

**DYNAMICS OF DIASPORIC
IDENTITY IN SELECTED
CUBAN-AMERICAN WRITERS**

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Dynamics of Diasporic Identity in Selected Cuban-American Writers

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My dissertation examines the Cuban-American group, domiciled in the United States predominantly in the South Florida environs for over forty years since the historic Cuban Revolution. Following the mass exodus of the mostly wealthy, white, upper-class Cubans fleeing communism, they have maintained their diasporic identity as exiles, with this ambivalent designation being endorsed by the U.S. government up to the present time. Their mode of entry into the U.S.A. and their relationship with the U.S. government in a Cold War context has positioned them in a way atypical of Latino minorities. This group had no interest in remaining in the U.S. and has pursued to the present day a politics of cultural continuity inscribed in their assumption of return and the possibility of eventual reclamation of their homeland. They have made tremendous impact within their host country linguistically, culturally and economically, transforming the tranquil winter resort that South Florida was to a "boom city" for Latinos. The influence of the first generation has been transmitted to the younger group members and the adversarial relations with Cuba continue through their influential lobbying efforts for the maintenance of the trade embargo against the Castro government.

I have examined the first generation Cuban exiles who were responsible for the formation of their enclave and the attendant transplantation of Cuban culture in Florida. Despite embattled engagements with native Floridians especially during the early days, Cuban-Americans have prevailed. Based on the vitality of the first wave of exiles, subsequent generations have stood to benefit from this legacy. The retention of their native Spanish language in Florida and the passing of the bilingual ordinance, making Florida the first bilingual state, is a clear indication of the transformation effected by the Cubans. Among this empowered collectivity which has been successful in North America in a way unprecedented in the history of Latinos in the U.S., the Cuban-Americans are still contradicted over the grief of separation from their native land which is exacerbated by the prolonged adversarial conditions informing their mutual interaction. I have explored the interstices of the psychological and spiritual dimensions of this group, always preoccupied with their search and yearning for reconciliation, selfhood and truth. I explore what I see as an operative "web of power" among them and posit the theory that, although generally viewed as two separate entities, the evidence points to a syncretic national identification. Their interaction and response to each other, I propose, suggest a symbiotic relationship in which a sense of involvement on either side keeps them inextricably linked, with Miami becoming a border town. Examining their identification

primarily through a theory of hybridity and postmodernism, I have concluded that they occupy a liminal positioning and are constituted both by their Cuban identity as well as their American citizenship.

Keywords: Muffett Emily Barry; Cuban-Americans; diaspora and identity