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Landscape, Memory, and the "Gaze of Others": Becoming Nostalgic Subjects in a Post-*ingenio Cuban* Village*

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ABSTRACT

In Cuba, the sugar agro-industry has long been closely intertwined with the global political economy, affecting regional economic structure and culture. With the national downsizing of the sugar agro-industry in the early 2000s as a backdrop, this article examines the local and personal repercussions of the restructuring and its implications in the post-Soviet era. Based on ethnographic field research in a shut-down sugar-mill town (*batey*), I pay particular attention to memories of place and nostalgia, made through the decaying *batey* landscape, and tourism introduced in the early 2000s. Built in 1916, the *batey* Hershey, as an example of Cuban modern passage, displays today an exceptional palimpsest of spatial characteristics that concurrently preserve the early 1900s American modernist vision for work and life, socialist values of the post-revolutionary times, and national post-Soviet strategies such as tourism. It is since the sugar-mill closed in 2002, that its remaining material infrastructure has evoked personal memories and gained foreign attention. The architectural and spatial arrangements, reflecting Hershey's modernist vision for life and community are now sites of nostalgia among the *batey* residents. Their memories of places often contribute to critiques of the current socio-economic dilapidation. Rather than seeing this nostalgia simply as a "late-socialist" symptom, I inquire into the ways in which such evanescent mood has been maintained, and the social functions served thereby. Recounting the institutional, intellectual, and touristic interventions in the village, I

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discuss how those engagements made possible personal estrangement from the material surroundings, and have encouraged self-reflection and longing for the distant Hershey era. Based on this discussion, I argue that nostalgia continues as individuals appropriate socially sanctioned nostalgic narratives in reflecting on self and the past in Cuba.

Key Words: landscape, nostalgia, memory, sugar tourism, Cuban *azucareros*, selfhood, post-Soviet Cuba

INTRODUCTION

As many Cuban scholars have asserted (Ortiz 1995; Moreno-Fraginals 2001; Zanetti-Lecuona 2009) sugar has been the main backbone not only in regional socio-economic morphology, but also in cultural traditions and personal identities. In this article I explore local and personal repercussions engendered by the decline of the sugar agro-economy in post-Soviet Cuba. As pointed out by many, the rise and fall of the sugar-agro economy is bound up with colonialist, American imperialist, Soviet socialist, and post-Soviet contours of Cuba. My concern is with this last era, following the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1991, as a turning point for the sugar-agro industry, and therefore, for socio-cultural transitions at local and personal levels in daily life. From the start of what has been called Período Especial (Special Period),[1] burgeoning organic farming and tourism in Cuba were salient state strategies designed to produce 'self-sufficient' economic models. In 2002, the state announced a nation-wide program, Tarea Alvaro Reynoso,[2] as one of such strategies to be enacted in the face of an adverse economic outlook produced by the closing of almost a half of the then existent sugar-mills. The plan called for relocating some 100,000 sugar workers and giving them opportunities to be retrained over the ensuing eight years to pursue another "timely" career such as farming, engineering, or tourism. This has been relatively well-explored in recent years (Alvarez 2004; Peters 2003; Pollitt 1997; 2004).

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1 As many analysts have pointed out already, the impact of the collapse of the Soviet bloc on Cuban society was as great as that of the success of the revolution in 1959. Fidel Castro named this fatal economic crisis 'Special Period (*Período Especial*) in time of Peace' that began in 1991.

2 Alvaro Reynoso *Task, Tarea Alvaro Reynoso* was titled in honor of a Cuban bio-chemistry scientist. Alvaro Reynoso (1829-1888) was a Cuban expert in chemistry and many other related fields and also wrote a book about sugar cane during his time.

One cultural aspect of this, however, has rarely been studied-what has remained of the *batey*[3] (and how it affects the everyday life and the memories and emotions of the resident *azucareros* (sugar mill workers). "*Ingenio*" literally means sugar factory in Spanish and applies to the production mode for sugar whether traditional or modern. Coining a term "post-*ingenio*", I aim to indicate an epochal contour of social and cultural responses to the closing of the sugar mills across post-Soviet Cuba. Using the case of one of the sugar complex villages, "Hershey", built by an American company in the early twentieth century, my focus is situated at the interplay among the materiality of the *batey*, nostalgic memory recounting and the local enactment of the Tarea Alvaro Reynoso program that includes sugar tourism in its purpose.

Nostalgia in this post-*ingenio* space captures this paradox characterizing the post-Soviet political economy and associated subjective experiences. Hernández-Reguant (2009) refers to the strategic dissociation of socialist politics from socialist economics, a step devised precisely to avoid the fatal aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union. With this step a paradoxical way of life began, with ideas such as "we [Cubans] have to think like capitalists but continue being socialists" (Brotherton 2008). This paradox persisted while the state tried to implant "self-sufficient" or "salvaging socialism" strategies. The state sought to maintain their "socialist politics" by commodifying their culture, history, and nature in compliance with the tastes of "capitalist" clients. Thus, the key element in surviving the adverse global situation was not to achieve a "self-sufficient" model, but to find goods other than sugar to dominate international exchanges. So far, many ethnographic works have drawn complexity and paradoxical contours that this shift has brought to the everyday life in Cuba in various sectors, such as in medicine (Brotherton 2008; 2012), organic farming (Premat 2012), and "revived" tourism (Babb 2011; Roland 2010; Simoni 2015). Those changes, however, do not come to exist without any contestation with the former economy or material remnants at local level.

3 A local term for a compound of sugar-mill and residential area for the workers. Cuban *bateys* across the country share similar structural elements: at the center lies a modern sugar-mill, a "*central*", with a centrifugal (*centrifuga*) landscape including commercial areas nearby the *central* such as a *bodega* and kiosk, social facilities such as schools and parks, and residential areas surrounding or in front of the *central*. Regionally, Cuban *bateys* and neighboring communities are linked through railways, first for vapor engine trains and also for electric trains. This transport system links the nation-wide web of sugar cane fields, sugar-mills (*central*), rum factories and by-product factories producing things such as wooden boards. These constitute the material environment turned into meaningful signs on which people rely to reflect upon, interpret, and engage with their world.

In provincial regions, especially, the various economic infrastructures were built around in a more inchoate way, rather than as a synchronized and organized form. As a result, provincial landscape projects more bricolage-like outlook that consists of the vast area of the territory related to the sugar production, other newly established economic factories, and service industry or nearby touristic areas. Among them, the sugar related places which now are emptied or dismantled can be described as "landscape of potentiality" that is "often imagined as standing apart, as relatively separate and detached though never completely disconnected [···] [and as] perceived 'potentiality' ('the way we could be') (Hirsch 1995, 4)". This landscape of sugar not only produces nostalgic gazes from the insider (the people who are living in the area) but also from the outsiders, such as state tourism department and foreign tourists, albeit in different manners. Thus, "potentiality" here connotes multiple regards, including a reflective gaze of the former *azucareros* on their past, the state's commodification of cultural resource, and European tourists' search for authenticity and nostalgia for the industrial modernity era.

One way to explore this nostalgia is to consider its enactment and the social processes of the institutional efforts, that were made at the local level and that have had a significant effect in shaping personal narratives. For example, how, and through which channels, do Cubans of all generations, even young people, use this "nostalgic" rhetoric in contemplating current difficulties? How is an "unlived" past given legitimacy as evidence of a better way? How are nostalgic narratives sustained after living witnesses have passed away? Following Brunner's (2008) insight that socially and culturally sanctioned narrative form creates opportunity for individuals to grasp abnormal experiences that may be traumatic and associated feelings such as guilt or fear, I seek to elucidate not only how "the gaze of others" toward the past and toward landscapes of the town affected the personal narratives of village people, but also to suggest the power of the socially sanctioned narrative for the people to critically frame the present and envision a better future. As Berdahl (1999) described, nostalgia takes on oppositional significances that contests and confirms the new order. It can produce a critical awareness about post-Soviet uncertainties and social conditions as well as conformation to newly implanted political economic strategies. In the case of the *batey* Hershey, residents' appropriations of the nostalgic discourses given by institutional and external gazes, simultaneously contest the present in critical comparisons of post-*ingenio batey* life with the past "utopia" and envision a better future. On the other hand, their nostalgic narratives could maintain because of

Cuban tourism and associated media reflections that strategically provoked nostalgia among European others. Based on this discussion, I also seek to understand the manners of self-perception and identity formation that Cubans apprehend through navigating their history in the post-Soviet uncertainty.

RESEARCH COMMUNITY AND DATA

The arguments developed here are based on an ethnographic research in a *batey* referred to as Hershey (Camilo Cienfuego),[4] situated in the province of Mayabeque, approximately 50km east from the capital La Habana. When I arrived in Cuba in 2011, I aimed to focus on how the current everyday life had changed over a decade, since the national restructuring program. I chose Hershey as a field site, following advice from a Cuban college whose hometown situates in the same province. I saw it as a good field site in drawing everyday life changes before and after the restructuring plan, not to mention its proximity with Havana, where I could find an accommodation permitted for foreigners. As one of the *bateys* whose sugar-mill was decided to be dismantled in the year of 2002, it was inhabited, at the time of research in 2011, by a registered population of almost 2,500 residents, including both the families of former sugar-mill workers and other new comers irrelevant to sugar production.

Hershey town in Cuba represents historical and spatial formation of the Cuban relationship with sugar, reflecting twentieth century American colonialism, the Cuban revolution (1959), and a post-Soviet social mood. Hershey was built in 1918 by an American investor, Milton. S. Hershey, who needed a stable sugar supply for his chocolate business. Modeled after the style and system of Hershey in Pennsylvania, which he had previously built, the Cuban version was supplied with similar standards in living and working environments. Hershey also built a railway spanning over 100km, connecting the capital Havana with the city of Matanza. Geographically centered within this provincial transportation web, Hershey quickly became the center among the neighboring villages, providing not only jobs and transportation but also a high-end American cultural experience. Having survived the ideological turn by the Cuban revolution in 1959, the town continued its privileged life-style. Despite the legacy

4 The name of the town was officially changed to Camilo Cienfuego who was one of the revolutionary heroes during the Cuban revolution (1959). I use Hershey in this paper as the main informants favorably use this name than the other.

of imperialism, the sugar industry became a "salvage machine" for Cuban socialism under circumstances that led the Cuban economy to swing toward dependence on the Soviet bloc in the early 1960s. The Soviet economic assistance entailed the benefits of exporting sugar from the island leaving Cuba with no choice but to stick to the undesirable economic structure established by American imperialists. Fidel Castro's frequent speeches and visits to various sugar mills across the country until the 1990s reflect a national emphasis on the sugar industry, politically and economically at once. Most of the Cuban *azucareros* that I have met in and out of the village unanimously stressed the economic benefits from working in the post-revolutionary era. Known as "the vanguards of socialism",[5] they benefited from housing, higher salaries and occasional incentives such as clothes, shoes, and edible oil. Locally speaking, Hershey town saw expansion since the 1960s in its residential zone, a change in name – from Hershey to the name of revolutionary hero, Camilo Cienfuego, and removal of "bourgeois" remnants such as a hotel and golf course. Demographically, many of the high ranked workers fled to the U.S. or to the Europe after the outbreak of the Cuban revolution (1959) and the homes of exiled workers were filled by commuting workers from neighboring communities. The new and former *azucareros* altogether took advantage of such possibilities as promotion to managerial positions as the *central* suffered from a labor shortage that boosted opportunities for those who remained. Thus, whether under capitalist or socialist ownership of the town, a privileged life style ensued until another rupture of the Cuban political economy in 1991.

The collapse of COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance of the Communist Bloc) in 1991 created a turning point in the sugar agro-industry, not to mention a catastrophic national economic crisis. Although the *central* (sugar-mill factory)[6] was closed in 2002, many of the *azucareros* confessed to me that this was foreshadowed by faltering maintenance and incessant difficulties owing to lack of energy and low motivation among the workers. Upon the arrival of the Alvaro Reynoso program in Hershey, which relocated the sugar mill workers to other

5 I coined this term through some phrases written on the wall of the *central*: one was "*Azucareros a La Vanguardia*", translated as "Sugar-mill workers to the front" and the other was "*Estamos Seguros del Triunfo; Tu Esfuerzo es Decisive*" translated as "we are sure of the victory; you effort is decisive". Those two phrases together emphasize the role of sugar and sugar workers in keeping the Cuban socialism intact.

6 *Central* is a local term to refer to the sugar mill factory. According to Manuel Fraginals (2001, 618) this term appeared in the literature on sugar in 1803 when a spinning machine "centrifuga" replaced the old style of manufacturing, a big vacuum evaporators.

industries and agriculture for domestic consumption, the residential workers took different paths according to their ranks, skills, and individual capacities to start private businesses (*trabajo de particulares*). While bureaucratic members stayed in the department of MINAZ (Ministerio del Azúcar, Ministry of Sugar), some obtained teaching opportunities in schools for engineering courses. Those without superior qualifications were given retraining courses or advised to work in agriculture, remembering the motto of the government was "study or go to farm" (*estudiar o ir al campo*). A school opened for retraining the workers and offered courses for both improving basic educational qualifications and refashioning careers. Spanish literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, culinary courses, agriculture, English, and veterinary sciences were all available. Retrained workers were assured a salary equivalent to state payment for their participant days in the retraining courses.

Along with the retraining school, new plans for the local economy were implemented, such as organic farming grounds set aside and a ceramic factory. Although these two economic institutions became the new backbone of the Hershey community, their influence and impact on social life was scant, and somewhat negative. The consolidated mood of the community dwindled due to an influx of strangers, not to mention the fact that residents had lost the community and emotional bonds that had prevailed among them as *azucareros*. Economically speaking, the residents of Hershey now have different sources of income and some are better-off by having gotten involved in the black market (*bolsa negra, or a la izquerda*). Socially speaking, community activities, whether voluntary or involuntary, have lessened, as personal contacts have diminished. Harsh living conditions experienced under the economy of shortage led to criminal activities, such as larceny. The people say that the currently prevalent fear and distrust appeared only recently, specifically after the central closed and new people entered the town. Negatively viewing current community life, the residents explicitly compare the current socio-economic dilapidation with the past environment of social engagement. Ultimately, what results in nostalgia is not only economic hardship and displacement of their livelihood, but also the memories that are evoked by the existing landscape.

In this local context, data was collected during four-months of fieldwork between January to May in 2011, and several day-trips during the one-month follow-up trip in August 2015. Among the fourteen people I interviewed, six people belonged to the second generation of immigrants to the *batey* Hershey, five people were the new comers as *azucareros* in the post-revolutionary era; and the last three were family members of the

azucareros (without having involved in sugar production). Those interviews were not structured nor consisted of "fact-checking" closed-ended questions. Common questions were raised on their experiences as *azucareros* in the pro and post-revolutionary era, as well as changes in career which comprised much nostalgic "now and then" narratives in this paper. I also asked about personal and emotional implications of having worked as *azucareros* in Cuba. When I had figured out that place-ness was the paramount subject and mnemonic device in their memories, I further enquired whether there were other places that had strong memories and emotional attachment. Also, some of the informants whom I built strong rapport with, voluntarily accompanied me for visiting and taking photographs of the main buildings and landmarks. They not only explained the official use of the buildings and landmarks then and now, but also told of their personal memories, embedded in the place. These moments were the main source of my data collection, which were only able to happen after several visits to their houses for interviews (after which, they gradually felt comfortable enough to tell me personal memories and thoughts). On the other hand, casual personal conversations with the local people also became an important source. Those conversations were carried out in piecemeal during my research, and I used some statements which I had reserved in my field notes. To protect the informants' privacy, I used pseudonyms. However, I kept the official name of the *batey*, because of the relevance of the public works that I used as data.

NOSTALGIA WITHIN UTOPIAN LANDSCAPE

> *It is not simply nostalgia that makes the past so powerful – Hindsight and overview enable us to comprehend past environments in ways that elude us when we deal with the shifting present.*
> (Lowenthal 1975, 7)

One day in May 2011, I saw a dozen people in blue uniforms who were off-loading equipment from a truck. I asked what they were doing and they answered they were trying to cut down some trees. They were discussing which trees they would cut and how they would do it. When I met a native resident for an interview, I asked why they cut the trees. She said,

> I do not understand why they cut down the trees. Of course for the cyclone season, it would be better because then they won't fall to the ground.

> But, those trees were here for more than 50 years [···] they are beautiful [···] The trees in "*la casa de vista*", you saw it? It is the biggest tree in our village. It is marvelous. Before, Mr. Hershey wouldn't cut it. He always took care of the trees, trimming them every year [···] he loved nature. He planted all the trees here and it was beautiful. Cuba, they [the state] say "plant trees for nature" and look what they do now. They could just trim them [not cut them down] (interview with Carmen, 62, a former teacher in the village, May 2011).

Carmen was a native resident who was born in 1949 in this village and her father used to work for the *central*. She became a Spanish literature teacher in the village school for the children of the *azucareros* and participated in the local FMC (*Federación de Mujeres Cubanas*, Federation of Cuban Women) actively throughout her life. Owing to this professional and social contribution to the *batey* social life, she saw herself as a worker for the *central*. Her criticism is based on a distinctive way of perceiving this event. While agreeing that it is a necessary action, she reproaches the way it was conducted. By suggesting "trim the trees" rather than "cut down the trees", she addresses the values of environmentalism on which the *batey* was established. Her comments are thus suggestive of a better way, rebuking the crudeness of state's resolution. Accordingly, her memory-telling in nostalgic tone hardly fits an "anti-socialist" position, but rather projects her wish that the state would stick to the initial utopian version of life and nature entailed by the *batey*. Other interviewees described Hershey era as more benevolent for the laborers.

> Before, in the *bodega* [the state's ration store], there were lots of things. They gave you "credits" for the workers. With 8 credits a week, we could get what we needed from the credit store [replaced by the bodega since the revolution] [···] Sugar cost 7 cents per pound. The best sugar in the world. Now we have to pay 2.5 dollars per pound (interview with Alysa, 82, a senior resident, March 2011).

The "credit system" (*credito*) that Hershey corporate provided parallels the current ration system.[7] In the Hershey era, the corporation offered workers a certain amount of credit to use in corporate stores –currently

7 Cuban ration system was conducted according to the number of the people in the family. A household possesses a booklet called "*libreta*" (a small book). In the village, the shortcoming of the rationed food was the main issue and the focal point to be compared with the Hershey era as the socialist ration system and Hershey's credit system both were carried out in the same place, now called "*bodega*" (a place for state's food distribution).

state ration stores (*bodega*)– for living necessities. As noted by Alysa, the Hershey era was perceived as one of material abundance and some senior residents proclaimed it as "*paraíso*" (paradise). Given that workers had received economic redemption as *azucareros* in the post-*ingenio* era, this focus on past material prosperity indicates the disturbance associated with the under-evaluated Cuban peso. Getting paid their pension with the under-valued Cuban national currency (*moneda nacional*), rather than Cuban convertible peso (CUC),[8] *azucareros* experienced lowered standards of living than they might have if their salaries would have been paid in CUC. In the post-*ingenio* era, this became more problematic as residents saw economic disparities grow among themselves. When income fails to fit legitimate consumption patterns, most of the village people, and the Cuban population in general find goods on the black market, a strategy that results in shame, anxiety, and damage to one's perceptions of self-legitimacy as a citizen.

Another point that the resident today stress is a sense of connection with the outside world. They commented in particular on the superior quality of the refined sugar that they produced, which gained much international attention.

> Before the revolution, the sugar that was produced here was specifically sold to Coca-Cola too [···] after the harvest season, the employees of Coca-Cola came here to help clean the mill (interview with Luis, 56, a former *azucarero*, May 2011).

Emphasizing the international reputation of Coca-Cola, this statement demonstrates how the speaker's self-esteem and pride as a resident in the Hershey *batey* could be realized through international recognition. The same story was told of the post-revolutionary era.

> Japan used to buy the *rapadura* (unrefined sugar), because it had more benefit. They had the sugarcane honey (*miel*), which they could use for other things [···]. I started working as an engineer from 1974. While the *central* was running, the town was much more vibrant [···] We used to have a special school for *ingenio*, people from the Soviet bloc would come to our town for training. Especially I remember [···] the people from Poland, Russia, and Czechoslovakia trained here (interview with Julio, 74, retired *azucarero*, March 2011).

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8 The dual currency system, introduced during the Special Period in Cuba, consisted of a Cuban Peso (CUP) and Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). 1 CUC is equivalent to 23-25 CUPs at the time of research in 2011.

> Even the people from Havana visited our town on the weekends. We used to have the most recent American movies in the movie theater *La Glorieta*. (Then, she complained that) [···] now, I need to pay 30 CUC to hire a car to go to Havana (interview with Alysa, 82, a senior resident, April 2011).

This sense of connectedness contrasts with the current isolation. Residents juxtapose the vibrant social mood of the past recalled through community activities such as cultural events in the town's local theater, *la Glorieta*, and baseball games in the built-in baseball field, with the current absence of such engagements and geographical isolation. In the post-*ingenio* era, the town quickly became isolated from all other neighboring communities when the trains and buses for commuting workers ceased to function. It has a been daily struggle for them to find proper transportation, even to go to the nearest town or to wait in the official "yellow spot" (*punto amarrillo*) for all kinds of means that include hitch-hiking (*coger la botella*). Though it has been a common phenomenon in the post-Soviet Cuba to have daily struggles in finding food, living necessities and proper transportation, the village people have the history and spatial remnants of the Hershey era as a point of reference in the nostalgic narrative.

As shown above, even if the past stretches across two eras, the socialist and the capitalist, village residents locate their sense of ideal forms and communicative means based on the history of Hershey era. The remaining landscape features are in-between those two opposing ideologies making an example of the utmost utopian vision in the early twentieth century: material abundance, active sociality, and environmentalism. As many historians of Hershey have pointed out (Brenner 2000; D'Antonio 2006; Ginzl 2006) the town was both designed as an industrial utopia in the early twentieth century. According to D'Antonio (2006), Milton Hershey stands out from other rich businessmen who also built company towns at that time such as Ford, Rockefeller and Pullman. He escaped the image of a heartless and greedy capitalist through "latch[ing] on [to] progressivism" (D'Antonio 2006, 159). American progressivism in the early twentieth century was a reaction to mass industrial development and encouraged critical reflection on the potential of social organizations to corrupt people and induce poverty. At the time "socialism of some kind was a basic part of progressivism" (Crunden 1984, 35).

Hershey's infrastructure became a positive point of reference not only because its architectural and spatial arrangements preserved the "good side" of the both "capitalist" and "socialist" regimes, but also because the Hershey gives an interpretative means for their current life. It is

the utopian social mood that is recollected at the heart of daily life and its consummate representation in the material forms of Hershey's remnants. This longing is nostalgia for the "modernity" of the early twentieth century or "utopian dream of the industrial modernization in the 20th century" (Buck-Morss 2000). The dream of "overcoming scarcity of all" (Buck-Morss 2000, ix) of the industrialization resonates with the stated longings under the economy of shortage; material abundance and active mass culture. Stewart (1988) argues that nostalgia is a cultural practice that surfaces when people are "threatened with a deadening pluralism that makes us all just an 'other' among others [···] and where the self is a pastiche of styles glued to a surface, nostalgia becomes the very light house waving us back to shore – the one point on the landscape that gives hope of direction" (Stewart 1988, 229). Boym (2001) argues for the potentiality of nostalgia to become political in uncertain social conditions. Binding together these perspectives by Stewart (1988) and Boym (2001), nostalgia in the Cuban *batey* utopian landscape equips residents with the cultural means to politically, emotionally, and epistemologically engage themselves and narrate upon the unsatisfactory present.

GAZE OF OTHERS: MAKING THE PRESENT INTO THE PAST

First of all, the term "gaze of others" is used to indicate the "gaze of the tourists" in the village, and I have used it also as a reference to scholarly, media, and popular interpretations focused on the history and landscape of this village in the post-Soviet era. According to some scholars, Cuban tourism has two aspects, "revolutionary heritage tourism on the one side and tourism that is nostalgic for pre-revolutionary extravagance on the other" (Scarpaci et al. 2002; Sanchez et al. 2008, recited in Babb 2011, 56). Tourism in Hershey town encapsulates both trends and further an accelerated practice of searching for "authenticity" of the western tourists. The operating tourism company advertises Hershey as follows:

> The authentic Cuba experience and living train history on this journey back to the 1920s [···] Enjoy a journey through a typical Cuban landscape far away from tourism, with "Fiesta Cubana", open bar, dance and live-music on board. Rustic lunch in Hershey and short walking tour through the "*Batey*" with the ruins of the former sugar *central* (In the banner of the website of the agency[9]).

This website promotes an "authenticity" of this day-trip because of its historicity, antique and rustic quality that lacks in popular tourist spots in Havana or in the "tropicalized" hotel resorts nowadays. Although I do not have critical data on the actual perception and motivation of the tourists who visited the town, this one-day package tour appears in line with the "imperialist nostalgia" (Rosaldo 1989) that "mourn[s] the passing of what they themselves have transformed" (Rosaldo 1989, 108). Contemporary tourists' fascination on the vintage cars, vapor trains, colonial architect, and the houses of the famous Western writers such as Hemingway captures well this eagerness to find traces of what European/American imperialism had transformed and lost at the same time. Meeting this specific expectation of the foreign tourists, the village thus became a "quasi-touristic" place, a folk site for foreign visitors, yet no contacts nor institutional side-benefits were given to the residents. Instead they felt the gaze of the tourists in their everyday life while, for example, waiting for rationed milk powder or chatting up in the *central* park next to the *central* entrance.

The background of this "quasi-touristic" mode includes a broader sense of the "gaze of others" that implicates the institutional, intellectual, and artistic involvement in the village in the last decade. In 2000 when they decided to restructure the sugar-agro economy, MINAZ created the Department of Recreation and Tourism as a branch. The organization of this department at that time demonstrated the state's intention to reconfigure the local economy toward tourism development, one of the most successful ways to earn foreign currency in post-Soviet Cuba. Until 2008, the department engaged local people in numerous small business related activities, such as excavating Hershey era cultural activities, stories about old buildings in the town, and life-histories of the native residents. In 2002, the department re-opened Hershey Gardens, one of the recreational legacies from the Hershey era, to draw foreign, mostly European and Canadian, tourists. Through the arrangement of Swiss based tourist agency, the village received sporadic tourists mostly through Havana based tourism agencies from 2004. One of the tourist packages organized and managed through these agencies advertises itself as "Trans Hershey-Nostalgia on Rails" and offered a one day tour, including transportation and a guide to the *central*, the Hershey railways, and the ruins of the Hershey company town buildings.

In conjunction with the cultural promotion activities at the provincial

9 http://www.transhershey.com/site/index.cfm?id_art=48375&actMenuItemID=22847&vsprache=EN

administration level, a local historian, Amarilys Ribot, eagerly participated in the history excavation. Her father managed the *central* after the revolution (1959) and she grew up in the *batey*. After several years of passionate investigation, in 2008 Ribot published a book titled *Hershey*. It opens with her academic and personal desires to demonstrate how memories supersede history in the case of her home town, Hershey. Resembling an ethnographic work, this book collects not only her personal memories and emotional attachments to the village from her childhood, but also captures dormant local histories through interviewing her neighbors. Along with this book, one of the native residents introduced me to another public work addressing this village. It was a short documentary film, "Model Town", made by a film school student from Havana, Laimir Fano Villaescusa, in 2006. This short documentary was made through visual images of the run-down landscapes, short statements and songs by the living witnesses of the Hershey era and their old photographs in the Hershey era. The scene starts with such a grimy look, naming it a "ghost town" in the beginning scene in stark contrast with a mosaic of the old black and white photographs of the landscape and life in Hershey time: the electronic trains with Hershey banner, the resident ladies in extravagant dress who were posing in the town's park, and Hershey baseball team and etc. The climax of the film arrives when the senior residents break down when the director hands each of them a big chocolate bar with "HERSHEY" written on it. One of the native senior resident moans and repeats "Where did you get this" (¿Donde conseguiste esto?), implicating that Hershey chocolate bar is no longer available in the village, not to mention that chocolate itself is an luxurious item in the contemporary Cuba. His dramatic reaction implicates the feeling of sadness and nostalgia for the Hershey era draw from the ironic situation that a Hershey chocolate bar is inconceivable in a town called "Hershey".

Although it is difficult to generalize the impact of such public works on peoples' nostalgic narratives, it is harder to ignore the impact of tourism development, local history, and artwork regarding the influence of the past on the people's ways of perceiving the environment today. All these multifaceted foreign involvement in village landscape can be viewed as "emotive institution" (White 1995) that emphasizes on the role of social and institutional recognition on the national events and its reinforcing effect of emotional engagement of the social members in a certain social event. While this can be applicable in understanding the impact of the institutional efforts on the personal narratives, it fits the story only partially

because those places were yet to be officially designated as heritage nor spatially marked as material monuments. As Young (1999) warns, "it is as if once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember" (Young 1999, 2). If they were officially monumentalized, the landscape might lose its "potentiality" (Hirsch 1995) for the people to contemplate with nostalgic tone. In other words, this "would-be" state of the town and landscape makes possible the collective desire for economic and cultural retrievals and thus, nostalgia maintains its force through interplay of these two emotions, dejection from loss and desire for its revival. Notably, this has been through engaging themselves with history of their living environment provided by outsiders.

> My father used to work in the *central* and I work here [in the train station] [···] [after she showed me her digital photographs, I asked how come she had all those photographs]. Because I like it. Hershey is the most beautiful compared to other *bateys* [···] It is very sad that the *central* here closed (personal conversations with Ramira, 40s, worker in the Hershey train station, May 2011).

Ramira illustrates how the core elements of nostalgia, feelings of loss and longing for a specific era are interwoven and how those feelings could be evoked by the distributed visual materials. Those photographs could be obtained from her work place, the train station. The train station in the village did not only function as a station, but also displayed the old electronic trains for the tourists. Through this connection to tourism, she could access to those old photographs, and thus to the Hershey story more closely. As a daughter of a former *azucarero* and a worker in the train station, her statement demonstrates that closing of the Hershey sugar mill was felt more tragic than the closing of any other sugar mills. The main reason was that it was more "beautiful" than any other *batey*s. While showing and handing me the old photographs, she sees the beauty of the *batey* in the photographs, not in the present condition. As other informants reported in the earlier chapter, the current *batey* appearance had been degraded when compared to the Hershey era. Only after she saw Hershey in the photographs, she could fully visualize the uniqueness and beauty compared to its present form. Another example also shows how both the public works and historicity of the town amplified such "traumatic" feeling among the former *azucareros*. Feeling bad, sad, and traumatic were common emotional responses among the former *azucareros* whether they were native residents or new comers during the

post-revolutionary era. A former *azucarero* who came into the town in the 1970s recalled,

> Sometimes we heard rumors that the *central* would be shut down. [I asked when did he know about the official news] [···] like two months before? [I said, "really?"]. Many people were in shock, and it was really bad [*era muy mal*]. [A while later, when I asked if he had read the book Hershey, he answered] I think what the woman says [in her book] is correct [···] we all lament for [what happened for] the central. This *batey* has tradition. It is the unique model town in Cuba (interview with Jerrónimo, 56, a former *azucarero*, May 2011).

Nostalgia involves not only a longing but also a feeling of despair and sadness of a loss. Divested of the economic benefit, cultural meaning, and political symbol in the revolutionary era, *azucareros* felt as victims in the face of the restructuring program. While feelings of displacement and loss of identity prevailed in other *batey*s as well, the Hershey era story amplified such sentiments and justified their act of mourning. They saw the closing of the *central* as exceptionally lamentable as the *batey* Hershey has "tradition", not like others in Cuba. After acknowledging the historicity and stories embedded in the places through reading the book, he thought that the closing of the *central* was worth earning a greater emotional response.

On the other hand, this distributed information provided a younger generation as well as new comers irrelevant with the *central* with a perspective to criticize current politics. A new comer at his 40s in the village confessed to me that "there is no person in this village who does not like Milton Hershey" (personal communication with Calisto, May 2011). He asserted that Milton Hersey was different from other Americans, by pointing out Hershey's charitable work such as building schools and shelters for the Cuban orphans. That information about Hershey's charity work was clearly stressed in the tourist's guide's explanation, as well as information described in the website of the tourist agency: "Hershey's presence and manner of doing business in Cuba were in sharp contrast to most foreign businessmen who exploited the country and its people and took their profits home with them".[10]

On the other hand, the longing for the Hershey era also reflected a frustration which followed the unfulfilled local hope for the revitalization

10 http://www.transhershey.com/site/index.cfm?id_art=53581&actMenuItemID=24986&vsprache=EN

of the town. In 2008, a Swiss tourism agency was supposed to develop this village into a full-scaled touristic town that would include new developments such as a hotel and a souvenir shop. Over the past decade some residents actually engaged in the tourist industry and recognized the potential for Hershey's history to bring economic benefits into the town. Around then, one of the native residents had opened a restaurant and had to close it eventually after running for a couple of years, because there was no real tourist effect nor any material that could be ensured. In 2011, however, there still existed some hope for this project among the residents. One of the senior residents confessed, "there was a group of Swiss people who came here. They are going to develop this town, I heard. But, look [···] they have done nothing [···]" (personal communication with Luisa, May 2011). Nostalgia lays in this dialectic feeling of loss, hope and dissatisfaction, in the context of post-soviet economic strategy. When the rosy dream of full-scaled tourism development and the cultural revitalization which would follow seemed far-fetched, the feeling of loss was felt even more traumatic, as the expectations for tourism lingered on. Such hope was embedded in the everyday life of the young generation as well. One easily observed signs of local appreciation of the past such as "Hershey" written on informal media such as the board game material like "Monopoly" of the young people. They wrote "Hershey" or "Ferrocaril" (train) with small drawings, each representing the *central* instead of the original icons and signs of the board game. When I asked them why they put "Hershey" rather than copying the exact board game design, they simply answered "because we like the history" (personal communication with a young person in the street, May 2011). It was also easy to observe scrawls on the street walls saying "I love Hershey" in English as if they wished their hope and desire to be known to the tourists or other outsiders like me.

In general, international tourism in the post-Soviet era established social conditions in which local individuals could better understand a particular history and recount the past in relation to their present life. In other words, the state and then foreign visitors have instigated, intentionally or not, self-reflexivity among residents who, in turn, internalized the gaze of the others looking back at their past.

EXPERIENCING THE SELF IN THE POST-*INGENIO* ERA

Experiencing the self has become an ever more serious business in the post-Soviet era due to the constant threat of something similar to what Verdery (1996) described as "erosion of their very conception of themselves as human beings" (Verdery 1996, 55). In the post-communist Romania, for example, state's "seizure of time" or "etatization of time" meant resultant delay, ineffectiveness, waiting and illegal form of purchase under the in the economy of shortage in the early 1990s. She noted that this caused "the erosion of sociability" (Verdery 1996, 55) had thus incapacitated a major part of Romanian conception of self which was experienced through social gatherings and offerings of hospitality. In Hershey, endless waiting, involvement in black market, destruction of dignity as *azucareros* and lessened sociability were commonly experienced in the village as well. Amid these threatening conditions for 'erosion of self', the arrival of the gaze of others was a chance for objectifying their current status in the mirror of the past.

The nostalgic perspectives allowed residents to create a sense of self by positioning the self in a world figured by the discourses of the past that circulated in their present circumstance. Because pre-revolutionary era was an "unlived" past for many, this history functioned to offer another temporal belonging for the people who lost their sense of identity as *azucareros*. More fundamentally, however, it is the remained Hershey era infrastructure that plays a crucial medium between such emergence of historicity and self-reflection among the former azucareros in the village. In other words, such nostalgic reflection could occur because certain landscape attributes appear as "objects", not as unnoticed material arrangement. Hallowell (1955) once raised the importance of material objects and non-human entities such as dead ancestors for the self. Self-reflection is to view one's self as a distinctive object in a "world of other objects in its behavioral environment, discriminated, classified, and conceptualized with respect to attributes which are culturally constituted and symbolically mediated through language" (Hallowell 1955, 91). In this case, indeed, it was the "gaze of others" who conceptualized the meaning of their surrounding environment, and thus, deliberately or not, contributed to self-reflection among the former azucareros and positioning the self within this culturally constituted world of things. When outsiders and intellectuals proclaimed historical meanings, offered detailed images, and explained the economic potency, the landscape became a mirror where

oneself understood the world they live in and thereby classified the positive and negative implications of the local history according to their own current desires. Former *azucareros*, particularly, better understood the cultural implication of their transgenerational labors through narrating their personal memories that matched the recent international, institutional and intellectual nostalgic tone. Whether they had lived it or not, the "utopian" remnants connoted a positive aspect of the implication of the life as *azucareros*. As such, nostalgia in the *batey* Hershey exemplified that sharing memories and self-formation lay in keen attention to socially given narratives.

This leads us to Brunner's (2003; 2008) take on the power of existent cultural narrative frames. Brunner (2008) saw that existent cultural narratives such as myth, history, and legend are the main tools not only for the individuals to understand abnormal reality but also for individuals to realize their selfhood by appropriating the existing narrative and putting together "factual" experiences from these collective memories into a continuous selfhood. In this way the emerging cultural resources had an impact on the emotional development and selfhood of residents "through the conventionalization of experience into shared ordinariness, a conventionalization that makes place as well for rendering deviations from shared ordinariness into a comprehensible and manageable form" (Brunner 2008, 35). In the case of nostalgia in Hershey, the closing of the *central*, experiences of diminishing community life, and the quasi-touristic situation all resonated with what he described as "deviations" in their historical lineage of the sugar production. Governmental, intellectual, and artistic works on the Hershey era, gave the residents a framework for expressing and further amplifying the feeling of lamentation for their traumatic event of the closing the *central* while at the same time providing the foundations for a hopeful mindset for the villagers. Nostalgia, therefore, had become a genre for both personal memories and political expressions that include both despair and desire.

CONCLUSION

Many scholars have argued over the "overextension" of nostalgia in post-Soviet or post-socialist societies (Boyer 2006; Gigova 2013; Lankauskas 2014). Gigova (2013) particularly stressed the characteristics of nostalgia that result mostly from "its local and historical idiosyncrasy" (Gigova 2013, 537), not as a general symptom of modern anomie. In this article I have offered an example demonstrating nostalgia, not as a general

phenomenon accounted for as a "late-socialist" symptom, but as a specific outcome of local geographical and historical assets entangled with the political and economic contours of the post-Soviet era. Based on this, I have argued how expansion of nostalgic narratives among residents of a Cuban *batey* in general indicates the importance of social sanctions and experiencing self-identity in relation to their specific time and space.

Post-*ingenio* nostalgia dramatizes a striking comparison between then and now: the past is the utopian-like time and the current life lacks the good parts of the past. The remained landscape becomes a tangible reference for pointing out the dejection caused by the deteriorating infrastructure, lessened social activities, and geographical isolation. Rather than accounting for this observation as a symptom of "late-socialism", I argue that this nostalgia involves non-ideological meanings for the people by demonstrating that the desirable values in the vision of twentieth century Hershey were drawn from a merging of capitalist and socialist perspectives. Trying to have a better picture for the future is the aim of their nostalgic narratives, even for the folks like new-comers and the younger generation in the village. The nostalgic narratives have individually developed content but consistently encompass a communal sense of displacement, dejection over deterioration, hope for retrieving a sense of community and unity, as well as local expectations for cultural and economic progress.

These nostalgic narratives could continue, fundamentally, by the administrative, intellectual and touristic discourses that pivot around the Hershey era, with a strong emphasis on the tragic contour of local history. My conjecture is that the nostalgia among the former *azucareros* and the prevailing popularity of Milton S. Hershey among residents in general follow from the distributed media made by historians, film-makers, and tourism agencies of the last decade. In the unique material surroundings of Hershey, certain places and visual images become symbols for personal glories and points of reference in memory telling in the same way that the state, intellectuals, and foreign visitors imbue places with "historical facts". The nostalgic perspectives allow residents to objectify their past, to reflect their past, and thus experience self by positioning the self in a world figured by the discourses of the past that circulate today. When this past becomes authorized by global and institutional others, local individuals appropriate the interpretative frame for understanding their own past, the current surrounding environment, and their position in both, making these visions authentic and meaningful. Now the people can enjoy freely the myth and imagination that the past offers to them regardless of capitalist or socialist leanings. The nostalgic interpretations

by and for external others, inadvertently, provided local residents with an appropriate frame for understanding their past, for organizing their feelings about the past and for understanding themselves as well. It is the "gaze of others" that constantly provokes new ways of looking at the landscape, at society, and at the personal emotional contours subject to transformation through nostalgia.

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