

Abstract

The exile leaving his or her homeland for new and unknown territory travels with much more than just luggage and the clothes on his or her back. He or she carries a weighty collection of memories. Available for the exile in times when the harmony of the past is far removed from the difficult circumstances present during the process of cultural assimilation, these memories present an opportunity for the exile to fashion for him or herself an identity that mimics the realities of life in the home left behind. In this creative endeavor, I seek to examine the powerful potential of memory as it is exercised by a collection of Cubans and Cuban-Americans in different corners of the United States. Analyzing Achy Obejas' *Memory Mambo*, Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Ana Menéndez's *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, and Elías Miguel Muñoz's *Brand New Memory*, I aim to trace the suggestive potential of memory as it is used by each of the characters in these works in an effort to reconcile their Cuban identities with the ones that are in the process of creation in the U.S. I will borrow from a collection of literature dealing with identity and exile, relevant graduate-level theses on Cuban-American literature, as well as theoretical perspectives on memory formation and nostalgia in order to trace the various ways in which memory is relied on in the process of cultural assimilation and emotional coping. Being presented in Miami, which hosts the largest concentration of Cuban immigrants, this thesis aims to present itself as a reflective tool for Cubans and Cuban-Americans who may find value in seeing their personal sentiments portrayed in literature, thus allowing for a potential reevaluation of identity. If the existing literature on my topic of analysis reveals anything, it is that the scope of my project is one that has not been inspected previously, thus making my analytical contribution a new one that will add a new interpretive set of lens through which readers of contemporary Cuban-American literature can examine the works.