

New Tracks of Trauma in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*

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Abstract:

Trauma studies are essential because they shed light on the development and incoherence of men's and women's social identities and, in some situations, certainly illustrate cultural gender combinations. Trauma is a common theme in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*. Since the 1990s, this concept has been growingly addressed in literary studies, and, more notably, studies on trauma have started to focus on gender issues, taking a different path than those that deal with the Holocaust, violence, and wars. In this paper, some of the female characters in the novel under scrutiny experience various types of trauma. Traumatic experiences are linked to the characters' life stories and the codes of behavior that male dominance expects them to follow. The cultural structure, and the person's life identity within that sociocultural setting, can give traumatic significance to occurrences that would normally be gloomy or distressing. Individuality is developed through interactions between personal experiences and the social context in which a person lives. This paper examines the experiences and circumstances that led to trauma for female characters and the role of socio-cultural circumstances in trauma. *Dreaming in Cuban* centers on characters who share common thoughts and feelings in their Caribbean ancestral homes and their diasporic movement patterns to the United States. In the novel, trauma is explored through differing viewpoints, and diasporic movements become significant because they are linked to the trauma some female characters experienced all through their lives. Consequently, this paper aims to discuss these diasporic actions and analyze their impact on the characters' traumatic experiences.

Keywords: Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*, Trauma, Diaspora, Female characters.

مسارات جديدة من نظرية الصدمة في رواية كريستينا غارسيا أحلام في كوبا.

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ملخص البحث

تركز رواية الحلم في كوبا لكريستينا جارسيا على نظرية الصدمة من خلال بعض المسارات الجديدة. منذ تسعينيات القرن الماضي، تم تناول هذا المفهوم بشكل متزايد في الدراسات الأدبية، وبشكل أكثر وضوحًا، بدأت الدراسات حول الصدمة في التركيز على قضايا النوع الاجتماعي، واتخاذ مسار مختلف عن تلك التي تتعامل مع الهولوكوست والعنف الجماعي والحروب. في هذه الورقة البحثية، تتعرض بعض الشخصيات النسائية في الرواية المشار إليها لأنواع مختلفة من الصدمات. ترتبط هذه الصدمات بقصص حياة الشخصيات وقواعد السلوك التي تتوقع هيمنة الذكور منهم اتباعها. كذلك يمكن للبنية الثقافية، وهوية حياة الشخص في هذا السياق الاجتماعي والثقافي، أن تعطي أهمية صادمة للأحداث التي عادة ما تكون حزينة أو مؤلمة. وأيضًا يتم تطوير الشخصية من خلال التفاعلات بين التجارب الشخصية الداخلية والسياق الاجتماعي الذي تعيش فيه. تبحث هذه الورقة في التجارب والظروف التي أدت إلى الصدمات التي تتعرض لها الشخصيات النسائية ودور الظروف الاجتماعية والثقافية في هذه الصدمات. يتركز الحلم في كوبا على الشخصيات التي تحمل أفكارًا ومشاعر مشتركة في منازل أجدادهم الكاريبية وفي أنماط تنقلهم في الشتات إلى الولايات المتحدة. في الرواية، يتم استكشاف الصدمة من وجهات نظر مختلفة، وتصبح حركات الشتات مهمة لأنها مرتبطة بالصدمات التي مرت بها بعض الشخصيات النسائية من خلال الخطابات. نتيجة لذلك، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى مناقشة تصرفات الشتات هذه وتحليل تأثيرها على التجارب الصادمة للشخصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

كريستينا جارسيا، الحلم الكوبي، الصدمة، الشتات، الشخصيات النسائية.

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Introduction:

As a result of many complexities experienced by humanity such as wars, slavery, colonization, and diaspora; trauma can symbolize modern history. 'Trauma' first appeared in the English language in medicine in the late 1700s, and it started referring to a physical injury triggered by an external agent. As a result of Freud's studies, the theory was expanded to psychological illnesses in the twentieth century. The World Wars, the Holocaust, and Gulf Wars all resulted in new trauma theories. According to Luckhurst, "the concept of "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder helped consolidate a trauma paradigm that has come to pervade the understanding of subjectivity and experience in the advanced industrial world" (Luckhurst 2). During the same time, this exploration sparked research in a variety of fields of study dealing with traumatic experiences.

Craps and Buelens argue that trauma theory in literary works is essential, "for understanding colonial trauma such as dispossession, forced migration, slavery, segregation, violence, and genocide" (Craps 3). *Dreaming in Cuban*, in particular, emphasizes the discourse of traumatic experiences for female characters in various contexts and reveals issues that are rarely addressed in trauma study results. E. Ann Kaplan claims that "there are traumatic experiences which are usually neglected because trauma perpetrated or suffered by men have been the main focus.⁸ Accordingly, Greg Forter refers to the difficulties involved in clarifying types of trauma that have been naturalized in social circumstances, such as rape, racism, and the subjugation of women and those categorized as "others". He considers the trauma caused by these occurrences to be "chronic" and "social," and thus they cannot be classified underneath its core principle (Kaplan 260). This notion is

central to the statement in this paper because the characters Celia and Felicia encounter cultural trauma, which appears to be linked to their family background, sexual encounters, and the social and political situations in which they experienced.

It is necessary to discuss the development of subjectivity through the characters to explain trauma, as E. Ann Kaplan states, “trauma produces new subjects” (Kaplan 1). Accordingly, Donald E. Hall outlines subjectivity as “the intersection of two lines of philosophical inquiry: epistemology (the study of how we know what we know) and ontology (the study of the nature of being or existence)” (4). Later, Hall defines it as a “particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short, sooner or later, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being” (Hall 3). Moreover, Hall explains that “subjectivity may never be under any firm or even measurable degree of control, however, what we do with our understanding of subjectivity is susceptible to some degree of control” (Hall 113). Even after the distinction between the two terms "identity" and "subjectivity," numerous academics use ‘identity’ to refer to the method of subjectivity development. The term ‘subjectivity’ is employed because the female characters in the novel continuously question themselves regarding society, ethnicity, racial group, and sexual identity.

Tracks of Trauma:

The novel contains two types of trauma, which complicates its evaluation. To evaluate them, the history of trauma as a disease should be covered. The accepted definition of PTSD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R) of 1987 is as follows:

The essential feature of this disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience (i. e., outside the

range of such common experiences as simple bereavement, chronic illness, business losses, and marital conflict). The stressor producing this syndrome would be markedly stressful to almost anyone and is usually experienced with intense fear, terror, and helplessness. (The Circumcision Reference Library).

On the contrary, in the 1990s, Cathy Caruth, for whom the trauma theory is widely regarded as pioneering, emphasized that “traumatic disorders reflect the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking-over – physically and neurologically – of the mind by an event that it cannot control. As such it is understood as the most real, and also most destructive psychic experience” (Caruth 24). As a result, Caruth's interpretation and the DSM's concept converge to describe specific major accidents that are not accepted as normal human annotations. While Lourdes exhibits symptoms consistent with the above definition, she also shows symptoms consistent with another type of trauma. Similarly, Felicia's experiences do not belong to the group of trauma; however, she displays symptoms that seem to be linked to this other type of trauma.

Kaplan's research focuses on this second type of trauma, as she addresses an issue that trauma researchers have rarely conferred, the “family” trauma, the “trauma of loss, abandonment, rejection, betrayal” (Kaplan 19). She ignored these traumatic events because trauma fomented or struggled by men, instead of women, children, or entire families, have been the core concern. As a result of this gender stereotyping of trauma, women's sufferings are rarely addressed. Laura S. Brown marks out that what the DSM identifies as, “the range of human experience” is “what is normal and usual in the lives of men of a dominant class: white, young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men” (Brown 101). Special events such as child sexual abuse,

rape, and beating of women happen in mysterious situations, inside the house, and are regarded as common incidences. As a result, they do not fall under the predefined trauma types.

Greg Forter, in the latest study on trauma and forms of literature, emphasizes the importance of Caruth's and certain other trauma critics' works in provoking advances in psychological theories that are critical for collaborative procedures in which, "punctual trauma" had a major expression, such as the great wars and the Holocaust (Forter 259). Most remarkably, such theories have been exaggerated in some cases to other traumatic experiences, such as child abuse and rape. However, he, like Kaplan, emphasizes the restrictions of these notions in clarifying types of trauma that have been naturalized in social settings, such as sexual assault, racism, women's subservience, and those classified as, "others." As trauma is chronic, it is "necessary to excavate and 'estrangle' them to see them *as* social trauma" (Kaplan 260). This last notion is essential to the reasoning and discourse in this paper since all of the characters have experienced some kind of social trauma. Concerning the female characters examined in this paper, their social trauma are primarily related to the transnational activities they experience, though they are all exacerbated by other social factors.

Discussion:

Since its first publication, there has been a lot of debate about *Dreaming in Cuban*. Most interpretations focus on the novel's placement, examining how the characters and response start moving between Cuba and the United States. In these interpretations, the family's surname self-image occurs predominantly as a formation of their native Cuba and their birth country (the United States). Pilar, the character who decided to come to America as an infant, is the location of this blending. In an early essay that impacted many successive strategies to the novel, Isabel Alvarez Borland concentrates on Pilar in particular, "a Cuban-American ethnic who grows up in New York desperately searching for her Cuban roots" (Borland 43). Borland shifts her emphasis from Pilar

to the novel's overall placement, Pilar dramatizes an ethnic writer's concerns about issues of tone and individuality. Garcia's relevance stems from her endeavor to “reconcile two cultures and two languages and two visions of the world into a particular whole” (Borland 48).

The formation of evidently pure Cuban and US civilizations is central to this composition of Cuban-American traumatic experiences. Bringing up the integration, or even adjustment, model without even any mention of other Latino cultures within the United States, however, appears to entail the formulation of two identity entities (Cubanness and Americanness) into a fresh, surname status (Cuban-Americanness). Lori Ween's most recent article, in which she describes Garcia's project as a "coordinated effort to obtain Cubanness into English. Even though each of these critics mentions a "Hispanic" or "ethnic" identity in *Dreaming in Cuban*, it appears indicative that Marrero refers to the novel as "U.S. Cuban literature," and Borland refers to Cristina Garcia as a "Cuban-American writer.

Cristina Garcia is a Latina writer rather than a Cuban-American, with all the conflicts and inconsistencies that entails. Latina writers accommodate to and do not necessarily fit into, several literary types. Garcia's connection to heritage is ambiguous. Though born in Cuba, Garcia writes in English about America and a motherland she hardly knows. Sandra Cisneros could be asked nearly the same questions. She is normally considered part of the compilations of American literature because she was born in the USA and writes in English. Nonetheless, as the daughter of a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother, she could be regarded a Mexican or even a Latin American author, an identification fortified by the reality that *The House on Mango Street* is being interpreted into Spanish.

Displacement also characterizes the lives of the individuals featured in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Lourdes and her daughter Pilar are two ethnic female characters in the novel. Lourdes is also a complicated

character, reflecting several aspects of her traumatic events. She provides a segmentation procedure that goes back to her childhood when her mother Celia refuses her existence due to severe anxiety. This type of trauma plays a significant role in Lourdes' breakdown and her blurry perception of reality. Lourdes only allows her father to get into one of her worlds in the narrative. Celia, her mother, represents rejection, while Jorge, her father, represents affection and support; there are no other definitions in her connection with her family members. Lourdes acknowledges as an adult that she, "is herself only with her father. Even after his death, they understand each other perfectly, as they always have" (Garcia131). This bond is solid and transcends time, as they continue to discuss Lourdes's current and past challenges even after her father's passing. Lourdes' relationship with Felicia, her sister, is signified by bigotry and self-centeredness, as she does not enable Jorge any space to communicate with her sister.

Lourdes' relocation to the United States takes place for both political and personal purposes. Her mother Celia and sister Felicia stayed in Cuba, while Lourdes moves to the United States with her husband Rufino Puente, and daughter Pilar. Lourdes ends up losing her attributes after the Castro Revolution triumphs, and she decides to move to the United States. Nonetheless, she plans to return to Cuba soon, believing that US involvement will change the country's political situation. As Pilar emphasizes, "we lived in a hotel in Manhattan for five months while my parents waited for the revolution to fail or for the Americans to intervene" (Garcia 32). Lourdes is initially from the lower middle class, but when she gets married to Rufino, a man from an influential and wealthy family, she becomes a member of Cuba's dominant class, which controls the political and economic system.

The Castro revolution traumatizes her since it deprives Lourdes of the rest of the world's equality. As she works to modernize the farm, she refuses to acknowledge the revolution because it gets control of qualities, land, money, and wealth that rightfully belong to a small persecuted group of individuals. Regarding the deformations of Cubans, Franklin Knight states:

Approximately 200,000 persons joined the exodus from Cuba in the first three years of the revolution, many, no doubt, thinking that they were undertaking a temporary sojourn. Immigration decimated the ranks of the wealthy and skilled, created a shortage among various occupations, and weakened public administration. But it also cleared out the vast majority of the disaffected, making powerless the counterrevolution. After 1961, the revolution could no longer be overthrown from within. (Knight 246-47)

The advancement of Fidel Castro to the highest position in the country and the outline of communist ideology through such a dictatorial regime was a turning point in Cuban history that labeled, partitioned, and traumatized the country. This division is investigated in the novel through the characters of Celia, who backs the popular uprising, and her daughters Lourdes and Felicia are anti-Castro to variable levels. The arrival of the father exemplified by Castro performs a significant role in the process of subjectivity-building projects and segmentation for the characters examined, compounding other trauma they face. The characters in the novel frequently refer to 'El Líder' a term frequently used to identify Cuba's commander. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, the legacy is also important in understanding the complexities that underpin the procedure of moral subjectivity of the female characters. Solitude, loneliness, and male oppression characterize them. The novel begins with an elderly Celia fantasizing about being tempted by 'El Líder' on her balcony: "She would be feted at the palace, serenaded by a brass orchestra, seduced by 'El Líder' himself on a red velvet divan" (Garcia p.10). This illusion validates the temptress myth that was built around Castro's portrait when he was young.

Andrew St. George's essay "Castro's Women" outlines 'El Líder's active attitude towards women and the several misconceptions that make him well-known among women. According to St. George, Castro's sexual desire is only matched by his infatuation with the revolution's positive outcomes. St. George introduces that memories of Castro sexually assaulting females are plenty, and he is unconcerned about making comments or rejecting them. The Lorenz case is a well-known example, "his alleged rape of an 18-year-old American girl at the Hilton in Havana – and her forceful abortion afterward" (George 11). Thus, for both legend and the real world, Castro's temptress aura stayed over women's imaginations, particularly in the early years of the revolution. Moreover, Saikat Basu details Castro's ostensibly exceptional sexual performances, strengthening this image: "He slept with at least two women a day for more than four decades, one for lunch and one for supper. Sometimes he even ordered one for breakfast" (Basu12). Women appear to object to being ravenously raped by leaders. Whether true or not, the fact remains that his personality was enhanced by the adjustments he helped bring to Cuban society, particularly those that improved the lives of the poor and evicted.

As a result, in *Dreaming in Cuban*, Celia represents the image of such women who fantasized about and preferred Castro's charisma and hypersexualized figure. Celia substitutes Jorge's image at her bedside with Castro's, and at the beginning of the revolution, she abandons her dedication to her first love, the Spaniard Gustavo, and begins an intense glorification of Castro. Despite her awareness of the strength established norms have over her, she adopts Castro's revolution with the exact zeal she would devote to a beloved, and this behavior has an impact on her connection with her relatives. Myra Mendible, in "Absent Fathers and Lost Lovers," says that the "two mystified objects of desire" (the Spaniard and El Líder) translate "Celia's search for fulfillment and self-validation" (Garcia 13). This quest for her individuality is deeply embedded in her mother's traumatic abdication and the other obstacles she faces, occurrences that will trouble Celia by becoming trauma that will encompass her existence.

Celia's parents got a divorce when she was young, and their children are divided among family members. She is taken to Alicia in Havana, and the trauma she experiences will be painful for her and her daughters. Celia is impacted by her aunt's romantic period as an adult, and she is easily captivated by Gustavo, the wedded Spaniard who later renounces her. Gustavo alludes to the following for Katherine Payant, "the many outsiders, colonialists such as the Spanish and business people such as the North Americans, who have exploited the beauty and riches of Cuba and then left" (Garcia 14). Celia is heartbroken when Gustavo gives up her without even bidding farewell, "to her bed by early summer and stayed there for the next eight months. That she was shrinking there was no doubt." (Garcia 15). Gustavo's withdrawal is traumatic, and it will compound the trauma of her mother's earlier neglect of her, influencing how Celia will afterward cope with her young children. Celia gives up her love for Gustavo and gets married to Jorge, a salesman for an American company. During this time, she begins sending letters to her beloved, which she never sends and leaves to her grandchild Pilar much later in the novel. In these writings, she recounts her family background as well as significant events in Cuban heritage. Her life with Jorge, in contrast, tends to add to her misery and distress because Jorge's mother and sister, Berta, and Ofelia, render her life a living hell. By idolizing Jorge and brutalizing Celia, both women reinforce women's subjugation. Jorge distances himself from her as she becomes pregnant, abandoning her in the care of his mother and sister. Celia describes her pain in one of her notes to Gustavo, "They poison my food and milk but still I swell. The baby lives on venom." (Garcia P. 16).

Celia still has a vivid picture of her gathering with the Spaniard and desperate hope to go to Spain to look for him if she has a son, but she decides to remain in a particular instance she does have a daughter. This son represents the possibility of breaking free from the gender structures that smother her. Nadia I. Johnson mentions that "understanding the hierarchy of gender in Cuba, Celia knows that a son

can thrive and be successful, even without his mother” (Johnson 17). Celia has a psychotic break shortly after Lourdes is born, potentially caused by post-partum anxiety, and rejects having the baby. She fails to fulfill her commitment of “not abandoning a daughter to this life, but train her to read the columns of blood and numbers in men’s eyes, to understand the morphology of survival” (Johnson 18). Even though she is still in Cuba, she demonstrates no compassion for her girl.

Lourdes' discontent with Cuba grows as a result of a second trauma caused by the revolution. Lourdes, who is currently pregnant, loses her baby after a riding accident and a potential conflict with two of Castro's soldiers. One of the military men rapes Lourdes as a result of the incident. He then scuffs inscriptions on Lourdes' belly with his razor blade. All of these occurrences are metaphorical because they depict a feeling of sadness on different levels, namely the loss of property, the loss of the baby, and the infringement of the belly. Therefore, she not only goes berserk in her own body, but she also has a permanent inscription on her body that keeps the recollection of all the numerous lost lives and souls. On the other hand, Felicia hints at her eternal torture and tragic fate from the beginning of her narrative and through the meaning of her name. All through her residence at the sanctuary, Celia gets to meet Felicia, a woman she appreciates, “She killed her husband. Doused him with gasoline. Lit a match. She is unrepentant. We’re planning to escape” (Carcia 23). Celia identifies her second daughter after her insane friend, who also dies in a fire, and she acknowledges this will have long-term repercussions. Felicia has been an outsider in her family because she was a child, though Celia tries to compensate for her refusal of Lourdes by loving Felicia. Mary S. Vasquez asserts to Felicia, “Celia bequeaths her poetry, her love of language, her sensuality, her ever-hovering madness” (Carcia 24).

Furthermore, Felicia has been unable to communicate in the language that Jorge and Lourdes communicate with since childhood, despite her best efforts: "He was always away for work. He had promised to employ his wife as a Jamaican maid this time” (Garcia 25). Felicia's father did not return with a maid, but he agreed to sign a

baseball for her sister, Lourdes, which made her jump in location. Felicia had never heard the name before. For Felicia, all attempts to communicate with her family fail, owing to Jorge's devotion to Lourdes, who does not pay attention to Felicia's problems. Celia appears to accept parenthood with Felicia's birth, but she is too preoccupied with Gustavo, and later, the revolution, to notice the mental and physical dissociation Felicia begins to experience.

Lourdes travels north in the United States since she only feels secure in the chilliness of New York, which serves as a barrier because she has to wear jackets, which are layer upon layer that preserve her. The tranquilizing probably a symptom of horrific memories emerges through the winter conditions and its protective potential for Lourdes. She also tries to erase the incident from her mind. According to the novel, only her father is aware of the sexual violence, which he only reveals to Lourdes within a week of his murder in a discussion. This could lead to the assumption that she has never told anyone about the sexual assault. She receives 118 pounds in New York and shares her time between both her pastry shop and having sex with her partner. As the storyteller demonstrates, Lourdes' separation expresses herself in her overwhelming urge to satisfy her hollowness and via bingeing and trying to have sex, "Lourdes did not battle her cravings; rather, she submitted to them like a somnambulist to a dream. ... Lourdes was reaching through Rufino for something he could not give her, she wasn't sure what" (Garcia 21). According to Bordo's concept of cultural inscriptions on the skin, Lourdes' body, like Marina's, is becoming an emblem in which several components are marked, all of which are related to her failures and resulting emotional trauma.

Herman emphasizes that "trauma impels people both to withdraw from close relationships and to seek them desperately.... The traumatized person therefore frequently alternates between isolation and anxious clinging to others." She adds that "traumatic events ... shatter the sense of connection between individual and community" (Herman 55-56). Lourdes' desire to have sex appears to be her way of

compensating for all of her failures. Besides, Lourdes' sexual assault is a question of power, just like Marina's. The soldiers' first endeavor to recapture the farm for the revolution is thwarted when Lourdes faces them and orders them to depart her estate. The military man who sexually assaults her comes from the underclass, and she recognizes him even during the sexual assault, "She felt his calloused palm, ... she smelled the soldier's coarse soap, ... his milky clots and the decay of his teeth" (Garcia 71). The sexual assault becomes much more traumatic since it was committed by a representative of the country, and thus represents all of her failures. In terms of the purpose of rape, Herman adds, "the essential element of rape is the physical, psychological, and moral violation of the person... The purpose of the rapist is to terrorize, dominate, and humiliate his victim, to render her completely helpless" (Garcia 58). Being instructed by a woman from a higher social class is exceedingly undignified for Lourdes' rapist, so sexually assaulting her and abandoning a lasting mark on her is the manner he tries to find to demodulate the authority binary choice.

Lourdes possesses a bakery shop in the United States and hires other less privileged immigrants; nevertheless, in her autocratic character, she persecutes them and fails to realize the sufferings they face. Aside from her job at the bakery, she has no companions or community interactions. Moreover, she asserts being integrated into her country of birth, although being there will not force her to resolve her internal issues. On the other hand, her unwillingness to cope with them is exacerbated by her deformation expertise, as are her trauma. For her, the seizure of her property by Castro's authorities represents the end of her world as she understands it: she ends up losing her fortune and the authority to rule over others around her.

Her sexual assault by a rebellion is the death blow that shatters her entire world and her mind. Her flee to the United States does not alleviate her suffering, and she is unable to resolve it with her mother, who endorses Castro's ideas and authorities. Furthermore, because she does not discuss her trauma, Pilar is unaware of her mother's circumstances. Lourdes' otherness activity is the result of her

unsuccessful attempt to escape her trauma and incoherence. She asserts to have been fully integrated into US culture to conceal the hurt she claims to believe Cuba has imposed on her as a result of Castro's reaching the authority, his trial to proclaim the land, and, as a result, her sexual assault and her baby's death.

Pilar starts to feel like a stranger in the United States, and despite leaving Cuba at a young age, she retains recollection of her moment there, as evidenced by this quote, "I was only two years old when I left Cuba but I remember everything that's happened to me since I was a baby" (Garcia 26). She also has a special relationship with her grandma Celia, who endorses her and counsels her on her troubles. Pilar is unable to comprehend Lourdes' autocratic treatment of her, nor her mother's hatefulness of Cuba, as she is unsure of Lourdes' childhood trauma. Pilar believes her father is indeed out-of-place in the United States, but they do not explain this at home. She paints to demonstrate herself; her art reflects her doubts about herself and her ability to connect herself to Cuba, "My paintings have been getting more and more abstract lately, violent-looking, with clotted swirls of red" (Garcia 29).

Pilar's precognitive relation with Celia helps her in developing a recollection of herself. However, this discussion also reaches its conclusion after a few years. Pilar demonstrates how Cuba gradually distances itself from her, "I resent the hell out of the politicians and the generals who force events on us that structure our lives, which dictate the memories we'll have when we are old. Every day Cuba fades a little more inside me; my grandmother fades a little more inside me. And there's only my imagination where our history should be" (Garcia 138). Celia, artwork, and music provide Pilar with compassion as she adjusts to life in the United States. She also can get her father's help, but because Rufino is also separated in the United States, he is incapable of assisting Pilar in establishing a strong relationship with her motherland.

Pilar is identified as Changó's daughter by the Santero, who informs her, "you must finish what you began" (Garcia 200). On her way to college, she is pursued by some high school teenagers, who grab

her under an oak and pressure her to enable them to lick her breasts by putting a knife on her neck. However, she senses the elm's assistance and attempts to figure out why the young teens did what they did. Even though this appears to be a transgression of Pilar's body, it represents a metaphor for cultivating and linking with nature, as depicted by the oak and herbal products given to her by the Santero.

Lourdes' mental condition does not progress to insanity due to their distinct psychic histories, different cultures, and socio-economic conditions. Even though Lourdes is outlined as "dark," she is not prejudiced. Lourdes has a habit of having total control over her surroundings. She goes through traumatic experiences such as Celia renouncing her, losing her social position, and being raped, but she does not turn psychotic as Marina. When Lourdes comes back to Cuba, she does not open up to Celia, and when the aforementioned passes away, the readers are not informed how Celia's death impacts Lourdes. She assists her nephew Ivanito in fleeing to the United States. It symbolizes her gaining control over the circumstances in her and Cuba's lives, which provides her with a sense of independence. It is an accomplishment for her against Castro, whom she holds accountable for the loss of her unborn child and her sexual assault. Furthermore, Ivanito appears to be a potential candidate for her lost child as well as a source of recovery. It could be contended that Pilar is searching for her subjectivities in the precognitive discussions with the ancestors with her grandmother. Both women are emerging from a period of distressing separation prompted by separation, disassociation, and an absence of family ties that would communicate them to their ancestral lands, past histories, and mothers and grandmothers. At that time, they are energized by spirits that come from their primitive ancestors and native lands.

In the novel, the transnational gestures of the female characters are inextricably linked to the trauma they face. Trauma cause the diasporic women characters to connect, but they also vary markedly because their narratives offer various results for their trauma. Even though the majority of the female characters who migrated to the United States maintain to confront and remain alive in the host country, the

sense of hopelessness and disassociation that diaspora brings adds to the other problems they face as women, which develop into trauma of multiple levels that result in mental illnesses. This claim backs up Layton's allegation that decentralization can end up causing pain and trauma. In contrast, even though Pilar has had traumatic events of various kinds, their situations transform out to be optimistic because of their adaptability, ego, and connections to their old days in their native lands. This final aspect is critical in opening doors to their numerous identities, their foremothers' narrators and authority, and the realization that they can be adaptable taking regulation of their many frames of reference fashioned by the merging of two different cultures.

The ascension of Fidel Castro to the country's top post, with the founding of communist ideology and the formation of an autocracy that continues to this day, was a turning point in Cuba. This occasion, like what occurred in the Dominican Republic, labeled and traumatized the state's history. Nadia I. Johnson, in a paper about *Dreaming in Cuban*, explains that "Cuba is a nation that has been constructed around extreme ideologies. Pre-revolutionary Cuba is marked by the control of wealth by a small Spanish upper-class, whereas the post-revolutionary Cuba is marked by the obliteration of the upper class and the progression of the African and Indigenous population" (Johnson 78). The protagonist of Pilar Puente, who has been interpreted as the author's alter ego, has received a great deal of real acclaim. As a result, Pilar's perception of her mother appears to have notified the meaningful awareness of Lourdes. Isabel Alvarez Borland, a critic, explicitly says that Lourdes, "does not fare well in Pilar's narratives" – Pilar brutally refers to Lourdes as her "fucking crazy mother" (Borland 64). According to trauma theory, Lourdes's trauma perceptions are unknown to any living character in the novel, such as Lourdes herself. The notes written by her mother Celia to Gustavo, Celia's former, affirm that the mother abandons her child Lourdes. Celia, wishing for a son, intends to abandon the child with his father and flee to Gustavo in Spain.

In this particular circumstance of Lourdes, food appears to behave autonomously as it transforms her body. She begins swelling with pecan sticky buns after purchasing a bakery, believing that there can be no sadness in trying to work with bread. “[T]he 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” (García 20). The examples of tugging, carelessly drifting constituents, as well as the official statement that men "end up losing the ability to talk, introduce the traumatically labeled, sensorial world and individuality of Lourdes. The language in the paragraph successfully invents ways of depicting and demanding any potential trauma story while remaining true to the functioning of trauma itself.

Lourdes' posture of herself as an immigrant is impressive, given that most Cubans departing the country at this point would see themselves as emigrants who had left for political purposes. The notion that Garcia gives Lourdes a different relationship with Cuba and her past hints at the novel's sophistication. In his literary works, Cuban American author Gustavo Pérez Firmat, who clearly defines himself as an exile rather than an immigrant, offers beautiful pictures of Lourdes and Rufino's different circumstances:

The exile and the immigrant go through life at different speeds. The immigrant is in a rush about everything – in a rush to get a job, learn the language, set down roots, become a citizen. He lives in the fast lane and if he arrives as an adult, he squeezes a second life into the first, and if he arrives as a child, he grows up in a hurry. Not so with the exile, whose life creeps forward an inch at a time. If the immigrant rushes, the exile waits. He waits to embark on a new career, learn the language, and give up his homeland. If

immigration is an accelerated birth, exile is a state that looks every bit like a slow death. For the exile, every day is a delay, every day is deferral. (Pérez Firmat 38)

Dreaming in Cuban is one of the most well-known Cuban American literary works, and much of its appreciation stems from the achievement with which it speaks directly to complexity. This sophistication includes the development of characters such as Lourdes Puente, whose portrayal may appear to be nothing but complicated at first. Pilar, for instance, interprets her mother's opposition to sophistication as a means of survival, "Mom's views are strictly black-and-white. It's how she survives" (p. 26). Lourdes' "black-and-white" viewpoints are primarily, if not solely, political in nature. The philosophical conflicts that have existed since 1959, between island Cubans and banished US Cubans and between Miami Cubans and "other Cubans," make up part of the backdrop against which the novel was written. Cuban critic Vitalina Alfonso asks Garcia in *Ellas hablan de la Isla* [They speak of the island] if *Dreaming in Cuban* could have been composed of the same perception if she had lived in Miami. In the same meeting, Garcia confesses trying to silence herself during novel readings in Miami. It's reasonable to assume that this ego includes leaving out texts about Lourdes. Garcia, appropriately, has her strategy for categories of Cuban individuality:

"My relationship with Miami Cubans is often uncomfortable. Miami is such a political hothouse that suffers little dissidence. It can be an intolerant place. It is frequently monolithic in its approach to Cuba. As far as Cuban identity goes, there are three concentric circles – the Cubans, the Miami Cubans, and the other Cubans. I'm in the third ring three

times removed!” (Kevane & Heredia 70-71).

Eventually, Caruth establishes a framework for comprehending how a novel such as *Dreaming in Cuban* can play an active role in procedures of peaceful coexistence, “The meaning of the trauma’s address beyond itself concerns, indeed, not only individual isolation but a wider historical isolation that, in our time, is communicated on the level of our cultures” (Caruth 11). Even without discussions between Lourdes and her late father, which we have the option to interpret as Lourdes discussing to herself if we are skeptical about speaking to the dead, there would be no journey to Cuba, no going back to begin patching up the injuries, no ability to open for a comprehension between the irresolvable national politics of Lourdes and Pilar, the latter in love with the capitalist system and the latter with communism.

Dreaming in Cuban, the tree-rooted part of del Pino’s individuality, has a great sense of blood connections, demonstrating how alluring the impulses of the family tree can be. Undoubtedly, the portrayals of Latino and Latina protagonists who are not members of the del Pino relatives emphasize the precariousness of relationships between individuals that consider themselves to be uniquely national, trying to remind us of the many challenges in any attempt to reach such limits towards unity based on gender or envisioned ethnic group. Lourdes describes her interrelations with a variety of Nuyorican characters, whom she regards as thieves, drug smugglers, and overall scumbags. Continuing to work as a charitable police officer, Lourdes faces Maribel’s son, whom she alleges of selling trash containers of marijuana behind the liquor store. The boy tends to fall to his death while escaping from Lourdes. Lourdes tries desperately to differentiate herself from her neighbors after internalizing the dominant image of other Latino communities as criminal activities “put your name on the sign, too, hija, so they know what we Cubans are up to, that we’re not all Puerto Ricans” (Garcia 170).

While Lourdes' relationships with those other minorities in the neighborhood are rooted in economic contests and racist stereotypes, Pilar has more positive relations with other Latino organizations. Her first boyfriend, Max, is a Tejano musician; her second, Rube'n Flor'n, was born in Peru and moved to the United States at the age of just two. Pilar perceives these connections as being founded on a common bond and ethnic origin; both appear to be drawn to Pilar because of their hazy, intimate affiliations with what Cuba and its radical culture stand for in the Latin American imagination. Even though their mutual interests may create any sense of a shared context seem so idealized and improbable, instead of rooted in real personal experiences, it has become at least the start of Pilar's entrance into a Latino community. Nevertheless, her interactions with the two men highlight the racial inequality that characterizes any pan-ethnic imagination. In these times, envisioned pan-Latino support and social structures to conquer these preconceptions and inconsistencies may appear to have only the greatest poorly constructed fundamentals upon which to construct. In the meantime, the novel's symbolizing techniques imply that, no matter how shaky the floor, Puentes can still be built.

Conclusion:

There is a pessimistic interpretation of *Dreaming in Cuban*: being Cuban in the era of commerce embargoes and travel bans means being restricted to Cuba, whereas being Cuban-American means being able to move between the two. As much as this is inferred by Pilar's declaration, the novel's portrayal of American identity allows for a more likely explanation of Pilar's decision. According to Pilar, choosing the United States is the only direction she can encapsulate her Cuban, Latin American, Caribbean, American, and Latina identities. Pilar epitomizes American-ness by making this decision rather than envisioning the US and Cuba as resisting poles of pureness, she chooses an already name America, the immigrant New York at which half the book takes place. Even though relations between any of these immigrant communities are not idealized, they portray the commitment of voting based on generated everyday experiences that Flores alludes to. Pilar reimagines American-

ness as this relational, always alternate spellings Latina state; Cristina Garcia rewrites American literature to create a Latina doctrine and start making the gap her center. The novel's signifying techniques become a metaphor for Latina individuality: *Dreaming in Cuban* movements between aesthetic registers and including vast numbers, just as Pilar's identification is packed with inconsistencies and starts to add up to a greater sum of its components.

In terms of their trauma, Celia and Felicia are intrinsically tied. The unwanted litters are hurtful, and the problems they face as a result of male privilege are strikingly similar, with grave repercussions for both women. The connection with the main protector is important because the daughters' conceptual frameworks suffer severe fracturing as a result of poor or no interplay, as in the instances of Celia with her mother, Felicia with Jorge, and, to a lesser extent, Celia who is engrossed in her emotions. Felicia is incapable of creating her subjective nature apart from the reactions of others, and failures, sexual persecution, and abuse all traumatize her. Cuba's political and social context is crucial in determining these women's identities and compounding their trauma. The pre-and post-revolutionary Cuba's paternalistic rules are initial in ensnaring the character of both Celia and Felicia. Trauma is proffered in *Dreaming in Cuban* as a multi-layered and complicated concept that necessitates a new line of inquiry that departs from the federally supported trauma.

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