

A 2007 Reading Resource Guide for

1BOOK
for Greater
Hartford

Dreaming in Cuban

By Cristina García

HARTFORD
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

One Book for Greater Hartford

I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon,
-from "Heredity" by Thomas Hardy



When thinking about this year's One Book for Greater Hartford theme, "Place of Heart, Place of Home," Thomas Hardy's metaphor of "family face" came to mind. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, the 2007 One Book selection, writer Cristina García uses the lives of three generations of a Cuban American family to explore the meanings of home, family and personal identity.

The question of identity and heritage is a common thread among each of the books we have chosen for the One Book for Greater Hartford series. Indeed, One Books often share writers' personal remembrances of a place that was once home: smells, sights, sounds and tastes that we, as readers, can relate to even if we are experiencing the specific details of the writer's private recollections for the first time. All of us, in some way, have lived through the practice of carving out our true selves; a rite of passage Cristina García writes about so beautifully.

One Book for Greater Hartford is an opportunity to not just explore the work of an author who you might not know, but to open a dialogue about important issues we all face. We hope this reading guide will help you further enjoy this year's One Book for Greater Hartford. We invite you to participate in our wonderful events this summer and fall, including the October 26 author event with Cristina García at the Downtown Library. We hope you'll join us!

Sincerely,
Laise Blalock

Louise Blalock, Chief Librarian, Hartford Public Library

2007 Honorary Chair

Bessy Reyna is the author of the poetry chapbooks *The Battlefield of Your Body* (Hill-Stead Museum Publications) and *She Remembers* (Andrew Mountain Press, Hartford, CT). Her poem "Memoir" was awarded the first prize in the 21st Annual Joseph E. Brodine Poetry Contest sponsored by the Connecticut Poetry Society. She has also been the recipient of individual artist's awards given by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and the Greater Hartford Arts Council.



Reyna, who is currently an op-ed columnist for the *Hartford Courant*, had been a frequent contributor to *Northeast*, the Sunday magazine of *The Hartford Courant*. Her poems and stories have been included in several anthologies and literary magazines in the U.S. and Latin America.

Reyna is a regular contributor to Spanish and English language newspapers in Connecticut and currently works as the editor of "Latin Arte News," the arts page for *Identidad Latina*. Selected as a Master Teaching Artist by the Commission on the Arts, she has been a writer-in-residence at several area elementary and middle schools under the sponsorship of Partners-in-Education of the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts.

Bessy Reyna, who was born in Cuba and grew up in Panama, is a graduate of Mt. Holyoke College (B.A., Magna Cum Laude) and has a Master's and J.D. degree from the University of Connecticut.

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction to *Dreaming in Cuban*

Time of the Novel: 1972 to 1980

Location: Cuba, New York City and Florida

Principal Characters:

Celia del Pino – 70 years old, a mother and grandmother living in Cuba

Jorge del Pino – the ghost of Celia’s husband

Lourdes del Pino Puente – Celia’s 34-year-old daughter who has left Cuba for Brooklyn, New York

Rufino Puente – Lourdes husband

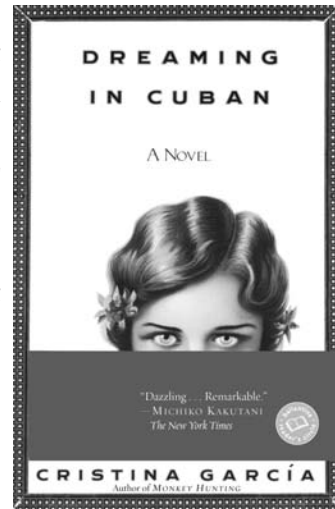
Pilar Puente – Lourdes and Rufino’s 12-year-old daughter

Felicia – 30-year-old daughter of Celia who remains in Cuba with her mother

Luz, Milagro and Ivanito – Felicia’s children

Herminia Delgado – Felicia’s friend; a Santería priestess

Dreaming in Cuban is the moving story of three generations of women whose ties to Cuba simultaneously draw them closer together while forcing them apart. Haunted by family secrets and longing for the comforts of home, each of the women struggles to come to terms with her true identity – wife, mother, daughter, infidel, patriot, lover, and friend. Torn apart by years of familial and political unrest, each character shares her own personal take on the struggles in Cuba, the shortcomings in her own life and, inevitably, her feelings toward the other women. A poetic blend of humor and surrealism, *Dreaming in Cuban* is about the meaning of home and heart, love and hate, and, ultimately, what happens when a broken family tries to rebuild itself.



The Author of *Dreaming in Cuban*



Photo by Norma Quintana

Author Cristina García was born in Cuba on July 4, 1958. Though her time in her Cuba was brief – it was only two years before her parents moved her family to New York – her heritage lives on today in her literary work. An accomplished journalist and author, García has earned her place as one of the foremost authors of Latin American literature by using her native country as a central character in her complex and multi-layered work.

Throughout Cristina García’s childhood, her family moved through various boroughs of New York City, taking up residency in Queens, Brooklyn Heights and Manhattan. As a child, García was an avid reader of American, Russian and French novelists. Though her family moved frequently through the years, García maintained a predominantly Catholic school education. Upon graduation, however, she chose to attend the liberal arts institution Barnard College. It was there that she received her Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science.

Immediately following, García went on to receive her Master’s Degree in European and Latin American Studies from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. It was during this time that García worked part-time as a copy editor for the *New York Times*, a job that would begin to spark her love for writing, much as a brief course she took at Barnard rekindled her childhood love of literature.

After graduating, García worked briefly in marketing for Proctor and Gamble in West Germany. When she returned to the United States she began an internship at the *Boston Globe* and then moved to a permanent position working for the *Knoxville Journal* in Tennessee. After several years with the *Journal*, García accepted a position working for *Time* magazine; a job that would take her to New York, San Francisco, Miami, and Los Angeles.

It was during her time with the magazine that the author took a trip to Cuba, a journey she sites as imperative to her growth as a novelist. In interviews, she has credited the return to her native country as “. . . instrumental in the resurgence of my own Cuban identity, which really didn’t take hold until I began writing fiction. There’s something in the excavation process that one goes through in creating a book that allowed me to reach areas that I didn’t even know existed . . .”

García continued working as a reporter for *Time* through the 1980s, eventually being named Miami Bureau Chief (a position that included coverage of the Caribbean). And though she loved her work, she began to concentrate more and more on her dream of becoming an author, using her spare time to write early drafts of what would become her first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban*.

In 1992, Cristina García gave birth to her only child, a daughter she named Pilar. This was also the year that her first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban*, was released to positive reviews. The book became a bestseller and the novel garnered a nomination for the National Book Award shortly following its publication. Historically, *Dreaming in Cuban’s* publication was significant as it marked the first time a Cuban American woman published a work of fiction in English.

Since the publication of her first novel, Cristina García has continued writing fiction. Her second novel, *The Agüero Sisters*, was published in 1997 and *Monkey Hunting* was published in 2003. In 2007, she released her fourth novel, *A Handbook to Luck*, and in 2008 she will publish her first work for children: *I Wanna Be Your Shoebox* and *The Dog Who Loved the Moon*.

Cristina García has edited two volumes of contemporary Cuban literature. She has been a Visiting Professor and



Cristina García with her father, Francisco García, in 1959.

Writer-in-Residence at several prestigious institutions, including the University of California, Los Angeles; Hunter College; and Mills College. Her fellowships include acting as Hodder Fellow at Princeton University and the coveted Guggenheim Fellowship. Her work has been rewarded with several prestigious awards including the Whiting Writers Award.

Today, García works from an office near her home in Santa Monica. She is a contributor to several magazines, including the *Washington Post Magazine*, *Latina Magazine* and *Cigar Aficionado* and she often lectures throughout the country.

It is through both her work and her relationship with her family that Cristina García honors her Cuban roots. And it is by exploring her heritage that she has managed to carve her niche in the American literary canon. In doing so, she has helped many Americans of diverse ethnicities explore the ever-changing notion of cultural identity and the true nature of self . . . a journey that she, herself, continues today.



Cristina García’s grandfather, Juan Lois, with her mother, Esperanza Lois, in 1936.

Q&A with Cristina García

Hartford Public Library recently had the opportunity to chat with Dreaming in Cuban author Cristina García about her life, her work, and her heritage. An excerpt of this enlightening conversation follows:

Hartford Public Library: Which of the characters of *Dreaming in Cuban* do you most relate to?

Cristina García: I think there is a little bit of me in each of them since they are, in part, all products of my imagination. But I save the softest spot for the Celia character, who was inspired by my own grandmother.

Hartford Public Library: What books have you read most recently that you liked?

Cristina García: I particularly enjoyed a first novel by Peter Orner called *The Second Coming of Mavala Shikongo*. It's set in a remote boarding school in Namibia and is one of the funniest, most heartbreaking books I've read in a long time.

Hartford Public Library: Do you read while you're writing?

Cristina García: Yes, all the time, but mostly poetry.

Hartford Public Library: What do you do when you're not reading or writing?

Cristina García: I've recently started to paint and it's becoming an obsession. I love to travel and see art and hear live music. And, of course, I spend a lot of time with my fifteen-year-old daughter, Pilar.

Hartford Public Library: What would people be most surprised to learn about you?

Cristina García: That I will take on all challengers in a chili-eating contest.

Hartford Public Library: Can you tell us a little about your new novel *A Handbook to Luck*?

Cristina García: The story follows the lives of three characters from disparate countries: Cuba, Iran, and El Salvador, all places of revolution, upheaval, and dislocation. It explores, through these characters' tales and interconnections, the cultural and personal costs of migration. That said, it is often a very funny book.

Hartford Public Library: You also have two children's books coming out in 2008 – how is writing fiction for children different from writing for adults?

Cristina García: Writing for children and young adults is just as challenging, perhaps even more so. There is a certain poetry and voice and tone that you have to get right for it to work well. There is no more unforgiving critic than an impatient four-year-old.

Hartford Public Library: Do any of the relationships in *Dreaming in Cuban* mirror relationships in your own family?

Cristina García: Yes, I consider *Dreaming in Cuban* to be an emotional autobiography. My own family, very much like the del Pino and Puente clans, were bitterly divided over the Cuban revolution. I grew up with this schism and try to capture something of that experience in the book.

Hartford Public Library: How do you honor your Cuban heritage?

Cristina García: By making the best black beans west of the Mississippi (my mother has the east side of the country covered!). And, of course, by reading and learning everything I can about my homeland and imparting this to my daughter.

The 1950s

Ernest Hemingway was awarded a Pulitzer in 1952 and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954 for *The Old Man and the Sea*; meanwhile Cuban-born actor and musician Desi Arnaz sang his signature song, "Babalu," on the television show "I Love Lucy."

Fidel Castro and Argentinean revolutionary Ché Guevara joined forces in 1956 to overthrow Fulgencio Batista in a peasant-based social revolution.

The 1960s

In the mid-1960s, a new form of music became popular: *nueva trova*, inspired by and idealizing the Revolution of 1959.

The United States severed diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961. In 1962, the thirteen day "Cuban missile crisis" raised the specter of nuclear war as President John F. Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev negotiated the removal of nuclear missile bases being built in Cuba, ninety miles off the Florida coast.

The 1970s

Cuban novelist, poet, and essayist Reinaldo Arenas was sent to prison by the Castro regime in 1973 after being charged and convicted for "ideological deviation" (Arenas was homosexual) and for publishing abroad without official consent. He was exiled via the Mariel Boat Lift.

The Organization of American States lifted economic and diplomatic sanctions against Cuba in 1975; later that year, the United States allowed its foreign subsidiaries to trade with Cuba.

The 1980s

In 1968, Heberto Padilla was awarded the national prize for poetry for *Fuera del Juego (Out of the Game)*. Soon after, he was labeled "counter-revolutionary" and he was placed under house arrest. In 1980, Senator Edward Kennedy secured Padilla's release to the U.S.

Castro relaxed emigration policies in 1980, allowing more than 125,000 Cubans to leave the country. This "Mariel Boat Lift" lasted for six months.

Hartford Public Library: Food plays an important role in *Dreaming in Cuban*. To you, what distinguishes Cuban cuisine? Do you have a favorite dish?

Cristina García: Please see question 8!

Hartford Public Library: Do you find yourself believing more in magic or in realism?

Cristina García: My favorite place to be, fictionally speaking, is on that perforated borderline of what is remotely possible to what is absolutely impossible.

Hartford Public Library: What influences has Santería had on your life?

Cristina García: I didn't grow up with it but when I started writing about Cuba, I needed to quickly get up to speed. This syncretism between the Yoruban religion and Catholicism is a cornerstone of the island's culture.

Hartford Public Library: Upon completing a novel, do you find it hard to leave your characters behind?

Cristina García: By the time I'm finished with a book, I'm usually pretty ready to say good-bye. But that doesn't mean that I don't miss them now and then.

Hartford Public Library: Have you "met" the characters of your next novel yet?

Cristina García: Yes. In fact, I'm well along into a new novel tentatively titled *The Lady Matador's Hotel*. The book is set in a luxury hotel in Guatemala City some years after the Civil War. It's populated with many curious people, including a Japanese Mexican female matador who's in town for the first ever competition of *matadoras* in the Americas.

Magical Realism (The Magic in the Real)

Essay by John Christie



Magical realism, put simply, refers to when an artist blends the fantastic with the real, or mixes the bizarre with the logical and plausible. In the most famous magic realist novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, a baby is born with the tail of a pig and the blood from a fatally shot son trickles down streets, into doorways, around rugs, up steps and into the kitchen where the mother is cooking.

Likewise in Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Celia watches the little Santera pray herself into oblivion. "... her moist eyes roll back in her dwarfish head until the whites gleam from two pinpricks, and she trembles once, twice, and slides against Celia in a heap on the sidewalk, smoking like a wet fire, sweet and musky, until nothing is left of her but her fringed cotton shawl." The images are real, visible and powerful, but the idea is fantastic – the concept is reality exaggerated.

The reader who comes across a passage in an otherwise realistic text where something otherworldly happens is instantly disoriented. Unless the writer openly declares that the character is dreaming or insane, the reader is left uncertain about what is true. Edgar Allen Poe usually made it clear that the problem was in the mind of the narrator, but in Kafka, an early magical realist (whose hero Gregor Samsa wakes up as a cockroach), things are trickier. Ultimately, these texts provoke readers into reevaluating their own individual perceptions of the world. They require a dual perspective where equal credibility must be given to the plausible and, at the same time, to the uncanny.

Connected to the Surrealist movement, the term was first used by German visual art critics in the 1920s, but it resurfaced in the 1960s to become the most dominant label used by literary critics to categorize fiction from Latin America (though the narrative style is certainly not

The 1990s

In 1999, PBS aired "Buena Vista Social Club," documenting elderly Cuban musicians brought out of retirement to talk about, and play songs from, the golden age of Cuban music.

The U.S. Congress passed The Helms-Burton Act (The Cuban Liberty And Democratic Solidarity Act) in 1996, granting American citizens the right to sue foreign investors profiting from expropriated U.S. assets.

21st-Century

In February 2007, *Voice of America* reported a ration book allows Cubans to "buy limited stocks of food at government-run stores. Ten eggs a month, two kilos of sugar, half a kilo of chicken, a bar of soap, and every day just one bread roll...".

While the U.S. maintains its 40-year-old embargo, Canada, Spain, Italy, and other countries have invested more than \$4 billion in international tourism and other Cuban goods.

unique to Latin American writers). Particularly during the “boom” of magical realism in the 1960s to 1970s, the technique served the political purpose of shaking up stereotypical Eurocentric attitudes and beliefs about the realities of Latin America.

With famed authors such as Miguel Angel Asturias and Juan Rulfo, magical realism became a celebration of the unknown in the new world. Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier talked about “the marvelous in the real.” The “real” suggests the known world of Western thinkers and the “marvelous” is everything else, particularly the traditions and cultures of non-western peoples. What is magical or marvelous, though it may resemble fairy tales, superstition and mythic fantasies, is, for the authors of such works, a way of granting validity to a non-European system of beliefs.

Some critics now argue that the label is misleading and that it steers Western readers toward misconceptions of Latin American political and sociological realities. It is, they claim, too easy to dismiss the factually important issues of Latin America when the reader’s attention is overly focused on dreams and fantasies. In fact, many recent Latin American writers have openly rejected the label. Young writers like Edmundo Paz Soldán, Albert Fuguet and Roberto Bolaño are now more interested in the outright reality of the cross-cultural, urban, transnational characteristics of their own experiences.

Whether or not the term has been overused, many writers have shown how magical realism can broaden and change a reader’s perception. In fact, they hope to push the reader’s own beliefs and encourage him or her to see the new and different objective – a leap that will ultimately require the reader to question his or her own sense of reality. The magical realist artist is free to explore the “other” with fresh enthusiasm: to tap into the peoples, traditions and philosophies associated with folk spiritualities.

In the works of magical realists, readers get more of the unwritten, undocumented oral history of the author’s culture (often with a strong feminine bent that makes it more “herstory”), along side the official record of the accepted written “history.” Thus, in the hands of women

writers the oral tradition comes to the forefront. Even García Márquez has said that he got his stories from his grandmother’s tales, and the importance of the “abuela” (grandmother) figure in U.S. Latino literature is obvious. In fact, in many stories, the family unit is extended beyond the living – ghosts come and go due to the magical realists’ interest in cultural attitudes about life and death. Stories of midwives, herbalists, shamans, orishas, babalaos, or witches – fantastic to some, believable to others – get emphasized in a magical realist text because they are never reduced to superstition or debunked as delusions.

Though many may read the works of magical realists with a certain element of detachment, as García Márquez eloquently reminded the world in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, “Strange things do happen . . .” and, in holding truth to the magical realist’s beliefs, one person’s sense of reality is never adequate to explain or understand everything.

John S. Christie is the co-editor of Latino Boom: An Anthology of U.S. Latino Literature (2005), the co-founder of the web page www.LatinoStories.com and the author of Latino Fiction and the Modernist Imagination (1995), one of the first book length critical studies of Latino/Hispanic fiction. He teaches English at Capital Community College in Hartford, Connecticut and has contributed articles and reviews to such academic journals as Latin American Literary Review and American Fiction Studies.

Discussion Questions for *Dreaming in Cuban*

In what ways does *Dreaming in Cuban* illustrate what some social critics refer to as “hyphenated” Americans?

Discuss the many factors that create distance between the family members. How do these factors contribute to a sense of exile?

Does this novel convey to non-Cubans what it’s really like to be Cuban?

For people throughout the world, “bread” or “the bread of life” is a metaphor for a greater need that comes in many forms. In what way is the Yankee Doodle Bakery like bread for Lourdes?

What do you think Pilar means when she states, “. . . the family is hostile to the individual”? Can you give examples?

Would you describe any of the intimate relationships in *Dreaming in Cuban* as successful?

After all her resistance to Pilar’s art, why does Lourdes defend her mural when it is revealed at the bakery?

What personal qualities enable Lourdes to assimilate so quickly when she moves to Brooklyn? What circumstances hinder her assimilation?

The epigram the author chose for the book comes from the poem by Wallace Stevens, “Someone Puts a Pineapple Together”, that scholars say is metaphoric. How do metaphor and dreams further your understanding of the characters?

Celia and her daughter Felicia both suffer various psychic breaks throughout the novel. What distinctions, if any, are made between dreams and delusions?

How do Celia’s unsent letters to Gustavo, which form several sections of the novel, serve to anchor the story? What do they add to the story?

After her husband’s death, Celia devotes herself fully to the revolution and serves as a civilian judge for several years. What do you see as her core motivation for this devotion?

The mid-20th century social and political history of Cuba could be said to be the dominant influences on the lives of the family. Discuss how this parallels your own understanding of socio-political influences on your family.

How do Celia, Lourdes, and Pilar relate to Cuba as individuals? Is Cuba the cause of their trouble or the source of their relief? Does Cuba impede them or facilitate them?

What role does each of the primary characters serve? What are the tensions within and between each? What drives each individual?

How does the implicit notion and even explicit description of “civilization” differ from one generation to the next (or from one character to the next)?

Does the text lead you to a revelation about the “other”? What do you see differently as a result of reading this novel?

What are the connotations of “dreaming” in this context? Why is the novel entitled *Dreaming in Cuban*?

Questions contributed by Hartford Public Library staff and Jeff Barnett and Ellen Mayock, Department of Romance Languages, Washington and Lee University.

Lickable Wallpaper: Magical Realism for Children and Young Adults

"It's true!" cried all four of the old people at once. "Of course it's true! Ask anyone you like!" *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, by Roald Dahl

Alice in Wonderland, *Wind in the Willows*, *Five Children and It*, *Mary Poppins*, *Harry Potter* – many great children's books freely mix the real, the not-so-real, the slightly magical, and the outright fantastical. Adults who are reading *Dreaming in Cuban* may wish to extend their conversation on the literary mode "magical realism" to familiar works such as these. Adults who wish to extend the conversation still further, to include children and young adults, could suggest *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* as a basis for discussion.

What are some elements of magical realism that are present in Roald Dahl's short, popular and very accessible text, and how can we discuss these with young people? Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. The completely mundane is repeatedly juxtaposed with the fabulous in a manner that integrates the two. Just as Mary Poppins brusquely negotiates her day off with her employer right before stepping into one of Bert's chalk-drawings, or Harry Potter steadily works his way through a list of required school supplies, but definitely not at Staples, so does Charlie operate in a world of dropped dollars, flashes of selfishness, lottery tickets – and chocolate rivers, to which these commonplace items lead him. Ask young readers (or listeners) to compare and contrast the settings depicted in *Charlie*, with those of a wholly realistic work (such as *Sounder*), and a work of pure fantasy (e.g., the *Redwall* series).

2. The hero lives, socially and physically, at the margins of the dominant culture – and, as in many Latin American novels of this type, the dominant culture is dysfunctional. Ask young readers how Charlie lives, and how he differs, as a character, from the other children in the book. How do the different characters respond to the magical elements

in the factory? Do the readers know people like Charlie in their own lives?

3. The hero is changed by his experience with the magical: there is "transforming power" to the magical space he enters, to use Yvonne Hammer's terms. How is Charlie changed? How important is this change to his life? Is Charlie helped or guided through this experience?

4. Scary things happen; there is a touch (at least) of nightmare to the work. The other children are changed in the factory, but not in a positive way. When Charlie is in danger in the book, does the danger come from the more "real" or the more "magical" world? The word "nasty" has been applied to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* – discuss whether or not that this is a good description for the mood of this book, and why or why not?

A final question might be, "Why do you think Roald Dahl chose to tell this particular story in the "magical realist" style?" Everyone would deserve a reward for even considering something of that depth. Fortunately, Dahl's widow has supplied us with directions for delicious treats, based on his books, in *Revolting Recipes*. From those ascribed to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the most appropriately surreal choice might be "Lickable Wallpaper." However, "Strawberry-flavored Chocolate-coated Fudge," "Toffee-apple Trees," and "Willy Wonka's Nutty Crunch Surprise" are also authentic – and not in the least revolting!

Sources:

Dahl, Felicity and Fison, Josie. *Roald Dahl's Revolting Recipes*. Viking: NY, 1994.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Puffin Books: NY, 1998.

Hammer, Yvonne. "Defining Magical Realism in Children's Literature: voices in contemporary fugue, texts that speak from the margins." *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature* 16.2 (Dec 2006): 64.

Bibliography of Works by Cristina García

Novels:

Dreaming in Cuban, Alfred A. Knopf, 1992
The Agüero Sisters, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997
Monkey Hunting, Alfred A. Knopf, 2003
A Handbook to Luck, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007

Volumes edited and/or introduced:

Cubanísimo!: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Cuban Literature, Vintage, 2003
Bordering Fires: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Mexican and Chicano/a Literature, Vintage, 2006
Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair: Dual Language Edition, Penguin Classics, 2006

Forthcoming children's books:

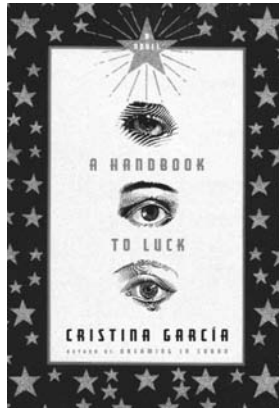
I Wanna Be Your Shoebox, Simon & Schuster, 2008
The Dog Who Loved the Moon, Simon & Schuster, 2008

Spanish editions:

Soñar en cubano, Ballantine Books, 1994
Las hermanas Agüero, Vintage, 1997
El cazador de conos, Emece Editores, 2003
Voces sin fronteras: Antología Vintage Español de literatura mexicana y chicana contemporánea, Vintage, 2007

Works about Cristina García:

Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, vol. 130, Gale, 2005
Contemporary Literary Criticism, vol. 76, Gale, 1993
Latino and Latina Writers, vol. 2, Gale, 2004



A Handbook to Luck

Suggestions for Further Reading

Fiction

The House of the Spirits by **Isabel Allende** (1985)
Paula by **Isabel Allende** (1995)
How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents by **Julia Alvarez** (1991)
Dona Flor and her Two Husbands by **Jorge Amado** (1969)
Bless Me Ultima by **Rudolfo Anaya** (1972)
Men of Maize by **Miguel Angel Asturias** (1949)
Ficciones by **Jorge Luis Borges** (1944)
*Labryinth*s by **Jorge Luis Borges** (1962)
The Master and Margarita by **Mikhail Bulgakov** (1928)
The Kingdom of This World by **Alejo Carpentier** (1949)
The Harp and the Shadow by **Alejo Carpentier** (1979)
The House on Mango Street by **Sandra Cisneros** (1991)
Stones for Ibarra by **Harriet Doerr** (1988)
Singing to Cuba by **Margarita Engle** (1993)
Like Water for Chocolate by **Laura Esquivel** (1993)
The Death of Artemio Cruz by **Carlos Fuentes** (1962)
Aura by **Carlos Fuentes** (1962)
Havana Heat by **Carolina Garcia-Aguilera** (2000)
One Hundred Years of Solitude by **Garbriel García Márquez** (1967)
The God of Small Things by **Arundhati Roy** (1998)
The Year of the Death of Ricardo Ruis by **José Saramago** (1984)

Non-fiction

Art Cuba: The New Generation edited and with an introduction by **Holly Block**; essays by **Gerardo Mosquera** . . . [et al.]; translated from the Spanish by **Cola Franzen** and **Marguerite Feitlowitz** (2001)

A History of Cuban Baseball, 1864-2006 by **Peter C. Bjarkman** (2007)

Capitalism, God, and a Good Cigar: Cuba Enters the Twenty-first Century edited by **Lydia Chávez** (2005)

The Cuban Reader: History, Culture, Politics edited by **Aviva Chomsky**, **Barry Carr**, and **Pamela Maria Smorkaloff** (2003)

Eating Cuban: 120 Authentic Recipes from the Streets of Havana to American Shores by **Beverly Cox** and **Martin Jacobs** (2006)

Cuba Cocina! by **Joyce Fray** (1994)

Guerilla Prince: The Real Story of the Rise and Fall of Fidel Castro by **Georgie Anne Geyer** (1991)

Cuba: A New History by **Richard Gott** (2004)

Che Guevara by **Kate Havelin** (2007)

The Diloggun: The Orishas, Proverbs, Sacrifices and Prohibitions of Cuban Santería by **Ocha'ni Lele** (2003)

Cuban Fire: The Saga of Salsa and Latin Jazz by **Isabelle Leymarie** (2002)

Afro-Cuban Voices: On Race and Identity in Contemporary Cuba edited by **Pedro Pérez Sarduy** and **Jean Stubbs** (2000)

Inside The Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground by **Julia E. Sweig** (2002)

Media Suggestions

Filmography

1. **Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate, 1993)**

The first Cuban film to be nominated for an Academy Award, *Strawberry and Chocolate* tells the story of a young Communist revolutionary who forges an unlikely friendship with a gay intellectual and his sexy neighbor. Cuba/Mexico/Spain. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío. Available from Walt Disney Video.

2. **Guantanamera (1995)**

A satiric take on Cuba that takes the form of a road movie, the film follows a long, slow funeral procession for a woman who has died of a heart attack after the thrill of being reunited with an old flame. Cuba/Spain/Germany. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío. Available from New Yorker Video.

3. **Life Is to Whistle (La Vida es Silbar, 1999)**

This highly stylized film tracks the romantic trials and tribulations of three young people living in Havana. Spain/Cuba. Dir. by Fernando Pérez. Available from New Yorker Video.

4. **The Waiting List (Lista de Espera, 2000)**

A look at what happens at a rundown Cuban bus station when a group of strangers are stranded while waiting for their bus to be repaired. Spain/Cuba/France/Mexico/Germany. Dir. by Juan Carlos Tabío. Available from Fox Lorber.

5. **Memories of Underdevelopment (Memorias del Subdesarrollo, 1968)**

Though his friends and family have fled the country in the wake of the revolution, Sergio, a bourgeois intellectual, has stayed behind. He spends his time reflecting on the past and present state of his country and embarking on relationships with women. Cuba. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Available from New Yorker Films.

6. **Buena Vista Social Club (1999)**

Filmmaker Wim Wenders documents the return of American guitar legend Ry Cooder to Havana where he reunites with the Cuban music greats with whom he recorded the Grammy Award-winning album

Buena Vista Social Club just two years prior. Germany/USA/UK/France/Cuba. Dir. by Wim Wenders. Available from Lions Gate Entertainment.

7. **Up to a Certain Point (Hasta Cierta Punto, 1983)**

A married filmmaker working on a documentary about *machismo* in Cuban society finds the subject brought uncomfortably close when he falls for an independent-minded female dockworker. Cuba. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Available from New Yorker Video.

8. **The Last Supper (La Ultima Cena, 1976)**

An 18th-century Cuban landowner gathers a dozen of his slaves to restage the Last Supper. Cuba. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Available from New Yorker Video.

9. **Death of a Bureaucrat (La Muerta de un Burocrata, 1966)**

A black comedy about bureaucratic absurdity. When José Martín is buried with his union card left accidentally in his pocket, his widow must go to extremes to retrieve it in order to claim her pension. Cuba. Dir. by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Available from New Yorker Video.

*Most audiovisual materials (videos, DVDs, etc.) purchased or borrowed are for home use only. Be aware that if you use them for a public program you must first get permission, called **Public Performance Rights**, from the copyright holder. A librarian can help you determine whom to ask.*

Most titles are available at the Hartford Public Library.

Webliography

About the Author:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/author/results.pperl?authorid=9673>

Biography of Christina García

About the Book:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/rc/library/display.pperl?isbn=9780345381439&view=rg>

Book club reading guide

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_realism

An in-depth study of the literary genre Magical Realism

About Cuba:

<http://www.cubagob.cu/ingles/mapa.htm>

Official web site of the Government of the Republic of Cuba

<http://digital.library.miami.edu/chcdigital/projects.shtml>

The Cuban Heritage Collection at University of Miami

<http://www.cubanfoodrecipes.com/>

Cuban recipes

<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/santeria.html>

The history of Santería

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/castro/index.html>

Information on Fidel Castro

Sites Related to One Book Projects, Book Groups and Reading

<http://ww2.hplct.org/reader.htm>

Hartford Public Library Readers Services Resources

www.readinggroupguides.com

Online community for reading groups

Suggested Listening

A toda Cuba le gusta by **Afro-Cuban All Stars**, Nonesuch, Audio CD, 1997

Central Park Rumba by **Eddie Bobe**, Piranha Records, Audio CD, 2000

Caña, tabaco y ron by **Club Musical Cubano**, Amiato Records, Audio CD, 2002

Calle salud by **Compay Segundo**, Nonesuch, Audio CD, 1999

Music from Oriente de Cuba by **Estudiantina Invasora**, Nimbus Records, Audio CD, 1995

En La Habana by **El Curi**, Nubenegra Records, Audio CD, 2002

Caliente Havana Salsa by **Celia Cruz**, Malecon Music, Audio CD, 2005

Mi Sueno by **Ibrahim Ferrer**, Nuevos Med, Audio CD, 2007

The Essential by **Ruben Gonzalez**, Manteca, Audio CD, 2006

Rumbero soy by **Sierra Maestram**, Riverboat Records, Audio CD, 2002

Tibiri, Tabara by **Sierra Maestra**, Nonesuch, Audio CD, 1997

Canto a Mi Cuba by **Benny More**, Egrem, Audio CD, 2005

Septetos cubanos-Sones de Cuba, Musica Tradicional, Audio CD, 1990

Poetas del Son by **Septeto Nacional Ignacio Pineiro**, Le Chant du Monde, Audio CD, 2002

Más Cuba Libres by **Septeto Nacional & Guests**, Network Medien, Audio CD, 1999

Buen Paseo by **Gonzalo Rubalcaba and New Cuban Quartet**, Blue Note Records, Audio CD, 2004

From Havana with Love by **Arturo Sandoval**, West Wind, Audio CD, 2003

Complete 1964 Sessions by **Chucho Valdes**, Malanga, Audio CD, 2007

Unforgettable boleros by **Chucho Valdes & Irakere**, Velas Records, Audio CD, 2000