Debunking the Myth of Return and Integration in two Caribbean Diaspora Novels

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Abstract.

Modern age has witnessed a huge rise in migrations facilitated by the new technological advancement leading to the formation of varied diaspora communities. The cultural dislocation experienced by the diaspora population in the host country creates a sense of nostalgic longing for the country of origin. The nostalgic longing for the home country develops a sense of inner conflict amongst members of the diaspora population between living sustainably in the hostile environment and returning to the safe environment of the country of origin. The nostalgia leads to a dominant pull towards the home country. The change in the diaspora subjects' relationship with the homeland over a period of time puts them in a problematic situation vis-a-vis the home country where integration upon return becomes increasingly difficult. Based on the preceding arguments, the present paper highlights how the dream of return becomes starkly different from the reality where the returnee diasporic subject oscillates between two world values: the homeland and the hostland and the dream of integration with the homeland upon return shatters. The present paper through the textual analysis of two diasporic Caribbean novels, that is, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) by Cuban American woman writer Cristina García and *How the García Girls Lost*

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Their Accents (1991) by Dominican American woman writer Julia Alvarez highlights this conflicting perspective on the diasporic subject's return.

Introduction.

The modern age is characterised by a stupendous rise in global movements facilitated by "modern transportation and communications technologies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries." Migration to a foreign country is easier than ever before and a lot of people are voluntarily leaving their homeland to settle in some foreign location for an overall improvement in the standard of living. However, not all migrations are voluntary and the countries marked by unstable government and civil unrest force their citizens to move for safety and survival: "The forces that draw or compel people to move to...any immigration destination...are varied and complex. People may be forced or otherwise compelled to leave their homelands because life there becomes untenable or unpleasant" (Ciment and Radzilowski, 2015, p.4). Migration, whether voluntary or forced leads to the formation of diaspora communities.

The term diaspora in its traditional usage was "mainly confined to the... Jewish experience," then extended to Armenians, Africans, and Irish in the 1970's "arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatized the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor" (Cohen, 2008, p.1). However, the contemporary view of diaspora has undergone a change and as William Safran in "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" argues that today, the application of the terms "diaspora" and "diaspora

community" has broadened to refer as "metaphoric designations" for several categories of people: "expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities" (Safran, 1991, p.83). A characteristic defining the disaporic experience is the maintaining of continuous ties with the homeland. In Roger Brubaker's article, "The 'diaspora' diaspora" (2005), three core elements of this term are identified: "dispersion in space...orientation to a 'homeland'...and boundary-maintenance" (p.5). Indeed, the diaspora population retains orientation to the homeland.

The present paper attempts to analyse return and integration in two Caribbean diaspora novels: one from Cuba and the other from the Dominican Republic which makes it pertinent to address the issue of migration and the resultant diaspora formation in relation to these two countries. Cuba is the largest island nation in the Caribbean region and the seventh largest island in the world. Cuba "remained a colony of imperial Spain until the end of the 19th century" and became independent in 1898 "almost eighty years after most of the rest of Spanish America" (Chaffee and Prevost, 1992, p.1). After independence, the most characteristic leadership was that of Fulgencio Batista (1901-1973). Elected president in 1940, he went on to rule as Cuba's dictator from 1952 to 1959 when the revolutionary soldiers led by Fidel Castro "marched into Havana" (Sheehan and Jermyn, 2006, p.25) victorious on 8 January, 1959. Castro's regime marked Cuba's difference "from the nations of the Western Hemisphere in significant ways" and Cuba became the "only state in the Americas run by a Communist party" (Chaffee and Prevost, 1992, p.1). Cuban migration to the United States is a historical phenomenon and

a wave of Cuban migration to Europe and the United States occurred after Cuba's "war for independence in October 1868" as well as "during the first five decades of the twentieth century, [when] smaller groups of Cuban migrants came to the United States to escape political turbulence in Cuba" (Masud-Piloto, 1996, p.7). However, Cuban migration to the United States saw an unprecedented rise following Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959 as a large number of people who could not come to terms with the communist way of life and governance left Cuba: "From January 1, 1959, to October 22, 1962, approximately 248, 070 Cubans emigrated to the United States. The first to leave were those whose positions of power tied them to the old regime...Not all who left during this first wave were affiliated with the Batista regime, however; thousands of people were negatively affected by the social and economic upheaval of the new revolutionary government" (García, 1996, p.13). The people leaving Cuba found refuge in the United States: "For the first time, the United States became a country of first asylum for a large group of political refugees fleeing a Communist country in the Western Hemisphere. The United States government...practiced an "open-door" policy toward those fleeing [the] Castro regime" (Masud-Piloto, 1996, p.2). This accounts for the formation of large Cuban diaspora in the United States.

The Dominican Republic is the second largest island nation in the Caribbean region and shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. The Dominican Republic gained its independence in 1844 from Haiti which makes it different from "any other Latin American nation because the Dominican Republic received its independence from Haiti, not Spain" (Brown, 1999,

p.1). Following independence, the Dominican Republic continued grappling with issues of unstable and inefficient governance and the political history has been rather tumultuous and "only during recent decades has some form of political stability begun to take root" (Gritzner and Phillips, 2010, p.14). Dominican migration to the United States is a historical phenomenon which "actually precedes the birth of the Dominican Republic as an independent nation" even "dating back to the first half of the nineteenth century" (Torres-Saillant and Hernandez, 1998, p.11). The Dominican migration to the United States came to a halt when General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo became the dictator in 1930 leading to "thirty years of the bloodiest reign of terror that Dominicans had ever experienced throughout their history" (Torres-Saillant and Hernandez, 1998, p.29). The nature of migration from the Dominican Republic was highly controlled during Trujillo's dictatorship as he "personally regulated migration" maintaining "strict control over exit visas" (Atkins and Wilson, 1988, p.91). Only the elites and the political dissidents managed to flee as it was "gravely dangerous for dissidents to remain at home" (Torres-Saillant and Hernandez, p.109). It was only after his assassination in 1961 that "a surge of Dominicans began leaving for the United States" leading to the creation of large Dominican diaspora in the United States and making the Dominicans the "fourth largest Hispanic group in the United States" (Weaver et.al., p.155). Both Cuba and the Dominican Republic, therefore have seen waves of migration to the United States roughly around the same time, that is, around 1960 making the United States the most sought after destination for both the countries' migrants, and creating a new wave of diaspora in the United States.

Cristina García is a Cuban American writer born on 4 July, 1958 in Havana, Cuba. García's family left Cuba in 1960 following the confiscation of their property based on new land laws by the new dictatorial communist regime. She grew up in Brooklyn and having made a career in journalism, turned to writing. Her return to Cuba in 1984 sparked her interest in writing about the "memories and stories of her childhood and family" (*A Study Guide for Cristina García's "Dreaming in Cuban,"* 2016). She started working on her first novel in 1989 and in 1992 her first novel *Dreaming in Cuban* was out in publication which got positive critical reviews. She is also acclaimed for such novels as *The Agüero Sisters* (1997) and *The Lady Matador's Hotel* (2010).

This paper will analyse her first novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) in which she portrays the Cuban revolution of 1959 to highlight how the political changes lead to a changed socio-economic environment. She weaves a story of three generations of women and highlights the impact of revolution on their lives. In the novel, Celia, the matriarch of the del Pino family supports the Communist Revolution while her daughter Lourdes resents the communist government. Lourdes and her husband Rufino Puente eventually leave Cuba taking their two year old daughter Pilar with them. Pilar retains a nostalgia for the homeland keeping the hope of a return alive.

Julia Alvarez is a Dominican American writer born on 27 March, 1950 to Dominican parents in New York City. However, the family soon moved to the Dominican Republic and stayed there till Julia Alvarez was ten years old after which they were forced to flee the homeland again following her father's involvement in a secret plan to overthrow the dictator Rafael

Trujillo. The family again migrated to the United States. Alvarez teaches at Middlebury College, Vermont. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* is her first novel for which she won the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award, named after Josephine Miles and awarded to the United States' multicultural writers of all cultural and racial backgrounds.

The paper will analyse Julia Alvarez's first novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) which depicts how the García family increasingly felt suffocated by Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship, until the father, Carlos García, becomes involved in an underground plot to overthrow the dictator, after which they flee the country for their survival.

Both the novels analysed underline a similar pattern of migration and expose a longing to return home, where the characters: Pilar in *Dreaming in Cuban* and Yolanda in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* come to grow up in the United States but do not develop a feeling of belongingness with the country. This causes them to wish to return to their homeland, and restore this sense of belongingness. Oddly, both Pilar and Yolanda succeed in reaching their homeland only to discover their incompatibility with the homeland making them realise that for them return and successful integration to the homeland remains a myth.

Cristina García in *Dreaming in Cuban* highlights the various factors which marked a change in the socio-economic setup of Cuba in the midst of the Communist Revolution. Cristina García, the author, depicts the large scale land reform that took place in Cuba: "Castro instituted a series of socialist reforms, including the expropriation of private enterprises and the

elimination of dissent. He also introduced Soviet-style central planning to dictate the use of Cuba's resources... [and] aggressive seizure of private assets" (Dieterle, 2017, p.99). As such, in *Dreaming in Cuban* Rufino Puente's property which includes "casinos in Cuba" as well as "one of the largest ranches on the island. [where] there were beef cattle and dairy cows, horses, pigs, goats, and lambs" (García, 1992, p.28) is confiscated by the Communist Government and two soldiers "handed Lourdes an official sheet of paper declaring the Puentes' estate the property of the revolutionary government" (García, 1992, p.70). Moreover, the two soldiers abuse the power and authority given to them and rape Lourdes highlighting the fact that: "wars and conflicts, wherever they are fought, invariably usher in sickening high levels of violence against women and girls" (True, 2012, p.113). Following these incidents, the Puentes find it impossible to live in Cuba and decide to seek refuge in the United States: "Between 1959 and 1962, approximately 250,000 Cubans emigrated to the United States. Some had always detested Fidel Castro, [whereas] others were appalled by the 'Orwellian' atmosphere that had accompanied his revolution – summary executions, arbitrary arrests, show trials, and the suspension of basic civil liberties" (Wright and Wylie, 2009, p.12). Julia Alvarez in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* also depicts an 'Orwellian' environment, that is, "a political system in which the government tries to control every part of people's lives" ("Orwellian") in the Dominican Republic under the dictator Rafael Trujillo's regime who "established one of the longest and most repressive authoritarian regimes in Latin America, characterized by bouts of extreme carnage interspersed with everyday forms of terror such as random abductions, pervasive surveillance..." (Derby, 2009, p.2) which

"made dissent an impossibility on Dominican soil" (Derby, 2009. p.3). Julia Alvarez depicts that Carlos García's involvement in a clandestine plot to oust the dictator had him "almost...killed" (Alvarez, 2004, p.217) as "political opponents met with a quick death that could include chilling spectacles to spread the demonstration effect" (Derby, 2009, p.2). Julia Alvarez highlights that Rafael Trujillo's regime which was characterised by extreme control: "every word, every gesture, a possible mine field, watch what you say, look where you go" (Alvarez, 2004, p.211) made it impossible for the García family to stay in the Dominican Republic and they, too, left for the United States. As such, Pilar's and Yolanda's families stand as representatives of the many Cubans and Dominicans who were forced to leave their homeland because of similar circumstances.

Both *Dreaming in Cuban* and *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* depict the pain that accompanies separation from the homeland, especially during forced migration. As Pilar and Yolanda are still young children when they are forced to leave their homeland, both experience a sense of distress and pain at leaving the homeland. Pilar was only two years old when she left Cuba. However, Pilar remembers the painful separation from her homeland and her grandmother Celia: "I was sitting in my grandmother's lap, playing with her drop pearl earrings...Mom tried to pull me away but I clung to Abuela and screamed at the top of my lungs" (García, 1992, p.26). Pilar's migration to the United States is a painful experience for her as a result of which she grapples with a "sense of lost intimacy – the knowing of a place and all its taken-for-granted ways of thinking, interacting and 'systems of relevancies'" (Schuetz). Pilar experiences distress following her migration

which "initiates a process in which [such] intimacies are shattered" (Werbner, 2013) as she leaves behind the "vivid, ongoing face-to-face relationships" (Werbner, 2013) with her family, particularly her grandmother. Like Pilar, Yolanda's separation from her homeland is distressing, symbolised by the separation of a child from the mother. Just before leaving the Dominican Republic, Yolanda, still a child separated a kitten from the mother cat knowing that to "take it away would be a violation of its natural right to live" (Alvarez, 2004, p.285). As such, Yolanda is haunted by the mother cat: "the cat appeared again at my bedside" (Alvarez, 2004, p.289) and still years after emigrating to the United States, she still says: "I wake up at three o'clock in the morning and peer into the darkness. At that hour and in that loneliness, I hear her, a black furred thing lurking in the corners of my life, her magenta mouth opening, wailing over some violation" (Alvarez, 2004, p.290). The recurrent presence of the mother cat in Yolanda's life symbolises Yolanda's own pain of separation from the motherland. Even after many years of settling in the United States, Yolanda still gets distressed having separated the kitten from its mother, living it as an analogy to her forbidden separation from her own homeland.

Both Cristina García and Julia Alvarez in their novels highlight how the external features like landscape, weather, etc., create a marked difference between the homeland and the hostland making it difficult for the diaspora population to adapt to the hostland. In *Dreaming in Cuban* Pilar observes the marked difference underlying Havana and New York: "the air was different from Cuba. It had a cold smoked smell that chilled my lungs" (García, 1992, p.32). In her description of New York, Pilar highlights New York's cold which stands in sharp contrast to the tropical warmth of Cuba. In a

similar manner, Yolanda experiences the cold weather: "The months grew cold, November, December. It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school" (Alvarez, 2004, p.167). Remarkably, both Pilar and Yolanda confront the harshness of the hostland symbolised by cold weather. The coldness of New York winter gets a place in their narration of the hostland. Having left the tropical warmth of their Island nations: Pilar of Cuba and Yolanda of the Dominican Republic, both the girls confront a harsh and cold weather symbolising the cold reality of their stay in the United States. Amidst the unfamiliarity which the New York landscape creates for Pilar, she tries to create a sense of familiarity and association with her homeland in the hostland: "I'd run through great heaps of leaves just to hear them rustle like the palm trees during hurricanes in Cuba" only to feel "sad" lamenting about "Abuela Celia" and wondering "how my life would have been if I'd stayed with her" (García, 1992, p.32).

Cristina García and Julia Alvarez depict how Pilar and Yolanda spend life as split subjects in the hostland: "migration and diaspora engender a split subject, a fractured reality" (Werbner, 2013). Even after having spent a considerable part of their life in the United States, both Pilar and Yolanda feel out of place there. Even though Pilar has been "living in Brooklyn all [her] life" (García, 1992, p.58) she has failed to reach the required degree of familiarity and intimacy with the hostland to feel at home – the hostland still feels distant, detached and cold to her substantiating Alfred Schuetz's argument: "'To feel at home' is an expression of the highest degree of familiarity and intimacy" (qtd. in Werbner, 2013). As such, the feeling 'to be at home' which connotes the highest level of intimacy and comfort remains foreign to Pilar during her stay in the United States: "Homes are

made of brick and mortar, that is, they are a physical reality. Yet, they can also be part of our imagination and longing to belong and to be 'at home'" (Agnew, 2005, p.15). Due to this feeling of unfamiliarity with the hostland, Pilar retains a longing for the homeland: "Most days Cuba is kind of dead to me. But every once in a while a wave of longing will hit me" (García, 1992, pp.137-138). Influenced by her grandmother Celia with whom she "feel[s] much more connected...even though" she has not seen her in "seventeen years" she maintains a connection with her homeland and retains "a love for the sea and the smoothness of pearls, an appreciation of music and words" (García, 1992, p.176). At the same time she is aware that with each passing day she is getting distant from her homeland: "Every day Cuba fades a little more inside me, my grandmother fades a little more inside me" (García, 1992, p.138). Following her migration, Pilar, like a typical diaspora subject loses a "kind of intimate connection with landscapes, and family and tradition" (Hall qtd. in Werbner, 2013) of the homeland and laments this loss with familiarity retaining a longing for the same: "diasporic individuals may feel constantly torn between 'here' and 'there,' between their countries of origin and their countries of residence" (Agnew, 2005, p.16). Yolanda, too, grapples with a sense of loss "without really knowing that she has been missing" (Alvarez, 2004, p.12) her homeland. In spite of an extensive stay in the United States, she too fails to feel at home there, raising pertinent questions about the nature of home for the diasporic subject: "What is home? The place I was born? Where I grew up? Where I live and work as an adult?...Is home a geographical space, a historical space, an emotional sensory space?" (Mohanty qtd. in Dunlop, 2005, p.147) and "she believes she has never felt at home in the States, never" (Alvarez,

2004, p.12) which makes her nostalgic about her homeland and creates in her a longing to feel 'at home'. Yolanda's position thus substantiates Stuart Hall's argument: "Although you can never go back to the past, you do have a sense of loss. There is something you have lost" (qtd. in Werbner, 2013). Yolanda does not realise precisely what it is that she has lost. Both Pilar and Yolanda, therefore, fail to feel 'at home' in the United States and manifest a sort of double consciousness: "those living in the diaspora have a double perspective: they acknowledge an earlier existence elsewhere and have a critical relationship with the cultural politics of their present home-all embedded within the experience of displacement" (Hua, 2005, p.195). Pilar and Yolanda, therefore, continue to feel displaced in the hostland in spite of having a physical 'home' and are continuously haunted by a sense of loss.

Moreover, both Pilar and Yolanda become victims of bitter experiences in the hostland which exacerbates the feeling of unbelonging with the hostland. Pilar experiences constant conflict with her mother Lourdes: "my mother is driving me crazy" (García, 1992, p.59) and she even witnesses her parents getting distant from each other as well as comes to know of her father's extra-marital affair: "My father looks like a kid, laughing and animated and whispering in this woman's ears" (García, 1992, p.25). On the personal front, Pilar experiences heartbreak when she discovers that her boyfriend Rubén Florín has been cheating on her. The unpleasant incidents make Pilar further estranged from the hostland and she wants to escape to some place which holds a promise of positivity: "I miss my grandmother and wish I'd never left Cuba" (García, 1992, p.59). Similarly, Yolanda experiences issues on the personal front, making her question her stay in the United States.

Both her romantic encounters end in disaster as a result of the overbearing influence her home culture and home language has on her. Yolanda maintains a conservative stance regarding physical intimacy even in the United States: "We would lie down...cuddling and kissing, Rudy's hand exploring down my blouse. But if he wandered any lower, I'd pull him away" (Alvarez, 2004, p.96). Her first boyfriend Rudy Elmenhurst, therefore, breaks up with her: "I thought you'd be hot-blooded being Spanish and all, and that under all the Catholic bullshit you'd be really free...But Jesus, you're worse than a fucking Puritan" (Alvarez, 2004, p.99). Raised in a conservative environment as per the Dominican norms where "the woman or young lady, for her part, has to be pure, innocent, and faithful beyond measure...like the Virgin Mary: pure, submissive, and self-sacrificing" (Brown, 1999, p.88), Yolanda "curse[s] her immigrant origins" (Alvarez, 2004, p.94) which makes it difficult for her to behave either as an American or a Dominican. As an American citizen with traditional Dominican upbringing, her failure to belong led her to state with hindsight: "A cold, lonely life awaited me in this country" (Alvarez, 2004, p.99). Moreover, her marriage with John, an American also ends in disaster because of language incompatibility between them: "We just didn't speak the same language" (Alvarez, 2004, p.81). The distressing experiences that Yolanda undergoes in her interpersonal relationships in the hostland make her realise the difficulty in belonging to the hostland: "I would never find someone who would understand my peculiar mix of Catholicism and agnosticism, Hispanic and American styles" (Alvarez, 2004, p.99), thereby strengthening her resolve to return to the homeland.

Pilar and Yolanda's failure to belong to the host country generates in them

a desire for return to the homeland, which is a characteristic of the diaspora subject: "existential aspects of the...desire to return are linked to the apparent urge to 'find oneself', to uncover rooted connections to the past that provide meaning and worth in contemporary life" (Cochrane, 2015). Juxtaposing their turbulent present with an idealised and partly constructed past, both Pilar and Yolanda's longing for the homeland depicts how diasporic memory works to construct an ideal past: "Rather than mental imprints or iconic likeness, memory is formed through elaborate mental mappings, that change over time. Memory is the construction or reconstruction of what actually happened in the past. Memory is distorted by needs, desires, interests, and fantasies. Subjective and malleable rather than objective and concrete, memory is emotional, conceptual, contextual, constantly undergoing revision, selection, interpretation, distortion, and reconstruction" (Hua, 2005, p.198). Cristina García and Julia Alvarez through Pilar and Yolanda respectively highlight how diasporic individuals "frequently feel a sense of alienation in the host country" and this feeling of alienation leads to an indulgence in an idealised past which may or may not be true: "Memory does not revive the past but constructs it" (Hua, 2005, p.198). Anguished by the present circumstances, both Pilar and Yolanda harbour a typically diasporic desire to return, a desire fuelled by the "collective memory of a homeland," and though "sometimes invented," it is the existence of this homeland/collective memory which "perhaps more than any other characteristic shapes diasporic cultures" (Klein qtd. in Cochrane, 2015). In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Pilar wishes to return to Cuba to find out where she belonged highlighting that "originary homelands are not simply there to be recovered: already multiply interconnected with other places, they are

further transformed by the ravages of time, transfigured through the lenses of loss and nostalgia, constructed in the process of the search." As "the very definition of diaspora depends on attachments to a former home and, typically, on a fantasy of return" (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p.3) Pilar feeling frustrated and "fed up with everything around here" (García, 1992, p.25) in the United States wishes to make her way to Cuba only to establish a sense of belongingness. Having experienced "too many stops on the road" in the last twenty-nine years since her family left the island behind, the sisters having "led such turbulent lives—so many husbands, homes, jobs, wrong turns among them" compared to female cousins back home, makes Yolanda wish to return permanently to the Dominican Republic: "Let this turn out to be my home" (Alvarez, 2004, p.11).

Pilar and Yolanda succeed in returning to their respective homelands, that is Pilar to Cuba and Yolanda to the Dominican Republic with great optimism. They feel dejected by the negative experiences in the hostland and wish to achieve everything that they had been missing in the hostland. However, both Pilar's and Yolanda's dreams of return and integration to the homeland are shattered once they interact with the homeland. In *Dreaming in Cuban,* Pilar feels ecstatic upon reaching Cuba and meeting her grandmother Celia: "I find Abuela Celia sitting motionless on her wicker swing...I kneel before her and press my cheek to hers...We hold each other close" (García, 1992, p.217). Pilar instantly forms a connection with Cuba and feels a sense of close proximity with her homeland: "I want to stay longer...There's a magic here working its way through my veins. There's something about the vegetation, too, that I respond to instinctively...and I love Havana, its noise and decay...I

could happily sit on one of those wrought-iron balconies for days, or keep my grandmother company on her porch" (García, 1992, pp.234-235). Having experienced "overseas migration which sets in motion a process of dislocation along with the encounter with new social environments and landscapes" (Werbner, 2013), Pilar's fulfilment of her dream to return home does not feel as expected, and she soon realises the nuances associated with being a diaspora returnee who feels equally out of place in her homeland. She states for example: "I'm probably the only ex-punk on the island, how no one else has their ears pierced in three places" (García, 1992, p.235). In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* Yolanda, too, becomes successful in reaching her homeland. However, as a result of her prolonged stay in the United States she emerges as a "bicultural bilingual [subject]" (Grosjean qtd. in Spolsky, 2016, p.4) in her interaction with her cousins. In contrast to her cousin Lucinda who "in her designer pantsuit and frosted blown-out hair, looks like a Dominican magazine model" (Alvarez, 2004, pp.4-5), Yolanda "sees herself as they will, shabby in a black cotton skirt and jersey top, sandals on her wild black hair tied back with a hairband" (Alvarez, 2004, p.3). As a result, Yolanda also feels alienated and excluded even when she is with her cousins who disparagingly refer to her as Miss America: "Here she comes, Miss America!" (Alvarez, 2004, p.4). Yolanda's interaction with her cousins underscores that "the homecomer is not the same man who left. He is neither the same for himself nor for those who wait his return" (Schuetz qtd. in Werbner, 2013). As such, Yolanda, too, undergoes a change as a result of her negotiation with the host environment which alters the way she perceives herself as well as how others perceive her. Not only this, time and again she is reminded of the difference between her homeland and hostland.

When she puts forth her desire to travel alone she is reminded by her aunts: "This is not the States...A woman just doesn't travel alone in this country" (Alvarez, 2004, p.9) making her aware of the difference that underlies the United States and the Dominican Republic.

Yolanda's attempt at successful integration into the homeland is further problematized by her bilingual identity causing confusion and friction in relations. She speaks to her cousins in "halting Spanish," and so quickly "reverts to English," to be scolded by her aunts: "*¡En Espanol!*" (Alvarez, 2004, p.7).Yolanda goes blank over the word "*antojo*" to realise that "her aunts are right. After so many years away, she is losing her Spanish" (Alvarez, 2004, p.8). Her position as a bilingual subject becomes all the more difficult when she encounters two men on the road as her car breaks down. The two men "not quite sure what to make of her" perceive her as an American: "*?Americana¿*" (Alvarez, 2004, p.20). Yolanda grappled with a feeling of being overwhelmed by fear, intimidated after having been warned by her aunts, their words echoing in her mind: "you will get lost, you will get kidnapped, you will get raped, you will get killed" (Alvarez, 2004, p.17) if she goes out alone. This causes her to lose her Spanish and revert to English, at which point the two men "stare at her uncomprehending, rendered docile by her gibberish" (Alvarez, 2004, pp.20-21). The incident highlights that following her extensive stay in the United States, she has lost her original language and uses English, her adopted language for her protection. Yolanda, therefore, becomes "emblematic of the bicultural subject" and the influence which the "American mainstream culture" has on her "is signaled in her difficulties to speak Spanish, [and] in the clothes

she is wearing" (Llorente, 2001, p.74). In a difficult situation, she lets go off her Spanish and uses English as a medium of interaction highlighting her further separation from her homeland. Yolanda's encounter with her cousins and the two men does not convey a sense of acceptance and of being welcome to her homeland. Such situations are typical. As many "diasporic return migrants have prior expectations of ethnic belonging in their country of ancestral origin, most of them are quite surprised, if not shocked, by their ethnic rejection and social exclusion. As their previous idealised and nostalgic images of their ancestral country are seriously challenged, they become culturally alienated immigrant minorities whose members are strangers in their ethnic homeland" (Tsuda, 2013, p.1998). In contrast to Yolanda, Pilar responds positively to her homeland and its language upon her return: "I've started dreaming in Spanish, which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible" (García, 1992, p.235). While Pilar's response to her homeland is a positive one and it gives a possibility of eventual settlement, Pilar herself negates the possibility: "I'm afraid to lose all this, to lose Abuela Celia again. But 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, 1992, p.236) illuminating the conflict between dual and dominant diasporic identities, thus, highlighting that "Although they were often minorities in their countries of birth because of their foreign racial descent, they again become ethnic minorities when they return to their country of ancestral origin, this time because of their cultural foreignness" (Tsuda, 2013, p. 1998) leading to a loss of complete identities.

Conclusion

In *Dreaming in Cuban* written by Cristina García, Pilar is a young girl born in Cuba but brought to the United States when she is two years old. However, she retains a connection with her homeland and forms a strong bond with her maternal grandmother Celia who still resides in Cuba. Pilar dreams of an eventual return to Cuba and wishes to settle there. In *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez, Yolanda is a young Dominican woman who grows up in the United States. However, Yolanda never settles as the American subject and her life in the United States is troubled by the overbearing influence of her home culture and home language. Frustrated by the constant conflict, she returns to the Dominican Republic where she hopes to spend the rest of her life. A common thread connecting both Pilar's and Yolanda's families is that both are pushed away from their homeland because of unpleasant circumstances and both Pilar and Yolanda arrive at a very young age to the hostland. While Pilar leaves Cuba after the Communist Revolution takes place in Cuba, Yolanda and her family moves following Rafael Trujillo's dictatorial rule in the Dominican Republic. As a result of forced migration, and in spite of various attempts, Pilar and Yolanda fail to belong to the hostland society and both harbour a desire to return to the place of origin. Another commonality between Pilar and Yolanda is that both succeed to return to the homeland at some point in time. However, the difference lies in the different realisation that both meet: Pilar realises that she must leave her homeland Cuba and return to the United States and Yolanda realises that it is not easy to integrate to the home culture after a long separation.

The discussion, therefore, highlights that diaspora subjects are haunted by a sense of loss therefore finding it difficult to feel at home in the hostland. This feeling of unhomeliness creates a dominant longing for a return to the homeland. The diaspora subject may feel she belongs to the homeland more than she belongs to the hostland but Pilar finds out this is not the case. The familiar structures of family, community, landscape, etc., that the diaspora subjects leave behind in the homeland eventually attract them. However, the prospects of a successful return and integration to the homeland are harder than thought by the diaspora subject. The familiar structures having been altered during the period of absence, integration becomes a tough process. Through the character of Pilar and Yolanda, the myth of a successful return and integration to the homeland is not supported by the experiences exposed in the two novels. Whereas Yolanda and Pilar succeed in returning to their homelands, Pilar eventually realises she is culturally a foreigner in her homeland, and should return to the United States leaving Cuba behind, whereas Yolanda is adamant on permanent return, though struggling with double identity and aware of her position as a bicultural and bilingual subject as a result of a long negotiation with two cultures and two languages. She is not perceived as a Dominican; neither by her family nor by the general people she meets on the road and both her cousins and the common people refer to her as an American. Moreover during the moment of crisis she chooses her adopted language which further symbolises her alienation from her homeland. These factors: changes in the person and her language; changes in the homeland and its structures; formation of dual/ fractured identities; adaptation to social and cultural norms, hence, feeling both a sense of loss in the host country, and a sense of alienation back

home are sure to make her integration to the homeland a difficult process. The present paper, therefore, highlights that the diaspora population fails to feel 'at home' both in the hostland and the homeland. While the hostland seems foreign to them, the returnee migrants are themselves perceived as foreigners when they return to the homeland, making their return and integration difficult. The paper, therefore appears to entertain the idea of return and successful integration as a myth in case of diaspora population.

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