

The Return to the Homeland: Pilar's Intercultural Hybridity in *Dreaming in Cuban*

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ABSTRACT

This work explores the acceptance of intercultural hybridity through the return to the homeland as a fundamental step towards the reconstruction of identity in Pilar, one of the protagonists of *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) by Cristina García. From a postcolonial perspective, the diverse means through which Pilar attempts to return to Cuba after decades of involuntary exile are analyzed and discussed. Therefore, dreams, spirituality and the physical return to the geographic space of the homeland are approached as attempts to reconnect to the essence of her fragmented identity which, in Pilar's case, was affected by the disruptive power of her family's exile. Finally, it is concluded that these diverse means to reconnect to her roots highlight her intercultural hybridity as a completely liberating and empowering component of her identity.

Keywords: Intercultural hybridity - identity - dreams - spirituality.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo explora la aceptación de la hibridez intercultural a través del retorno a la patria como paso fundamental para la reconstrucción de la identidad en el personaje de Pilar en *Soñar en cubano* (1992) de Cristina García. Desde una perspectiva poscolonial, se analizan y discuten las diferentes formas a través de las cuales Pilar intenta regresar a Cuba luego de casi una vida de exilio involuntario. De esta manera, se abordan los sueños, la espiritualidad y el regreso físico al espacio geográfico de la patria como intentos de reconectarse a la esencia de su identidad fragmentada que, en el caso de Pilar, le fue arrebatada a los dos años por la fuerza disruptiva del exilio de su familia. Se concluye, además, que estas diversas formas de reconectarse a sus raíces resaltan su hibridez intercultural como un elemento completamente liberador y potenciador de su identidad.

Palabras clave: hibridez intercultural - identidad - sueños - espiritualidad.

Introduction

“Don't grieve.

Anything you lose comes round in another form”

(Rumi)

Dreaming in Cuban (1992) by the Cuban-American author Cristina García narrates the story of the Puente family and how three generations of this family are torn apart by the disruptive force of exile and their different views of the Cuban revolution.



In this way, Celia, who stays in Cuba and endorses the revolution, separates geographically and ideologically from her daughter Lourdes, who exiles to the United States with her family after being raped by revolutionary soldiers and after losing her property, confiscated in the name of the revolution. Consequently, Celia is also separated from her beloved granddaughter Pilar, with whom she keeps a bond beyond the natural. It is Pilar, precisely, who is the focus of this work. Pilar becomes an exile involuntarily since she is only a child when her family leaves Cuba. As a result, she constantly feels that history and the government have deprived her of Cuba and her *abuela*, and as a consequence, both her Spanish, for which she feels pleasure, and her memories fade away every day.

Pilar embodies the 1.5ers, the generation of Cuban-Americans, who, in Perez Firmat's words:

were children at the time of migration, but grew into adults in the United States. They feel fully comfortable in neither culture but are able to circulate effectively in both. Unlike their parents, who will never be North Americans, they will never be Cubans. (qtd. in Payant 163)

As a result of inhabiting in the limbo between Cuba and the United States, and belonging to neither of them, Pilar experiences an identity crisis, constantly trapped between her roots and her present. In order to embrace the hybrid intercultural identity that emerges out of the oscillation between her identity of destination and her identity of origin, and come to terms with her separated beings, Pilar incessantly tries to return to her roots, to the homeland, where she hopes she will feel at home again.

In this context, this work explores from a postcolonial perspective the different means through which Pilar returns and reconnects to the homeland. As the title of the novel suggests, Pilar dreams in Cuban as a way to keep connected to her grandmother and Cuba and besides, she attempts to connect to her homeland through spirituality. These means represent the acceptance of her cultural hybridity and identity. But it is only through the physical return to the geographic space of the homeland when she finds the meaning of home.

A Postcolonial View of Hybridity

Hybridity is a central concept within postcolonial criticism given that it is considered a "valuable as well as an inescapable and characteristic feature of all post-colonial societies" and a source of their strength (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 30). Hybridity "replaces a temporal linearity with a spatial plurality" creating a cross-cultural mosaic, and attempts to change a "destructive cultural encounter" to the "acceptance of difference on equal terms" (Harris qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 36). In other words, hybridity is associated to the idea of synthesis: the synthesis of past and present, old and new, motherland and host land, different languages and forms of expression, a pastiche of memories. The result is, as the above-mentioned authors claim, a cross-cultural mosaic, a sort of cultural quilt that synthesizes and re-organizes the heterotopia¹ of the world meaningfully.

¹ Heterotopia is a term coined by the French Philosopher Michel Foucault (1967) to characterize the 20th Century as a "the epoch of space", simultaneity, juxtaposition, "of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of

In this context, Bhabha (1990) says that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” given that it represents “the third space which enables other positions to emerge” because it challenges the existing order and “sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives giving rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (211). By exploring this third space, Bhabha thinks, “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as others of our selves” (1994, 38-39).

García Canclini also develops on the notion of hybridity in his book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (2001) as a tentative answer to what he calls the uncertainty of the meaning and value assigned to modernity, which derives, not only from the obvious differences in terms of nations, class, ethnicity, to mention some, but also from the socio-cultural hybrids in which the opposite categories of the traditional and the modern mix. Hence, the difficulty in defining this concept originates in the multiplication of hybrid phenomena during the 20th century and the variety and heterogeneity of processes and actors that it involves. García Canclini defines hybridity applying Bhabha’s idea of hybridization process constantly in motion, as the “sociocultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, that existed separately, combine to generate new structures, objects and practices” (14). In his perspective, this fusion is not always planned; sometimes it is the result of touristic or migratory processes, processes of economic-communicational exchange, or the result of individual or collective creativity (García Canclini 16).

In his work, García Canclini establishes a relation between hybridity and identity, and explains that it is not possible to talk about identities either in terms of a fixed set of features or essence of an ethnic group or nation. Instead, he proposes to focus on intercultural hybridity, identity sedimentations organized in historical groups which are relatively stable (ethnic groups, nations, classes) are re-structured amid interethnic, transclassist, and transnational bodies. The concept does not suggest an easy and harmonious integration and fusion of cultures but ambivalence, contradiction, massification. In his words, the oscillation between the identity of origin and the identity of destination should take us to explore not only the “cohesion, the osmosis”, but also the contradictions that emerge, and at the same time, the dialogical relationship between them, allowing the immigrant to talk spontaneously from various places (20).

Therefore, postcolonial identity becomes a dynamic, “constantly evolving hybrid of native and colonial cultures” (Tyson 369). In relation to the social processes of identity (re)construction and the acceptance of intercultural hybridity, Mato explores identity making in the age of globalization, defined as the worldwide tendency towards the interconnection of people, their cultures and institutions resulting from different social processes. Mato states that “identities are not legacies passively received but representations socially produced”, and as a result, they are under social dispute (283). The author also builds up on the idea of an imagined transnational community, that is, mental representations elaborated by different types of public image-makers, varied

the dispersed” (1). Foucault states that the world we inhabit is not a vacuum but an heterogenous space, where there is a web of relations of proximity between points and elements. He explains that in opposition to utopias, defined as sites with no real place, there are heterotopias, that is real places, other places or “counter-sites” which are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted, and at the same time absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about (3-4).

types of individuals and multiple social actors, which promote their production and circulation, idea which brings together different Latin American countries, constituting a united race (282-283).

However, Mato's idea does not imply the homogenization of Latin American societies and cultures. In his view, there is a tendency towards the homogenization of Latinos, based on the idea of collective identity representation, the emphasis on similarities and the consequent eclipsing of differences. This disregarding of historical contexts and histories obscures the processes of identity construction through the over-simplification of each particular situation and the overseeing of elements like ethnicity, race, gender, class, and cultural and historical background (283). Similarly complex and problematic is the concept of nation, which tends to be used as the equivalent of the terms country and nation-state. This assumption carries out the implication, similarly problematic, that nations are composed of homogeneous populations, equally represented by their governments, disregarding the ethnic component of nations. Thus, the representation of Latin American identity is understood in this study as representations of difference (283).

Identities are then social constructs whose representations are constantly (re)produced by individual and collective social actors who, at the same time, constitute and transform themselves. These actors participate in the processes of globalization and identity-construction either consciously or unconsciously through the advancement and transformation of their own representations. Identities are not socially isolated units and all identities are constructed in transnational and internally connected social fields (Mato 285). Consequently, the processes of identity (re)construction are perceived as dynamic, evolving, relative, metamorphosing and socially interconnected, and as such, intimately connected to intercultural hybridity.

From Dreams to the Spiritual: Alternatives to Return Home

The effects of exile on identity construction materialize in the nostalgia Pilar feels about Cuba, since from time to time she feels the irrepressible desire to "hijack a plane to Havana" (García 137-138). Her memory of the last day on the island portrays exile as a dislocating and fragmenting violent force which separates her against her will from her beloved grandmother:

I was sitting in my grandmother's lap, playing with her drop pearl earrings, when my mom told her that we were leaving the country. Abuela Celia called her a traitor to the revolution. Mom tried to pull me away but I clung to Abuela and screamed to the top of my lungs. (26)

Pilar feels helpless about this and blames "the politicians and generals who force events on us that structure our lives, that dictate the memories we'll have when we're old" (138), demonstrating the futility of exile. The sensation that every day Cuba and her grandmother fade a little more inside her, and that only in her imagination is where their history will be preserved corresponds to the perception of exile as an imposed restraint on one's own memory, history and identity (Ricoeur).

For Pilar, the limitations to return physically to the island, such as the isolation of Cuba from the United States in terms of politics, economy and ideology, and her mother's rejection towards Cuba, impulse her to find alternative ways to return. On the one hand, Pilar travels to the island mentally, through the constant dreaming and the telepathic conversations with her *abuela* that take place during the dreams. These dreams, where metaphysical, magic phenomena are intertwined with reality, are instances of magic realism, and symbolize Pilar's internal yearning to reconnect to her roots and the need to stay connected to her *abuela*, and her Cubanness. On the other hand, Pilar travels to the island spiritually, through her approximation to the *Santería*, a strong link to the cultural background of the island and a component of her hybrid transcultural identity.

Pilar, who belongs to the generation which tries to heal their wounds and fragmented nature by remembering and by returning home to rediscover herself, "shift[s] from a portrayal of memories in Cuba to a depiction of the alterations in memory caused by the Cuban revolution and the Cuban diaspora" (Esplin 91). Pilar's memories of Cuba are influenced by her life in the United States and her family's memories. West suggests that in order to conquer the depression and fragmentation of exile, the subject should invent a "fictitious Cuba from the remnant and pieces of their memories" (qtd. in Esplin 83). While Cuba and *abuela* Celia are gradually fading inside her, Pilar realizes it is only in her imagination where their history should exist. This last concept, imagination, relates directly to the idea developed by Ricœur, who suggests that memory belongs to one region of imagination, the imagination of anterior reality. It is her imagination, through dreaming, that prevents her fading memories from disappearing.

As the title of the novel suggests, Pilar dreams "in Cuban" (García 236), which refers not only to the unique mental and sentimental bond between Pilar and Celia, a bond beyond the natural, but also to the language of those dreams. This reference to the language in which they communicate while dreaming, Spanish from the island or "Cuban", symbolizes the particular linguistic-cultural code they share and by extension a third space, a sort of identity bubble where Pilar and Celia keep their bond protected from their surrounding opposing environments. Thus, the notion of Cuban as a linguistic-cultural code also represents another cultural reality that they, Pilar and Celia, have constructed in order to bridge the physical, ideological and political distances that have separated them for decades.

Night after night Pilar dreams about her grandma and Cuba, and in that quasi-magical space they talk about mundane affairs, what they do and what goes on in their lives. In relation to this, Pilar says:

I hear her speaking to me at night just before I fall asleep. She tells me stories about her life and what the sea was like that day. She seems to know everything that's happened to me and tells me not to mind my mother too much. *Abuela* Celia says she wants to see me again. (García 29)

Dreams, then, are one medium Pilar finds to be in contact with her grandmother Celia, and by extension, to Cuba. Furthermore, the fact that sometimes she dreams her grandmother's dreams represents a unique language, a bond between her and Celia that goes beyond family lines, one in which communication occurs in the realm of

imagination and the unconscious, and not only through words but also through images. In this way, Pilar is able to travel across the Ocean every night and feel Cuba in her soul again.

The fact that Pilar attempts to reconnect to her roots through dreams highlights the yearning to rediscover her inner self and rebuild her hybrid intercultural identity, an identity which she feels incomplete. She is two parts of a person, hyphenated, one in real life and one, happier, in her dreams. This last idea is illustrated when, after dreaming in Cuban, Pilar reckons she used to “wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There’s a magic here working its way through my veins” (García 235). This image reveals, besides the internal yearning to reconcile with her past, a signal of her identity transformation and the intercultural, hybrid nature of her identity (re)construction process: the strong and almost supernatural bond she and Celia share, a bond that transcends the borders and boundaries imposed by men, nature and ideology.

Besides representing the need to stay linked to Cuba, to her roots and to her beloved grandmother, Pilar’s dreams suggest the relevance of the unconscious and imagination. Dreaming, aided by the power of imagination, has contributed to the fictionalization of the island as a paradise-like place where the reconciliation, or spiritual communion with herself and her past would finally materialize (Leonard 1). This act of imagination also works as an element that bridges cultures and trespasses geographic borders and boundaries; in this case, the political, ideological, cultural and economic differences that have kept Cuba isolated from the United States for decades. Dreams then become a mental third space that defies borders and boundaries, political differences and governmental decisions.

Feeling that both her dreams and her memories of Cuba and *abuela* Celia are erased by time and distance, Pilar finds in spirituality another vehicle to dig into her roots. In the novel, spirituality works not only as a means to reconnect to her past, her motherland and her family back in Cuba but also as the inner force that finally drives her to Cuba. Her connection with rituals and spirituality begins in Cuba when she is a baby. Back then, she is called *brujita*, little witch. The nannies do not last more than a few weeks, and leave, arguing that the child is bewitched; one of them even says that Pilar has made her hair fall (García 24). As a result of these events, which are not given any empirical or logical explanation, Pilar is involved in cleansing rituals, and she is, for example, bathed with chicken blood and covered with bay leaves.

In New York, and after having lived in the United States for decades, Pilar is attracted towards a shop on Park Avenue full of dried snakeskins, wooden saints and talismans. While she is examining some necklaces, the owner of the shop calls her a daughter of *Changó*, and urges her to finish what she has begun, words that illustrate the incompleteness in her life and also foreshadow her imminent return to the island. In order to find answers, Pilar performs the ritual indicated by the owner of the shop, *baños*, during nine days in an attempt to reconnect with the island. During her last *baño*, she experiences a sort of revelation and she knows what to do: she picks up her phone, calls her mother and tells her that they are returning to Cuba together. Interestingly, the decision to return to Cuba is triggered by a cultural, religious component that is part of the identity of the island. In relation to this, Castillo explains that, traditionally, cults have been designed by men of Western culture, and, consequently, women have been relegated to the task of preserving those cults, mainly through daily rituals and spiritual

cleansings. However, in an attempt to “return to long lost and non-Western ways in search of new direction for our lives”, these women have returned to the ways of their ancestors (Castillo 145). Therefore, a woman’s self-acceptance and reconciliation with her spirituality represent the maintenance of her well-being, since they help determine what makes us feel whole, the sources of our strength, courage, and fulfillment as human beings. In other words, the objective in understanding and affirming ourselves, integrating our fragmented identities, believing in the wisdom of ancient knowledge is, as Castillo says, “to bring the rest of humanity to the fold”, that is, to struggle with the need to understand who we are, believing in our worthiness, beauty and talents, “while having to survive within the constructs of a world antithetical to our intuition and knowledge regarding life’s meaning” (149).

One way of expressing this spirituality is through the roles of *brujas* “a spiritual healer or psychic” and *curanderas* “a specialized healer, learned in the knowledge of specifically healing the body” (Castillo 156). *Curanderismo* involves the supernatural realm of our reality, that is, the conception that “the supernatural is a reality based on the natural forces of the universe”, for instance, the belief that “persons can cause physical and emotional illnesses in others by use of personal power or with the help of non-corporeal beings” or the work with herbal and massage treatments (155). Both roles, which imply the representation of women endowed with a range of wisdom, are represented as a betrayal of the church, womanhood and the devout Catholic mother, showing inclination towards the grandmother’s belief or the community elder. Women who feel identified with these roles of *brujas* and/or *curanderas* create some distance from the previous generation through the unlearning of those lessons felt as harmful to their well-being, a sort of deconstruction which allows them to re-capture their spiritual orientation, and to adapt it to their particular needs. In Castillo’s view, this leads to the (re)affirmation and resurrection of womanhood, a process of self-empowerment and self-healing (152).

By healing, Castillo means “recovering from the devastating blows we receive from society for having been born poor, non-white, and female in a hierarchical society” (153). At this point, it is necessary to highlight that Castillo’s definition is used in this work to refer to the particular case of the Puente family after immigrating into the United States, where they are othered on the basis of their ethnicity, even when in Cuba they are one of the most respected upper-class families on the island. One of the main dilemmas faced by Cuban exiles is related to ethnic and racial awareness, since upon entering the United States, they discover that they are part of an ethnic group, Latinos or Hispanics, whose existence they did not know before arriving. Cuban exiles, as well as other Latino immigrants, encounter a dichotomous racial classification system in which whiteness and blackness are seen as a binary division, which is different from the racial classification systems prevalent in Latin America and the Caribbean, where race is organized along a continuum of categories denoting different degrees of racial mixture (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 226). This dissimilar environment increases the feelings of dislocation, alienation and fragmentation in the immigrant subjects.

One of the healing methods Castillo mentions is the ritual, that is, a form to calm or reassure oneself when chaos seems at hand. These rituals are, for instance, aura sweeping, tarot card reading, the construction of altars, or “channel sessions”, the use of material objects like candles incense and oils or *baños* (Castillo 153-160). These *baños* are precisely the ones that trigger Pilar’s determination to return to the island and

symbolize, in this way, a sort of spiritual call, coming from Cuba, asking her to come back. This spiritual call also epitomizes the irrepressible connection she feels towards her home culture, her Cubanness, and the internal, though somehow unknown, need to reconcile with and negotiate between past and present, old and new, and her multiple selves.

The Return: the Yearning for Finding Home

The effects of exile on identity construction materialize in the nostalgia Pilar feels about Cuba, since from time to time she feels the irrepressible desire to “hijack a plane to Havana” (137-138). This feeling of nostalgia increases the need to return to the geographical space of the homeland, the idea associated to the concepts of corporeal memory and the memory of places developed by Ricœur. Given that memory of places refers to the act of moving, travelling and having lived in a certain place, and the influence that geographic space has over what is remembered, the nostalgic Pilar returns to Cuba in an attempt to embrace her hybrid intercultural identity through direct geographic contact. She feels that the contact with the people, the smells and the images of Cuban culture, her corporeal memory, will quasi-magically make her feel at home again.

Nevertheless, her first attempt to return physically to Cuba is unsuccessful. Driven by that fear of her memories vanishing, and the image of her father kissing a woman so “huge and blond and puffy like a 1950s beauty queen” (García 25), Pilar experiences an unsuccessful attempt to return to the island when she is a teenager. This scene, her father kissing another woman, is truly disturbing for her, and she decides to go back to Cuba, take the money out of the bank and buy “a one-way bus ticket to Miami” (26), from where she thinks she can make her way to Cuba, “maybe rent a boat or get a fisherman” to take her (26). However, once in Florida she is caught and taken back to New York.

From that moment to the moment when Pilar returns to the homeland, the overlapping of the time and space increases her sense of disturbance and disorientation. She is, in Bhabha’s words (1994), here and there, back and forth. Pilar strolls between what she feels as a place “relational, historical and concerned with identity” and a non-place, by definition the opposite, trying to achieve a balance between transit and residence, interchange and the crossroads, being a passenger or a traveler (Augé 1995). In order to do that, she has to transgress borders and boundaries, fixed entities that are physical, socio-cultural and psychological, barriers she was unable to overcome when she was a child and her attempt to run away to Cuba ended up in a fiasco. Geographic space and the borders and boundaries that delimit the zone where the motherland begins and where it ends also determine how we perceive ourselves. Pilar, for instance, thinks that returning to the island will determine who she is, as if the process of identity (re)construction were a sort of magic moment, consisting in relocating herself into the geographic space of the motherland.

Pilar then returns to the island with an imagined, idealized version of the motherland given that the mental representation she has about it is composed of childhood memories. Once back in Cuba, Pilar seems bewitched by the images she sees around her in the streets, the women on *Calle Madrid*, the cars, and she feels they are back in time like living in a Cuban version of an earlier America. It is here when Pilar

realizes the connection between identity, memory and the past: “we’re all tied to the past like flukes” she thinks (García 220). Memory, consequently, becomes a constitutive element in the processes of identity transformation and (re)construction and in the acceptance of her intercultural hybridity.

She has, therefore, mentally constructed her own fictional representation of the homeland as a mystified entity: she does not feel at home in the United States, and feels the irrepressible need to feel, taste, smell and experience Cuba again, with her body and soul, in order to feel at home and discover who she is. However, as García Canclini explains, the richness of the processes of hybridization lies in the intercultural nature of identities, given that the various identities coexisting within a person are constantly interacting and communicating in a dialogic state with the surrounding context, which transforms itself all the time, and with the past, which is recurrently revisited and negotiated. García Canclini refers to intercultural identities rather than multicultural identities because the latter does not imply the connection or fusion between the elements composing a certain culture and identity, whereas the former implies a state of dialogism and constant exchange between those elements and subjects. These processes involve the elements that do not merge and those which are not negotiated as well. For Pilar, coming back to Cuba will not signify simply feeling Cuban again, as if she had never left. It will signify the reconciliation between her past and her present and the negotiation between the multiple identities that coexist inside her.

Once in Cuba, the yearning of finding home materializes, but not as Pilar had expected. Instead of feeling she had truly found home in Cuba, she discovers that she belongs somewhere else and, at that particular moment, she is able to embrace her intercultural identity: “sooner or later I’d have to return to New York. I know now it’s where I belong- not *instead* of here, but *more* than here” (García 236). In Pilar’s view, then, Cuba and the United States are no longer mutually exclusive binarisms, but rather complementary. As García Canclini points out, it is not in the osmosis and the cohesion where the richness of intercultural identity is found, but in the creative aspect of difference. Her identity is culturally in-between and therefore capable of moving physically and psychically between the locations of Cuba and the United States, traversing “the path from exile to ethnicity” (Álvarez-Borland qtd. in Machado Sáez 130). This perspective evinces that Pilar successfully negotiates and re-appropriates her past and is able to synthesize the elements of both cultures that nourish her soul. This synthesis, negotiation or creative (re)construction of her intercultural identity is not a rigid product, but the constant oscillation and movement between the multiplicities of beings that compose her own self.

Final thoughts

“I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is ‘Who in the world am I?’ Ah, that’s the great puzzle!” (Carroll 8).

As Lewis Carroll’s words in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* illustrate, the answer to the question *who am I?* (my emphasis) embodies one of the most challenging internal dilemmas, given that identity not only depends on internal factors but also on what the surrounding world says. This mirror effect, also called the looking-glass self,

in which the image reflected in the mirror illustrates society's perception, exhibits that the reflection is multi-dimensional (Tatum 18). In *Dreaming in Cuban*, the clash of cultures creates in the female characters, and particularly in Pilar, a third element that results from the bridge between the identity of destination and that of origin, a hybrid intercultural identity. Given that identity is grounded in our roots and heritage, the culture of our motherland, the language spoken there and the values and traditions work as the scaffolding we need to construct who we are. But identity also develops through our connections with the surrounding world, as a looking-glass self, that mirrors and reflects social expectations, rules, and values.

Pilar is deeply affected by temporal and geographic distance, which exercise a powerful effect over memory and identity, and produce in her nostalgia, leading to the construction of fictional representations of the island as a mystified entity, as a place of reconciliation and spiritual communion. Trying to reconnect to the motherland through dreams and spirituality awakens in the protagonist the need to go back to the homeland, to be in contact with the people, the language and the places where she thinks she would finally come to terms with her multiple selves.

There, in the geographic space of the motherland, Pilar is able to negotiate the tensions between her identities of origin and those of destination through an oscillation between her multiple selves and finally realizes where *home* is: she belongs in New York City, but not *instead* of Cuba, *more than* Cuba. This observation revisits and dismantles the dichotomies that have been fragmenting and hyphenating by understanding them not as mutually exclusive but as complementary, in a dialogic relationship. García Canclini says that it is in the creative aspect of difference where the richness of intercultural identities lie and it is precisely in this negotiation where Pilar materializes the acceptance of her intercultural hybridity. By embracing her intercultural hybrid identity, Pilar has appropriated the margins and turned them into third spaces creating a unique space from where the various and dynamic voices that constitute her Cuban American identity converge.

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