

Dissertação de Mestrado

**ENTANGLED CULTURES AND HYBRID IDENTITIES: THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE FEMALE DIASPORIC SUBJECT IN CRISTINA
GARCÍA'S *DREAMING IN CUBAN* AND ACHY OBEJAS'S *MEMORY MAMBO***

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The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the novels *Dreaming in Cuban*, by Cristina García, and *Memory Mambo*, by Achy Obejas. This work investigates how exile and hybridity may interfere in family relationships. In both novels, by contemporary Cuban-American writers, the characters have to negotiate with their own families and with different cultures. In these novels, the construction of identity of the female diasporic subject is intensively permeated by family relationships and politics, even though families may or may not be separated by political issues.

In the light of discussions by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and Stuart Hall (2005), this dissertation intends to investigate hybridity and the construction of the female

subject in these literary works, making use of feminist approaches. This work discusses the effects of exile and displacement upon the construction of one's identity.

In *Dreaming in Cuban*, by means of postmodern narrative strategies, Cristina García inserts voices silenced by patriarchy, deconstructing official history and providing the reader with a female perspective of events. The novel presents the Del Pinos, a Cuban family that is separated due to the Revolution in their country. Some of its members leave for the United States while others remain in the Island. However, all the members are affected by this separation as well as their relationship suffers ruptures. As Teresa de Jesús Fernández states, exile should also be analyzed considering the point of view of the ones who remain in their homeland:

Exile is usually understood as being uprooted; viewed this way, only those who leave suffer, those who voluntarily or involuntarily give up their native soil. It is the condition of all who emigrate, who live apart from their own nations; but this is an incomplete definition. It does not take into account the other side of the phenomenon, that of the Other, the internal exile, who is left with the estrangement, the sense of loss; it is the Other who is left to deal with absence. (FERNÁNDEZ, 2003, p. 77).

Exile affects the characters' construction of identity in *Memory Mambo* as well. In the novel, memory also plays an important role in the narrative, demonstrating that memory can be contradictory and that history is a social construct. Moreover, this dissertation investigates some issues concerning sexual identity that are present in Obejas's novel, discussing how politics and sexuality may be intertwined. In the light of discussions by Gloria Alzaldúa (1999), this work tackles some issues involving women of color, homosexuality and prejudice in their own community. Besides, throughout the novel, the reader is offered a picture of the lives of Cuban-American people and of their attempts to be part of a different society with a different culture. In *Memory Mambo*, the characters' daily behavior discloses their homeland traditions in many occasions. At the

same time, these characters attempt to incorporate the new culture into their daily lives, carrying out this process in relation to both individual subjectivity and national identity levels.

Dreaming in Cuban and *Memory Mambo* portray the necessity of coming to terms with a past that may be significantly present in the lives of individuals who experience exile. Furthermore, both novels challenge traditional modes of representation and offer a compelling portrait of life at the crossroads of cultures, as this dissertation sought to display.

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