virtue of living and surviving within a growing society, particularly in urban and suburban areas.

In addition, the revolution of the Black Movements in the U.S. through the 1960s and the earlier protests –a direct result of the Civil Rights Movement– farther the social crisis and deepened the clashes in our society. The Black Revolution produced a break from traditional thinking of ‘identity’ generating a new discussion regarding ‘ethnic consciousness’ whereas “ethnic or minority identities became more appealing options because of the discrediting of traditional Americanism brought about by the racial crisis” (Gleason 1995, 195).

This is relevant to U.S.-Cuba relations as this is the context in which those relationships break away from one another. The Cuban Revolution was certainly a matter of representation for African Americans groups like the Black Panthers and Malcolm X, which in turn provided the dialectical narratives for the Cuban Revolution over the controversies of the U.S. society. The construction of these narratives occurred always in oppositional binaries: capitalism versus communism; individual versus society; whites versus blacks, mainland versus island; freedom versus slavery; and good versus evil.

In terms of Hall (1995), his notions of ‘identity’ will assist in linking identity with diaspora and craft a much ample and permeable concept of identity. In his essay, he introduces two distinct constructions of the concept: a) a more classical approach links the collective, the shared history and cultural experience, the common ancestry a society holds as important set of values in which that history homogenizes and “continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history” (98); and b) an articulation that even though concords with the idea of similarities in terms of the shared experiences and common history, stresses a different perspective: a “deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really



are'; or rather — since history has intervened — 'what we have become'... a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'... [that] belongs to the future as much as to the past... [and transcends] place, time, history and culture" (Hall 1995, 98). This view of 'identity' or rather 'cultural identity' is a permeable concept that is always in the making, in constant transformation and (re)configuration. Indeed, Hall (1995) states that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (98) and from this perspective "we can properly understand the traumatic character of 'the colonial experience'" (98) as the 'colonial experience' drastically changed the lives of those who were under its power. That is the 'uniqueness' of the colonized being: his/her physical, spiritual, and psychological being have been 'otherized' and the ruptures and fractures from this process are the experiences of individuals' survival. The aggregate of those surviving such experiences provide a collective memory of horror that has been painfully crafted onto the colonized human beings as the colonizer saw fit at a particular time, place, and positionality of the colonist.

It is from this framing that the Cuban experience is unique within both the Caribbean as well as other Latin American countries. The ongoing and historically shifting interactions of the Castro(s) Regimes and the several presidents of the United States have marked and continue to do so the Cuban experience. Further, the Cuban diaspora living in the U.S., which, largely begins with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, is a product of colonial relations regardless of their positionality in U.S.-Cuban continuum.

*La idea de resolver a pesar de las vicisitudes de la vida* can be linked to the historical colonial experience, at least, in the case of Cuba since *esta necesidad de resolver con poco, con el ingenio, con la imaginación y la determinación de modificar la realidad hacia una mejor* is born out of this conglomerate of colonial domination and resistance in which confrontation emerges as the alternative *para resolver un*

*problema puntual*. This idea of confrontation is not placed on one side or the other. Rather, it signifies precisely the conflict of interests that seems endless, for both Cubans –island and mainland.

As a farewell: my last conclusions

In his conclusion, Fanon (1961) is exalting “his comrades” to effectively change the European paradigm, its duality in terms of what I consider the economic-culture of Europe which Fanon (1961) presents in his first pages: “The colonized world is a world divided in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations. In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokes-person for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier” (3). But Fanon (1961) goes deeper into this idea of divided notion and asserts:

[t]he colonial world is a Manichaeian world. The colonist is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized, i.e., with the help of his agents of law and order. As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil (6).

In other words, this dualism “master-slave/good-evil” serves an economic purpose that has pervaded our culture and acts as the axis of our binary thought. The paradigm of the Manichean World comes to be as an economic force. Such economic force has been named and (re)named and has been systematically implemented in Western/European conceptions of life and currently, most all our economic transactions operate with a degree through this dualism as the cost of the operation implies a human life at stake.

Fanon last paragraphs of the book represent a call to act, hope as well as despair regarding how to accomplish the immensity of this task:

The Third World must start over a new history of man takes account of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also its crimes, the most

heinous of which have been committed at the very heart of man, the pathological dismembering of his functions and the erosion of his unity, and the context of the community, the fracture, the stratification the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery, exploitation and, above all, the bloodless genocide whereby one and a half billion men have been written off. [...] let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies that draw their inspiration from it. [...] if we want humanity to take one step forward, if we want to take it to another level than the one where Europe has placed it, then we must innovate, we must be pioneers. [...] we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new man. (Fanon, 1961: 238-9)

So, “we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new [human being]” (Fanon, 1961: 239) and such pathway toward imagining a new paradigm, I am afraid, will not be a top-down endeavor. Indeed, I do not envision it happening in my lifespan because, collectively, we live in an “economic infrastructure [that] is also a superstructure” (Fanon, 1961: 5) based on the duality I mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, I believe in the power of knowledge and the (re)humanization process that arrives and emerges from artistic expressions. “The Wretched of the Earth” reveals the importance of the decolonizing process recognizing that prior to this process we must know where we are in the web of relations “master-slave/good-evil” and their complexities as we might fall in different overlapping shades of intersectionalities on that dual continuum. We must decolonize our thought process and situate ourselves within the given binaries and (re)create our own “anthropoi” (Mignolo 2011), promote our own awareness and embrace it as we continue live under the system of the old and inescapable paradigm.

Can we change such paradigm? Can we (re)think human relations through a none-binary

thought? *¿Cómo resolvemos, resistimos, bregamos (en) un mundo polarizado?* What do the Cuban people have to offer as an answer? What do Castro and Obama teach us?

Rushside (1995) simply writes an undeniable truth: “[a]rt is a passion of the mind. And the imagination works best when it is most free” (434). Free from *resolver y/o bregar* but at the same time art means *resolver y/o bregar*. *Todo, eventualmente, se resuelve*.

Art in all its expressions is my strategy to reach my spiritual place and my anthropoi (Mignolo 2011) as I delink myself from dualism. By delinking our approach to how we view our lives in and of themselves as well as how our lives are constructed in relation to others –instead of “the others”– from dualism and the “economic-culture” –the commodification of culture– in order to (re)build relationships of heterogeneous justice equality, spiritual in nature, and through enriching human interactions. Art, in all of its forms, as the description of the daily encounters of our lives, as the account of who we are inside, appears as the opportunity to appreciate what we see, what we experience, what we feel. Art breaks away from the politics of differentiation as it brings people together to contemplate beyond the realm of reality and think through the realm of imagination and creativity. Our ethnicity, the cultural boundaries we create; these are artificial and constructed marks of our individual and collective identity. They should not prevent us from connecting, contacting, conversing, and interacting with one another. Art acts as the connecting node and router to guide us through the process of appreciation and gratitude.

Within the limitations of their representation, Obama and Castro have started the process of resolver. The Rolling Stones –prepared or not this event by the two nations– connected mainland with the island as in the past Lennon did.

*Quiñones sintetiza que ‘bregar’ es ‘meter mano’ para “enfrentarse con brío a un problema” (24) con la participación de otros aunque esos otros o esas otras tengan diferentes niveles de participación y involucramiento. Pero la característica de bregar, del arte, de actuar para resolver y resistir es que “casi nunca es un ejercicio solitario (24) y por*

*ende la articulación del movimiento es por sobre todas las cosas en función de tod@s. Hay un poder en el conocimiento que se desprende del arte, un enriquecimiento espiritual, que nos pone en movimiento. Por otra parte, bregar y resolver son realmente un arte... Resistir, Resolver, Bregar.*

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