From Estrangement to Reconciliation: How Dis-eased Identities Propel Reconciliation in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*

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Abstract:
Dreaming in Cuban (1992) presents the lives of Cuban exiles in the USA. It highlights the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution that resulted in dysfunctional families torn apart because of the exile of hundreds of Cubans after Castro's takeover. In the novel, Pilar is a mediator between Cubans and Cuban Americans. Thus, whatever the damages perpetrated by the Revolution, Garcia offers her novel as a reconciliatory tract convincing her readers that identities of Cuban exiles and Cubans have become dis-eased because of broken familial ties. Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate Garcia's strategic narrative of reconciliation between Cubans and Cuban Americans. The main question addressed in this paper is; how can Cubans and Cuban Americans mend the relations that have been shattered by the Cuban Revolution? This research offers an answer to the previous question through Garcia's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* that suggests that reconciliation becomes the only alternative to all characters already psychologically weakened by exile. Garcia presents

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Displacement and dislocation often result in a process of transculturation whereby the exile strives to maintain his cultural heritage while readjusting to a new space that imposes the acquisition of new values and culture. *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), Cristina Garcia's first acclaimed novel, offers a glimpse of three generations torn by the Cuban Revolution 1959. It highlights the sufferings of those exiles in the diaspora as well as those in Cuba, and thus offers a new definition to the notion of exile. While exiles' plight lies in spatial displacement, Cubans' plight is shown through nostalgia and historical estrangement that classifies their exile as temporal. This paper is an attempt to read *Dreaming in Cuban* from two different perspectives in the hope of reconciliation between the past and the present. To put it otherwise, the novelist seeks to highlight the common traits between the experiences of those at home with those in the diaspora to shape a Cuban American extraterritorial nation faithful to the legacy of Cuban history.

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The main question that is addressed in this paper is the following: is there any possibility to reconcile Cubans with Cuban Americans taking into account their diametrical viewpoints about the Revolution? The answer to this question requires an examination of the characters' fragmented identities after the Revolution. This will help the researcher display how the feeling of nostalgia resulted in the exiled characters' readiness to reconcile with family members in the island. Thus, the first section of this paper is dedicated to an examination of some characters' fragmented identities embodied in the forms of diseases. Then, the researcher will shift to an analysis of the possible modes of reconciliation offered by the protagonist character Pilar who; affected by her nostalgia for Cuba, is responsible for the mend of broken family ties.

2. Exile in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Garcia introduces the reader to the del Pino family and admirably depicts three generations of the family's life in both Cuba and the United States. Throughout the novel, the trope of exile is presented as a paradox. On the one hand, those in Cuba see those in the diaspora as exiles. On the other hand, those in the diaspora identify Cuba as an exiled island severed from the world.

Exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is approached from two different points of view. On the one hand, Pilar and her parents are conceived as exiles in the United States. This conception is well-grounded both historically and literarily in Garcia's novel because Pilar's family feels estrangement away from home. On the other hand, Cuba that has been severed from the rest of the world is also represented in terms of exile throughout the novel, and thus Cubans are also viewed as exiles. Pilar associates Cuba with isolation when she states, "Cuba is a peculiar exile, I think, an island-colony. We can reach it by a thirty minute charter flight from Miami, yet never reach it at all" (Garcia, 1992, p.219). Celia similarly describes Cuba in terms of exile when she recalls her husband's meticulousness:

What was it he read to her once? About how, long ago, the New World was attached to Europe and Africa? Yes, and the continents pulled away slowly, painfully after millions of years. The Americas were still inching westward and will eventually collide with Japan. Celia wonders if Cuba will be left behind, alone in the Caribbean Sea with its faulted and folded mountains, its conquests, its memories. (Garcia, 1992, p.48)

This image of isolation raises the concerns that Cristina Garcia brings up in an interview with Iraida H. López with regard to "U.S. policy of continuing to isolate Cuba in a world where everybody else has been accepted and dealt with. Cuba continues to be ostracized in a way that makes no political or economic sense" (López, 1995: 105). Conveniently, it is argued that Cuba is isolated because the revolution has cut its ties with the world market and is thus not part

of the global market (Machado Saéz, 2005, p.139). Similarly, Ruth Behar explains the shift in the American cartographic imagining of Cuba in the wake of the Revolution:

Once upon a time, Cuba was such a common place of the United States' imagination that it was included in maps of Florida. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and Fidel Castro's declaration that Cuba would be resculpted a communist nation, the United States sent the island into exile. (Behar, 1995, p.1)

In fact, the image of "sending Cuba into exile" is well grounded if one takes into account the United States embargo against Cuba, described in Cuba as el bloqueo (the embargo). Thus, exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is dealt with from both the insider's viewpoint as well as the outsider's one in a non-judgmental narrative to provide the reader with an objective account of the Cuban Revolution and the way it impacts greatly the lives of generations of Cubans as well as Cuban Americans.

The experience of exile often results in different processes of identification. Some characters in the novel completely assimilate in American mainstream culture and ultimately identify as Americans. Some other characters, unable to relinquish the past, create a hybrid identity amalgamating their Cuban heritage with the Americanness, thus creating the Cuban American identity. However, this hybridity is responsible for characters' language loss as their Spanish language is no more of great use in an English speaking America. The thematic issue and discussion of language loss in *Dreaming in Cuban* is legitimate since it is the biggest sacrifice exiles, immigrants and displaced people make as soon as they are transplanted into a new culture. However, language loss is far from being the worse thing an exile might experience; some characters even develop dis-eased identities that are psychologically complex to define.

3. Disease and Dis-eased Identities in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Altogether with language language loss, disease represents identity crises in *Dreaming in Cuban*. The novel reveals dis-eased and disabled bodies relocated in new "homes" and inextricably intertwined with memories and national histories. These diseased beings "enable ancestral connections to stretch beyond strained emotional and political borders by assuming the characteristics of a rhizome" (Shemak, 2006, p.1). Following Deleuze and Guattari, Caribbean scholar Edouard Glissant (1997) defines the rhizome as, "An enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (p.11). For Glissant (1997), the rhizome is necessary for imagining the "submarine" connections that link Caribbean peoples, their histories and experiences, "rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (p.11). Thus, Glissant's

"rhizomatic thought" explains how the past permeates and even shapes the present. In this section, special attention will be given to the way the discourse of disease in *Dreaming in Cuban* calls for and justifies return to the past, in this case, conceived as a space of healing. Moreover, an examination of how *Dreaming in Cuban* displays disease and disability in such rhizomatic terms is provided. In so doing, this analysis highlights the dichotomized discourse surrounding the notion of belonging either to Cuba or the United States, or more exactly, living temporally in the present and abandoning the past or vice versa.

In fact, disability is common to all the characters in *Dreaming in Cuban* and thus reflects a collective if not a national trauma. Not only the characters suffer from disability, with its various forms, but Cuba also does. Cuba is affected by communism that severs the island from the rest of the world and disables it economically. Like communism that is seen as an economic infection that should be contained, Castro is described as "a complete hysteric with a messianic complex, if not a manic depressive" (Pérez Jr., 1999, p.230). Similarly, Capitalism is also conceived as a disease by communists. Fidel Castro, for instance, stated, "Perhaps, of the evils brought about by developed capitalism none is so nefarious as the way of life and consumerist habits" (Qtd. in De Salas-del Valle, 2006).

The character that best exhibits Castro's view of capitalist evils is Lourdes who unabashedly emulates the typical American consumerist habits. Lourdes experiences both extremes of eating disorders. She first deals with the trauma she suffered as a victim of rape at the hands of Castro's soldiers and then with the incurable disease and eventual death of her father, through first bulimia then later anorexia. Partly, Lourdes' insatiability reflects Castro's vision of the devilish aspect of capitalism:

Garcia suggests that despite its participation, and dominance, in the global marketplace, the U.S. is no more sustaining than Cuba. That Lourdes never manages to get "filled up" no matter how much she consumes symbolizes a political system marked by perpetual deficiency, despite the continuous consumption on the part of its citizenry. (Shemak, 2006, p.16)

Garcia matches Lourdes' change in appetite with instability in sexual appetite when the narrator tells us, "The more she took her father to the hospital for cobalt treatment, the more she reached for the pecan sticky buns and for Rufino" (p.20). Similarly, when Lourdes stops eating, she stops having sexual intercourse with her husband. Lourdes experiences diametrical opposites of eating disorder. During Jorge's illness, Lourdes excessively devotes herself to consumption in order to fill the void that the separation from her mother and motherland has caused and that the probable death of her father surely will. Her insatiable appetite, however, is supplanted by anorexia nervosa when her father dies as the

narrator recounts, “The smell of food repels her. She can’t even look at it without her mouth filling with the acrid saliva that precedes vomiting.” (p.169)

Thus, Lourdes’ eating disorders, in part, reflect her hybrid countenance as she experiences the hunger and starvation of Cuban people and the excesses of Americans. Lourdes’ excessive consumption in the form of eating and sex can be viewed as a kind of nourishment that she lacks and that the ailing presence of her father cannot satisfy. Lourdes’ suicidal refusal to eat, on the other hand, may be viewed as a willful euthanasia caused by the loss of the last and only familiar tie i.e., her father. Lourdes’ eating disorders are symptoms of an identity crisis. She strives to fill an inner emptiness; created by the separation from her mother and motherland, with overeating. For Lourdes, compulsive eating becomes a means to transform her body as “the flesh amassed rapidly on her hips and buttocks, muting the angles of her bones. It collected on her thighs, fusing them above the knees. It hung from her arms like hammocks.” (p.20) Overeating is the means through which Lourdes expresses her long for newness that she succeeds to carve out both at the physical and the ideological levels by severing herself from all that is Cuban. In this sense, instead of a poetics of relation “in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other”, Lourdes demonizes communist Cuba, through her emulation of the American character, and refuses to reestablish links between Cuba and America and between her past and present.

However, Lourdes’ abandonment of Cuba and the past disables her and foments within her a feeling of an amputee who has to live with organic deficiency. This feeling is later translated by her excessive diet that may be considered as the first step back towards the past aiming at reconciliation between the past and the present. By refusing to eat, Lourdes revives images of the past when “she was a skinny child . . . . [When] even on the day before her wedding, the seamstresses took in her bodice, begging her to eat and fill out her gown.” (pp.20-21) Lourdes’ later willful starvation parallels Cubans’ one and thus Lourdes reestablishes the link between Cubans and Cuban Americans throughout the primary feeling of empathy. These paradoxical experiences create dilemma for Lourdes as to whether she belongs in the USA or in Cuba and thus result in an identity malaise best manifested by her instable changing appetite.

No matter how Lourdes strives to Americanize herself and abandon her Cuban heritage, Garcia’s rehearsal of the association of Lourdes with the Orisha Ochún[1] proves that Lourdes cannot get rid of her Cubanness. This is explained by the association of Ochún with the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre[2] (Virgin of Charity of el Cobre) that is the patroness of Cuba. At the level of onomastics, none of the Puente family members can uproot himself and fully assimilate into American mainstream; their names are powerful reminders of their Cuban origin.

The escape, or voluntary exile, of the Puente family in *Dreaming in Cuban* is

propelled by the inability of the Cuban motherland to nourish its citizens. This idea is best portrayed through the mastectomy of Celia who functions, on one level, as a kind of personification of Cuba. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera explains in this concern that Celia's removal of the maternal breast, a source of human nourishment, sheds light on both the physical deprivation of the Cuban people as a consequence of food shortages and "the maiming of Cuba as mother country" (O'Reilly Herrera, 1997, p.86). The image of Cuba as incapable to cater for its citizens' needs results into the escape of its inhabitants who, in this case, cannot be indicted for Cuba's economic plight. While Lourdes' consumerist habits manifest U.S. economic ideology as an infectious one, Jorge's stomach cancer can be read as a manifestation of having lived under what Lourdes and Jorge see as the corruption and infection of communist Cuba. Pilar, for instance, explains, "Mom says 'communist' the way some people say 'cancer' low and fierce" (p.26). Jorge's mimicry of the American ideals manifests through his war on germs which he thinks spread in the tropical Cuban climate. For Jorge, the very word microbios "lit a fire in his eyes. "They are the enemy!" he used to bellow. "Culprits of tropical squalor!"" (pp.20-21). It is argued that the way Jorge combats germs "signals his efforts to control and order his family's physical interactions with the tropical environment and the Cuban system." (Shemak, 2006, p.17)

Jorge's war on germs and the advice he gives to Lourdes in one of her father's imagined visits "you must stop the cancer at your front door" (p.171) parallel the U.S government's strife to "contain" those "Cuban" diseases that menaced national, economic as well as political boundaries like the yellow fever in the 1900's. Following this line of understanding, it is no surprise that Jorge chooses an American biomedical treatment. The New York hospital where Jorge follows cobalt radiation treatment stands for his view of a world that must extirpate the communist contamination. Similarly, while dieting Lourdes ingests a bluish liquid that equals her father's cobalt radiation treatments or as the narrator describes it, "a bluish fluid that comes in tubes like astronaut food. It tastes of chemicals." (p.170) However, the incongruity of radiation therapy lies in the fact that although it aims at killing cancerous cells, it kills good ones too. Thus, this very irony of radiation therapy suggests that, "Lourdes' and Jorge's attempts to inoculate themselves from communism can only be accomplished by denying themselves connections to their family members still tied to Cuba." (Shemak, 2006, p.18)

Despite the many symbolisms referring to Jorge's ideological allegiance to American capitalism, he does not seem to condone its disadvantages. Preceding his death, Jorge's excretions of his ailing body fragment his mirage of an efficacious and hygienic American medical structure. During his treatment, Lourdes remembers how "her father despaired at incompetences and

breakdowns in procedures … Once a nurse inserted a suppository to loosen his bowels and did not return, although he cramped his finger ringing the buzzer, until after he had soiled his pajamas" (p.22). While Jorge disapproves of "tropical squalor", his ideological allegiance to U.S capitalism is ultimately eclipsed by his humiliation following his incapacity to maintain his hygienic borders in North America. This state of paralysis overwhelms Jorge and "ultimately symbolizes the difficulty of drawing distinct allegiances along national and ideological borders." (Shemak, 2006, p.17)

The impossibility for Cuban exiles to dissociate themselves from their motherland is depicted through the mother-child relationship. For women in *Dreaming in Cuban*, the in-utero and post-natal liaison between mother and child represents a poetics of disease as well as relation. Significantly, pregnancy is a condition that requires the health of interdependent bodies but also raises interrogations about health and disease because the in-utero mother-child connection suggests the potential for passing on illness and thus solidifies the mother-child bond. Celia, for instance, "imagines her pregnant body as a vector of disease, casting herself as a contaminated mother who passes "venom" on to Lourdes" (Shemak, 2006, p.8). It is especially because "the baby is porous" that it makes her vulnerable to contagion (p.50).

Similarly, Ivanito is Felicia's only child who maintains a solid bond with his mother. When Felicia spends one summer making and eating coconut ice creams, believing "the coconuts will purify them, that the sweet white milk will heal them" (p.85), Ivanito is the only one, among her three children, to share in this decontamination. In this particular case, the poetics of disease explain the poetics of relation. This is because Ivanito's participation in the disinfection process is explained throughout a poetics of disease since it is during her pregnancy with Ivanito that Felicia became infected with syphilis. Therefore, Felicia's disease is an embodiment of a symbolic connection that strongly binds Ivanito to his mother so that when Felicia believes her mother intends to poison her with the food she brings, Ivanito also balks at eating it for fear of betraying his mother.

Symbolically, the disabled mother figure in *Dreaming in Cuban* represents the disabled motherland in that both fail to nurture their children/citizens and both pass on diseases to them in such a way that the mother-child and by extension motherland-citizens relationships become increasingly interdependent. This is why, in part, one way to combat skepticism over matters of belonging includes revisiting dis-eased mother-child and motherland-citizen relationships so that disease is not always enfeebling but can be viewed as an ontological necessity.

4. Familial Conflicts and Reconciliation

Familial conflicts in *Dreaming in Cuban* may be interpreted in terms of

politics that divide the del Pino family into two camps: those who approve of Castro's Revolution and those adamantly damn it. Pilar, who lives in an in-between space i.e., geographically in the USA and emotionally in Cuba, is the character who proved her mettle in establishing a dialogue between Cubans in the diaspora and those in the island. This call for dialogue and reconciliation is apostrophized in the work of Cuban writer Ruth Behar who tried throughout her anthology Bridges to Cuba to build bridges between the extreme views of right and left. Behar (1995) assumes that Cubans need "a nuanced and complex view of how Cubans on the island and in the diaspora give meaning to their lives, their identity, and their culture in the aftermath of a battle that has split the nation at the root." (p.2)

Indeed, Garcia's work provides this nuanced and complex view of the lives of Cubans in the USA and Cuba throughout the geographically divided del Pino family. Moreover, *Dreaming in Cuban* can be an exemplar in terms of establishing a dialogue between Cubans and Cuban Americans due to Garcia's neutrality regarding political leanings. Garcia's impartiality is clear through her "metafictional use of multiple narrators and perspectives [that] creates a community of divergent political view" (Payant, 2001, p.165)

Although Garcia's novel translates the political divides caused by the Revolution, it is not political in the generally understood sense. Garcia argues in an interview with Iraida López (1995) that she did not intend to comment on politics throughout her characters and that by staying so close to the characters "it happened that they are diametrically opposed politically" (p.106). Thus, it becomes clear that Garcia's interest in politics is randomly rooted in the personal toll of events in Cuba following the 1959 Revolution.

The central point of contention, for instance, between Pilar and her mother is politics. In one memorable scene, Pilar gives her mother a book of essays on Cuba, called A Revolutionary Society, as a Christmas gift whose "cover showed cheerful, clean-cut children gathered in front of a portrait of Che Guevera" (p.132). When she sees the gift, Lourdes shouts, "Lies, poisonous Communist lies!" and immediately takes the book from the Christmas tree, fills the bathtub with hot water and throws the book in it. Afterwards, the narrator counts, "[Lourdes] fished Pilar's book out of the tub with barbecue tongs and placed it on the porcelain platter she reserved for her roasted pork legs. Then she fastened a note to the cover with a safety pin. "Why don't you move to Russia if you think it's so great!" And she signed her name in full" (p.132).

However provocative Lourdes' attitude is, Pilar simply reacts by picking up the book and hanging it out to dry. Pilar and Lourdes vehemently disagree on exile politics, and this recalls Garcia's own family experience. Garcia claims in an interview with Allan Vorda (1993):

I grew up in a very black-and-white situation. My parents were virulently anti-communist, and yet my relatives in Cuba were tremendous supporters of Communism, including members of my family who belong to the Communist Party. The trip in 1984 and the book, to some extent, were an act of reconciliation for the choices everyone made. I'm very much in favor of democratic systems, but I also strongly believe a country should determine its own fate. I realize I couldn't write and be a journalist and do everything I've done in Cuba; yet, I respect the right of people to live as they choose. (p.71)

These seemingly insoluble antagonisms affecting deeply the two generational matrilineal dyads i.e., Celia – Lourdes – Pilar are important in the sense that they give a conciliatory aspect to the whole narrative. In order to call for reconciliation between Cubans and Cubans Americans, Garcia had to profile the basic points setting the latter apart, something she successfully did.

The most stunning conciliation in the novel is the one that happens between Pilar and Lourdes however ideologically and politically different. Following the exhibition of Pilar's punk version of the Statue of Liberty, the crowd in Lourdes' bakery is offended and the atmosphere becomes acutely charged:

[When someone] yells in raucous Brooklynese, 'Gaaahbage! Whadda piece of gaahbage!' a lumpish man charges Liberty with a pocketknife, repeating his words like a war cry. Before anyone can react, Mom swings her new handbag and clubs the guy cold inches from the painting. Then, as if in slow motion, she tumbles forward, a thrashing avalanche of patriotism and motherhood, crushing three spectators and a table of apple tartlets. (p.144)

It is at this crucial moment that Pilar's feeling for her mother begins to become pellucid for however different they might be Pilar thinks, "And I, I love my mother very much at that moment" (Schniederman, 2007, p.26). This scene also puts Lourdes' assimilation into American mainstream into question. Although Lourdes does not necessarily condone the political meaning of Pilar's canvas, she defends it and does so out of "patriotism and motherhood". Thus, the Cubanness of Lourdes eclipses her Americanized persona at the first threat the latter poses to one of her compatriots.

After Jorge's death of cancer in the USA, he appears to Lourdes and they speak of past family stories throughout which Lourdes learns about her father's responsibility for Celia's mental disorder. Jorge also admits to Lourdes that Celia did love her and that he purposefully took her with him on his business trips to "own her" and deny Celia a bond with her (p.195). This confession along with her love for Pilar "seem to evoke a desire on Lourdes's part for reconciliation with her mother, leading to her return to Cuba in 1980" (Payant, 2001, p.167). Eventually, upon her arrival in Cuba, Lourdes affectionately bathes and dresses her sorrowful mother Celia deeply pained by Felicia's death. Lourdes's sense of estrangement from Cuba wanes gradually as she visits the scene of her rape at

the family ranch. The fact that she was capable of visiting the ranch, despite the cruel memories that this place evokes, evinces healing. Finally, Lourdes takes pride in her Cubanness as she seductively performs the originally afro-Cuban dance of the conga with her thirteen-year-old nephew Ivanito.

Therefore, it is necessary to note that the homeward journey is a significant conciliatory step that could reassemble the diasporic populations of Cuba with Cubans. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, it is assumed that it is Pilar who "marks the trajectory of the migratory saga by establishing the need to return home" (Ortiz-Márquez, 1997, p.237). Rocio Davis (2000) explains the necessity of the journey back to Cuba:

According to Lorna Irvine, the process of discovery – the 'psychological journey' –of the daughter's own identity demands a revision of the relationship with the mother, and this often involves three stages: negation, recognition, and reconciliation. The need to go "back to the future" implies the urgency of appropriating the intricate truths about one's self and history as part of the process of self-affirmation. The immigrant characters in Garcia's novel – Lourdes and Pilar – need to return to Cuba in order to come to terms with the tangled meanings of mothering, language, and home, and renew their lives in the United States. (p.61)

Cuban Americans' reconciliation with Cuba and Cubans in the island demonstrated through Pilar's reconciliation with Lourdes and their journey back to Cuba are cataclysmic for both characters. Return to Cuba results in maturation for Pilar and healing for Lourdes, it also clarified their respective conceptions of home. Separation and death may be surmounted by restoring both the cultural past and the maternal bond. Pilar's and Lourdes' recuperation of the mother-daughter dyad through and within language resulted in new sentimental configurations of the notion of home.

When Pilar returns to Cuba, Celia gives her the unmailed letters she wrote to Gustavo, her Spanish lover, and these "texts within the text" will become an informative section in Pilar's diary. A plot analysis enlightens the reader that the del Pino family discord dates back to the 1930's love affair of matriarch Celia with Gustavo, a married Spanish lover who abandons her. Celia's terrible sense of desolation after Gustavo leaves her brings about an extended period of estrangement between Celia and her husband,

The double role that Pilar plays in *Dreaming in Cuban*, as both a narrator and a participant in the story, reflects her double-consciousness that enabled her to recover that missing element of her identity. In this sense, Pilar is the narrator of the Puente family story, and is the one who is tasked by Celia to bridge the gap between Cubans and Cuban Americans. Pilar's role as an archivist, symbolized through the preservation of Celia's letters to Gustavo, foretells her role in preserving Cuban history within the memories of Cuban Americans. Unlike the

beginning of the novel, the end presents characters that depoliticize the Cuban Revolution and emphasize the social damages that it causes them. Moreover,

5. **Conclusion**:

This paper started with a brief discussion of the exile that was incurred on Cuban Americans as a consequence of Fidel Castro's takeover. As a result of their exile in America, Cuban American characters like Lourdes and Rufino, can no more restore links with their family members because of their contentious political views about the Revolution. Over time, the psychological impact of these broken familial ties is manifest on their dis-eased identities, marked by both clinical diseases and derangement. Only then, characters start a psychological reflection on their identities that became fragmented because of a deranged sense of belonging. Pilar, the protagonist of the novel, is the character who undertakes the improbable journey back to Cuba, and becomes responsible for the reconciliation of family members torn apart by the Revolution. This paper concludes that Lourdes' and Pilar's journey back to Cuba is a symbol of reconciliation that not only reunited the fragmented Del Pino family but rallied the characters from their psychological diseases. Disease, in *Dreaming in Cuban*, represents a phase of transition from exile and return. Already withering psychologically due to exile and disease, return to Cuba becomes the last ditch-effort to reconciliation with oneself.

6. Endnotes:

1. In Cuban Santeria, Ochún (also written Ósun in Yoruba and Oshun in Orisha) is the youngest and most beautiful of the female Orisha. Lourdes symbolizes the Orisha Ochún in many ways. One instance of this is when the owner of the botànica shop calls Pilar "a daughter of Changó" (Garcia, 1992: 200). The latter, another Orisha, is believed to be the sexual partner of Ochún.
2. In Santeria, the town of El Cobre where the statue of the Virgin of charity (the Virgin Mary) lies is identified with Ochún, the powerful goddess of rivers and womanly love. For more details on the significance of Ochún in Cuban Santeria see Mary Ann Clark, *Santeria: Correcting the Myths and Uncovering the Realities of a Growing Religion*, Praeger Publishers, USA, 2007, pp. 45-52.

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