THE LOST APPLE PLAYS: PERFORMING OPERATION PEDRO PAN

by

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ABSTRACT

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From 1960 to 1962, more than 14,000 unaccompanied minors took flight from Cuba to the United States, establishing the largest recorded exodus in the Western Hemisphere. The displaced children and the country they left behind are often metaphorized using a popular Latin American nursery rhyme, *The Lost Apple*. Now, more than four decades later, Operation Pedro Pan persists through a revealing body of performance by and about a nation's exiled children.

The Lost Apple Plays investigates how memory, identity formation, nationhood, citizenship, and migration have been dramatized through these performances. Artists including Pulitzer prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz, director/actor/playwright Mario Ernesto Sánchez, Grammy-winning singer Willy Chirino, performance artist Ana Mendieta, sculptor María Brito, prolific dramatist Eduardo Machado, and new playwright Melinda López compose a Cuba that can be neither lost nor recovered for Pedro Pans, but remains an impenetrable illusion—like the restless, liminal condition of lifelong exile.

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Thanks to several strong supporters who led me to valuable resources, including Sr. Dorothy Jehle and Lynn Guarch-Pardo at the Pedro Pan Archives at Barry University, Rafael de Acha, Mario Ernesto Sánchez, Mario Petrirena, Ernesto Pujol, Pedro Monge-Rafuls, Beatriz Rizk, and the late Elly Chovel.

With this thesis I honor the memory of my loving grandparents Marcelina and

Fernando del Busto, who bravely sent their children from Havana to Miami ahead of themselves in 1961. I extend special love and thanks to my mother Marta Elena del Busto, who exposed me to her plight as part of Operation Pedro Pan from the time I was a child. If I count my attentive listening to her insightful recollections, I have been researching this project all of my life.

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INTRODUCTION

I compose this study as the daughter and the niece of three Pedro Pan children. On 15 November 1961, my mother, Marta Elena del Busto, at the age of 13, became guardian to her younger sister María Cristina as they flew away from their home in la Habana to live parentless in Miami.[1] Their migration followed that of their older brother, Fernando, by only two months.[2] My mother, my aunt, my uncle, and 14,045 other unaccompanied minors were the children of Operation Pedro Pan.

From 1961 to 1962, years marked by the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 14,048 unaccompanied children took flight from Cuba to the United States, establishing the largest recorded exodus in the Western Hemisphere. Fearing that the revolution would "devour their children," parents deprived of *patria potestad*—a term approximating "custody" in English while situating curiously between "parent" and "country" in Spanish—chose this desperate alternative to the isolation, indoctrination, and labor assignments that faced the post-revolutionary nation's youth.[3] Conceived by Father Bryan Walsh, director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau of Miami, Operation Pedro

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[1] Jorge "George" Guarch and Monsignor Bryan Walsh, Official Airport Log, Pedro Pan Archives, Monsignor William Barry Memorial Library, Barry University, Miami Shores, FL, log date 15 November 1961.

[2] Ibid., log date 14 September 1961.

[3] News that the new government might strip parents of patria potestad, or parental authority, became the primary motive for the formation and continuation of Operation Pedro Pan. For more on patria potestad in relationship to the Pedro Pan exodus see Román de la Campa, *Cuba on My Mind: Journeys to a Severed Nation* (London: Verso, 2000), 37; Yvonne M. Conde, *Operation Pedro Pan: The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 16-20; Silvia Pedraza, *Political Disaffection in Cuba's Revolution and Exodus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 81.

Pan ensured prompt, safe migration and guaranteed lodging conditions for an urgent child exodus that had already begun. After assisting one desperate child, Pedro, who had arrived alone from Cuba to search for relatives in the U.S., Father Walsh created the underground program with funds from President Eisenhower. The Department of State cooperated by waiving visa requirements for all Cuban children.

The young diaspora of Operation Pedro Pan turned simultaneously from their parents and their patria to occupy places in camps and foster homes in various parts of the U.S. Many located relatives or reunited with mothers and fathers, though sometimes not for months or years. Nearly all of these children believed that their displacement was temporary and that they would return to Cuba, resisting the hybrid identity that would develop into a new hyphenated cultural category of "Cuban-American." Separated from their country in a boundless wait for return, the displaced children's feelings are encapsulated by a popular Latin American nursery rhyme "La manzana perdida" (The Lost Apple). "La manzana perdida" serves as a kind of emblem for the exodus, providing the title for one PBS documentary about the Operation as well as for a book by political scientist and Pedro Pan María de los Angeles Torres.[4] The nursery rhyme begins by posing a question that is subsequently answered but never solved:

> Señora Santana, ¿por qué llora el nino?
> Por una manzana que se ha perdido.
> Yo le daré una, yo le daré dos; una para el niño, y otra para vos.
> Yo no quiero una; yo no quiero dos. Yo quiero la mía, la que se perdió.
>
> Señora Santana, why is the boy crying?

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[4] David Suskind, director, *The Lost Apple/La Manzana Perdida*, Paramount, USIA, 1962; María de los Angeles Torres, *The Lost Apple: Operation Pedro Pan, Cuban Children in the U.S., and the Promise of a Better Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

> Because he has lost an apple.
> I will give him one. I will give him two. One for him and another for you
> I don't want one; I don't want two. I want mine, the one that I lost.[5]

This vivid image of a lost, irrecoverable possession stalls both the child and the narrative's progression as they resist resolution. The quality becomes a trend that persists forty-five years later, characterizing the Operation through a body of performance and dramatic literature by and about a nation's lost children—exiles still longing for Cuba from the other side of the straits. Irresolution marks characters, dramatic structures, concerts, sculptural installations, and performance art. This dissertation will examine the work created by artists about those flights, revealing performance as a therapeutic strategy taken on by these exiles in attempting to resolve the displaced child self.

A unique brand of Cuban exile, the young travelers of Operation Pedro Pan were stalled in two forced transitions. First, newly situated between Cuba and the U.S., they remained anxious and frozen in a "state of limbo and uncertainty while waiting for their parents."[6] Secondly, these child exiles—many of whom were already poised between youth and adulthood—accelerated their own maturity, transformed at once into independent guardians in order to manage their displacement. Pedro Pan exiles divide further the one-and-a-half or "1.5 generation" of Cuban-Americans.[7] Pérez Firmat insists

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[5] The lyrics of this popular lullaby vary slightly across multiple sources, including María de los Angeles Torres's *The Lost Apple* and Coro Corolillo's recording in *Cuban Lullaby* (Roslyn, NY: Ellipsis Arts, 2000). This version was translated by Marta Elena del Busto.

[6] Hedy Weiss, "Growing Up with Pedro Pan: an interview with Nilo Cruz." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 17 November 2005.

[7] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994). Firmat uses "1.5ers" or "one and a halfers" throughout the text to refer to all child immigrants from Cuba whose parents are considered first generation Cuban-Americans.

that the process of acculturation forces them to collect "Americaness" into a significant developmental stage, re-marking the transition made from child to adult. Stressing the bicultural quality of 1.5ers, Pérez Firmat sees the hyphen in "Cuban-American" as a seesaw enabling the freedom to choose between national identities—such exiles who seem to teeter precariously without equilibrium are "equil-libre," equally free to identify with former (Cuban youth) and acquired (U.S. adulthood) designations.[8] The disrupted lives of the Pedro Pan children,[9] however, establish the abrupt departure from Cuba as a lurch that becomes the fulcrum in a fantastic biculturation.

To always remain "other" in both the exile country and the home country, having two "births" and "selves," expands notions of a biculturality that merely straddles nations. The dramatic work produced by Pedro Pans spans a spectrum of strategies, performing across nations, ethnicities, and identities. Beyond the condition of lifelong exile experienced by many other immigrants, Pedro Pans express feeling their lives have been forever interrupted, with childhood essence lost. "We became adults very quickly. The child stayed in Cuba," insists Pedro Pan Lillian Mirabal Méndez.[10] Josefina Santiago takes this sentiment one step further in describing her own transformation after being sent by parents who later arrived in the U.S.: "To this day I resent being a parent to my parents…[When they arrived] part of me said, ‘this is absolutely not fair, you weren’t

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[8] Ibid., 7.

[9] To refer to the children of Operation Pedro Pan as "Pedro Pans" is the most common way of designating these young exiles; the term is used among the group as a way of identifying as well as by most historians.

[10] John Dorschner, "The Pedro Pan Generation," *CubaNet*, 22 September 2003, http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y03/sep03/22e6.htm, accessed 5 July 2007.

there when I needed you, and I have to be there when you need me!'"[11] Many children have struggled in vain to recover not only Cuba, but also childhood, the parents from whom they were separated, and finally the agency of which they were deprived in formulating such a drastic departure. Because they enacted their own migrations without initiating them, these unaccompanied 1.5-generation immigrants constitute a very particular class of "second actors," or deuteragonists, as defined by Rubén D. Rumbaut and his son Rubén G. Rumbaut in *The Dispossessed*:

> To the parent generation, as the protagonists (from the Greek *protos* and *agonistes*, meaning "first-actors") in the decision to leave, going into exile is a crucial act of self definition…, but to the generation of their children, deuteragonists (from *deuteros* and *agonistes*, "second actors") in this drama, exile…represents a discontinuity with one's origins, …an inherited circumstance.[12]

The deuteragonist status of the Pedro Pan children is compounded by the fact that these actors became orphans once they reached U.S. soil. Overwhelmed by forced, unexpected transformations into "adults" and "Americans," their childhood selves remain unresolved until they are able to reflect back on their circumstances from vantage points of full agency. The past becomes reanimated in dialogue with the present, as grown exiles question the decision they could not make for themselves, or wonder what they might have become if they had been allowed to remain in their homeland. Different from the popular breed of nostalgia that characterizes Cuban exiles as congealed in their lost

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[11] Conde, 187-88.

[12] Rubén D. Rumbaut and Rubén G. Rumbaut,"Self and Circumstance: Journeys and Visions of Exile," in Peter Issac Rose, *The Dispossessed: An Anatomy of Exile* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 340.

country's culture, stuck in the "still life of exile"[13] or "*cultura congelada*,"[14] Pedro Pans remain frozen in a state of migration, forever in flight.

Plays and performances by Pedro Pans utilize this conflict as a dramatic tension, delineating fragmented, searching, disconnected characters and unresolved narratives. Settings refuse static locales, shifting between, or taking place in liminal or labyrinthine spaces defying any circumscribed locus; they are landless, *desterrado*, like their wandering inhabitants. It has become common for work by Pedro Pans to produce autobiographical characters that, "unfinished," attempt to recover lost spaces and time from a vanished adolescence.

Restaging an already dramatic exodus becomes a means of resolving the unresolvable, working it out, solving the frozen state, recovering childhoods and years lost. The grown children gaze back into the "silverless mirror" of the *pecera*—the fishbowl-type configuration of the zone in José Martí International airport through which the children and parents stared into indeterminate pasts and futures just before flight.[15] In retelling their departures, grown exiles commonly cite the pecera as a powerful demarcation between past and present, youth and adulthood, Cuba and the U.S. Pedro Pan alumnus Tony Arias recounts: "You see your mother across the glass for 10 hours. You put your hands on one side of the glass and she puts hers on the other, and that's all

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[13] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Next Year in Cuba* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1997), 53. The concept and the book's title cite the popular Cuban-American toast "El año que viene estamos en Cuba" [Next year we will be in Cuba].

[14] María de los Angeles Torres. *By Heart/de Memoria: Cuban Women's Journeys In & Out of Exile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 112.

[15] Conde, xiv.

you can do. I was only 12. You feel that your parents don't love you, and you don't know what's going to happen. I still struggle with the memory."[16] Ileana Fuentes represents the *pecera* as a lens through which she last glanced at her lost childhood, which she personifies as a distant mourner:

> As I boarded the plane that would take me to Miami, I looked back one last time. Unknowingly, I caught a final glimpse of my childhood. It stood there, inside the airport behind glass partitions, staring at me through the eyes of my mother, my aunt, and my godmother, kerchief in hand, like them…dressed in black from head to toe, like them…in mourning, not just for my grandmother, who had died a month before, but for its own death on that October morning.[17]

The vivid image of the pecera has been invoked as a symbolic memory and metaphor for the bisected world of Pedro Pans. A powerful motif in staging the exodus, it also features prominently in testimonies by children in Yvonne Conde's *Operation Pedro Pan*, is elaborated by Carlos Eire in his National Book Award-winning novel *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, and is underscored by Guillermo Vicente Vidal in his personal chronicle *Boxing for Cuba*. Signifiers of the pecera can be located throughout the artwork of sculptor Mario Petrirena, who uses glass as a signature material in response to painful recollections of the partition as a "point of no return" marking the separation between himself and his parents and homeland.[18] A scene played across the pecera also forms a

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[16] Tonia Arias, "Thank You, Pedro Pan: How Tony Arias Left Castro's Cuba and Built a New Life," *Business Week*, 19 September 2005, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_38/b3951454.htm, accessed 22 March 2009. Tony Arias is the founder of NCG Medical Systems.

[17] Ileana Fuentes,"Retrato de Wendy, a los cincuenta, con ajustador," in Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 61.

[18] Catherine Fox, "Cuban Exile Delves Deeply Into Emotions," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 13 June 2004, M1. A certain intertextuality is also at work here, as Mario Petrirena notes first being able to articulate his use of glass in relationship to the pecera after reading Eire's description of the"fishbowl" partition in *Waiting for Snow in Havana* (London: Scribner, 2003).

poignant part of the narrative in playwright Eduardo Machado's food memoir, *Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile's Hunger for Home*, and is dramatized in the action of three prominent plays about the exodus: Mario Ernesto Sánchez's *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan*, Melinda López's *Sonia Flew*, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*.

López and Cruz are informed as close cousins of those who flew as part of the Operation, while dramatists Machado and Sánchez, as former Pedro Pan children, both compose autobiographical plays. Machado's *Havana is Waiting*, which premiered in 2000, and his *Kissing Fidel*, staged in 2004, are the two plays from his extensive oeuvre that deal overtly with Pedro Pan. Sánchez's *Matecumbe* predates *Havana is Waiting* by five years, while Pedro Monge Rafuls's 1994 *Lágrimas del alma* [Tears of the Soul], a very short play about the exodus (later made into a short film by Mario García Joya),[19] marks the first formal dramatic literary work relating to Operation Pedro Pan. Monge Rafuls was preceded by two Pedro Pan exiles who were the first to stage the exodus for public exhibition: performance artist Ana Mendieta, who began working in the 70s, and María Brito, whose sculptural installations soon followed. Their work inspired more sculptural stagings of Pedro Pan, including Ernesto Pujol's *Los hijos de Pedro Pan*, exhibited in Cuba in 1995 and dedicated to Mendieta, who had died a decade before. Petrirena began exhibiting in the 80s, and still creates work inspired by his experiences as

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[19] Mario García Joya, dir., *Lágrimas del Alma* by Pedro Monge Rafuls, 2000. Archived by Yvonne López Arenal at http://yvolare.blogspot.com/2008/05/un-proyecto-inconcluso-las-lgrimas-del.html, accessed 22 March 2009. During the Pedro Pan exodus, Pedro Monge Rafúls employed by the Catholic Diocese of Colombia and sent to Miami to see his brother was a Pedro Pan. He behaved as a substitute instructor for Pedro Pan children and traveled from camp to camp as needed. Personal interview with Pedro Monge Rafúls, 8 December 2008.

an unaccompanied exile.

Though Mendieta's ceremonial sculptures establish the earliest recognized performances referring to the Pedro Pan exodus, and plays have been scripted from the mid 90s, public stagings of the exodus and its effects have remained a fundamental practice of the exile group from its inception to the present. The events leading to the covert organization of the flights are often narrated in theatrical terms: María de los Angeles Torres describes how Monsignor Walsh was the "principal actor" in resettling the Pedro Pans, how the "parents were able to stage such a dramatic exodus," and the "role" the government took as "struggles were played out through the children."[20] From the children's first arrival at the camps, nighttime variety shows served as a way for nostalgic Pedro Pans to stage devotion to their pasts, reciting poems or performing music from their lost homeland.[21] Today, some of these adult Pedro Pans have reassembled to form a corporation, and on its official website (www.pedropan.org) childlike, animated images of Pedro Pan singers Marisela Verena, Carlos Oliva, Willy Chirino and Lissette Álvarez "perform" songs written about and dedicated to the exodus. An adult community of Pedro Pans, collected as Operation Pedro Pan Inc., struggles to preserve the names of all who flew unaccompanied, forging an exclusive community within a larger exilic space long supplanting "La Nación."[22] Photos, clothes, objects, and props relating to the

[20] de los Angeles Torres, *The Lost Apple*, 4.

[21] In *Fleeing Castro: Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children's Program*, Víctor Andrés Triay mentions that children put on shows inside tents at Florida City (University Press of Florida, 1998), 62. David Susskind's film *La Manzana Perdida* captured the camps' premier performer Dulce María Sosa singing a patriotic *guajira*; as an adult, she has reprised the song in Miami and Cuba (www.candisosa.com).

[22] Cuban exile communities as replacement nations are discussed in Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 85.

Operation have been exhibited at events like Miami's annual CubaNostalgia celebration, where informational cards are circulated in search of other Pedro Pans. Documents and testimonies have been collected to assemble an "official history," preserved at the Official Pedro Pan Archives at Barry University and, beginning in 2005, at the National Archives in Washington. Though the exiles remain without their home, personalized accounts and fetishized objects associated with their migration have taken up permanent residence.

The largely unknown Pedro Pan exodus has inspired several recent histories, including Víctor Andrés Triay's *Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children's Program* (1999), Yvonne M. Conde's *Operation Pedro Pan: The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children* (2000), Kathlyn Gay's *Leaving Cuba: From Operation Pedro Pan to Elian* (2000), and María de los Angeles Torres's *The Lost Apple: Operation Pedro Pan, Cuban Children in the U.S., and the Promise of a Better Future* (2004). Though they serve to inform a general readership alongside contemporaneous memoirs like *Waiting for Snow in Havana* (2003) and *Boxing for Cuba* (2007), these accounts primarily attempt to reconstruct objective facts of the Operation, in many cases also evaluating the ethical practices of involved parties—parents, governments, the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and foster homes. Conde and de los Angeles Torres are both alumnae of Operation Pedro Pan, making their studies primary material as much as they are histories. They attempt to relate factual summations of the exodus, though many government documents remain unavailable to researchers. The most thorough study continues as the primary project of de los Angeles Torres, a professor of Political Science at DePaul

University, who has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court after being denied access to many government records.

These written histories seldom focus on the performances that have been generated by and about the Operation. Most performances have been deliberately excluded from the "history" recorded by Operation Pedro Pan, Inc., the official Pedro Pan Archive at Barry University, and the National Archive in Washington, D.C. Though a section of www.pedropan.org remains reserved for films and plays relating to the exodus, it fails to acknowledge any work with a potential of bringing controversy to the Operation's efforts or jeopardizing funding to the charity. Such omissions limit representations of Pedro Pans and function in much the same way as do restrictive stereotypes, translated into a cultural imaginary as one solid group with a singular motive and perspective. My focus on Pedro Pans works to expose a variety of dramatic interpretations in response to a common migration, and also to help to disunify the vast groups of Cuban exiles—separated by years, class, motivations, and circumstances—who are often homogenized by such stereotypes.

The 2004 *Earth Body* exhibition, curated by Olga Viso, along with published volumes by Viso, Jane Blocker, Robert Katz, Donald Kuspit, and Gloria Moure, render Ana Mendieta the most visible among Pedro Pan artists, but none focuses closely on her experiences as a Pedro Pan exile beyond a few anecdotal accounts of the circumstances surrounding her migration from Cuba. Most of the articles that have been published on Machado, Sánchez, Brito, and Chirino mention the artists' migrations on the Pedro Pan flights, but there has been no involved study investigating this body of work as an

explicit product of that exodus. Published material on Cruz's *Hortensia* and Lopez's *Sonia Flew* is restricted to production reviews, all of which include brief histories of Operation Pedro Pan that function to inform audiences about the plays' context. Reading the creative work produced after Pedro Pan through theories of exile and alongside histories that have attempted to record the facts of the Operation, this dissertation will expose the powerful overlay that each chronicle makes with the others, revealing performance as a coping strategy, a medium for recovering lost land and life.

The plays, playwrights, and performers to be investigated remember a childhood in order to re-member it, recovering what has been lost through dramatizations of a recollected Cuba. Migrating cultural traditions—childhood songs re-performed, ritual practices re-scripted, and dialogue evolved from rhythmic Spanish syntax suffused with English—characterize a resistant hybrid identity born from deterritorialization: displaced, postmodern Cuban-American selves formulated while continually stalled in a once-transitory state of interruption.

The main chapters of this study draw relationships between pairs of representative figures who have given significant voice to this exodus through performance. Ana Mendieta and María Brito represent how Pedro Pans have brought their experiences to life through installation and performance art; Mario Ernesto Sánchez and Eduardo Machado are Pedro Pans who have composed strongly autobiographical full-length plays about Operation Pedro Pan; and Melinda López and Nilo Cruz have reached many national and international audiences through multiple productions of their plays written in response to relatives and others who are veterans of the exodus. These case studies omit

some artists whose works perform other interpretations of Operation, including recording artists Willy Chirino, Lissette Alvarez, Marisela Verena and Carlos Oliva; sculptors Mario Petrirena and Ernesto Pujol; and playwright Pedro Monge Rafuls. A brief discussion of work by these artists will introduce how the exodus has been interpreted across a variety of performance mediums.

Over the last three decades, Pedro Pan exile Willy Chirino has performed concerts dedicated to reclaiming his lost country. Chirino's interrupted childhood fuels his compositions: "It was a huge impact [sic] to leave my friends, my family, my history behind, but it was never traumatic because I thought of [exile] as a passing issue."[23] With songs like "Nuestro día ya viene llegando" [Our Day is Coming] and "Cubanismo," Chirino performs "the emotions of a Cuban who was unable to see his country, but still, with faith in human justice, expects to reclaim."[24] In "Nuestro día…" he sings of a suitcase containing certain intangibles: "En la maleta traje un colibrí, un libro de Martí / un sueño y un danzón / vino Beny Moré de polizón" [In a suitcase I brought a hummingbird, a book by Martí, a dream and a danzón, Beny Moré came stowed away].[25] The lyrics allude obliquely to the limited number of articles Cuban exiles were permitted to pack, and to the abstract *Cubanía* [sense of Cuban identity] that served to provide orphaned Pedro Pans with some continuity of self. Pérez Firmat notes that "[t]he speaker of Chirino's song inhabits, or would like to inhabit, a Cuba of the mind, a fantasy island

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[23] Willy Chirino,"Biography," www.willychirino.com, accessed 16 May 2007.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Willy Chirino,"Nuestro día ya viene llegando," *Cubanismo* DVD, Sony BMG, 2005.

untouched by time or memory."[26] Videos created for songs on his *Cubanismo* album superimpose Chirino against animated cartoon backgrounds featuring popular Cuban landmarks as they might have "decayed" during the dictatorship. Live performances enliven nostalgic

Willy Chirino performs "Nuestro día ya viene llegando" at a 1994 benefit concert for Cuban balseros [rafters] in Panamá. Video still from *Cubanismo* with permission from Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

audiences with rallying spoken interludes, chants of "Cuba Libre," and cheers when the singer adds a costume prop like a cap sporting the message "Adiós, Fidel." Chirino sometimes quotes the past through projected images during his concerts (including footage of the Pedro Pan flights), situating these events in an imagined, collective space between the enclave community and the "homeland" Cuban exiles "lack," "usurped and distant from free souls."[27] In this liminal space where vivid documents perform, audiences cope with their own—or vicariously experience others'—exile through a

[26] Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 8.

[27] Chirino,"Nuestro día ya viene llegando."

ritualistic sensation similar to Victor Turner's description of *spontaneous communitas*, a transient spirit of togetherness.[28]

Chirino's voice exclaims in youthful dedication on Operation Pedro Pan Incorporated's official website as he joins his wife, Lissette Álvarez, and two other singers from the exodus, Marisela Verena and Carlos Oliva, to deliver a campy medley entitled "Popurrí Pedro Pan." The exiles sing songs popular during the period of their encampment, including "Conga del Campamento" [Conga from the Camp], which they composed as children. The excerpted songs anticipate a "Cuba Libre" and are drawn from an album created to benefit Catholic Charities in assisting present-day refugee families with children. Another multimedia musical feature on pedropan.org includes a link to the voice of one young exile (Dulce María "Candi" Sosa) belting out a desperate, devotional anthem to Cuba in the Miami camps in 1962. Sosa's voice proves deep, profound, and resonant when compared with her young body; it is the voice for all Pedro Pan children who were suddenly forced into adulthood. The track is lifted from Susskind's *The Lost Apple* documentary and is situated on the site near the juvenile medley track sung by the group of adult recording artists. While Sosa's vocal technique suggests an adult soloist, Oliva's, Verena's, Chirno's, and Alvarez's adult countenances—which peer from an album cover image featuring a school bus driven by Monsignor Walsh—belie their childlike chants.[29] The juxtaposition illustrates the fluid exchange taking place between past and present selves who cope through a series of

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[28]Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1981), 47.

[29] The album cover image was drawn by a young balsero [rafter], Daniel Bussot Prieto.

stagings and abide by no logical chronology during this long period of exile.

Images featured on the official website for Operation Pedro Pan, Incorporated (www.pedropan.org). Left: Candi Sosa sings a devotional song to Cuba in David Susskind's 1962 documentary *The Lost Apple*. Right: Marisela Verena, Lisette Alvarez, Willy Chirno, and Carlos Oliva "ride" a schoolbus driven by Monsignor Walsh on the album cover for *Popurri Pedro Pan*.

Mario Petrirena's 1993 installation, *Once Upon a Time…a long, long time ago*, also transcends order and distance as he substitutes his son for himself in order to make the his parents' decision to send him to the U.S. palpable through the sculptural medium. "When my son Gregory was born," Petrirena reveals, "I started seeing my parents in a new light."[30] He remains conflicted when considering his roles as son and parent: "I know somehow it was the right thing…[b]ut I just couldn't do it to my child."[31] The sculptor came with his two sisters just before the Operation ended in 1962, and is still unable to speak about the experience to his older sister, who shouldered much responsibility for the siblings.

The title *Once Upon a Time…* suggests that Petrirena is relating his story to his

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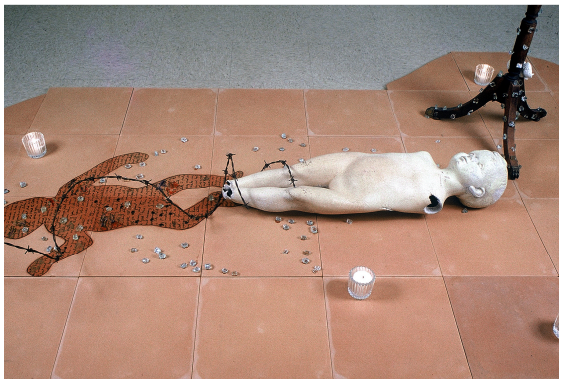
[30] Mario Petrirena, "Artist's Statement," in Barbara Anderson Hill, Curator, *Remnants: Installations by Five Cuban American Artists* exhibition catalogue (Clearwater, FL: Shillard Smith Gallery, Florida Gulf Coast Arts Center, 1993), n.p.

[31] Petrirena qtd. in Anne Rochell,"Childhood Lost," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 21 February 1993, A11.

son, whose shadowed outline forms a small silhouette on the floor. A three-dimensional figure of a child conjoins with the silhouette. It is nearly limbless, surrounded by shards of glass signifying tears and the pecera, and emits from its truncated form an angry coil of barbed wire. Six votive candles illuminate the scene, each in devotion to one of the six children in the artist's family. A pedestal birdcage contains a first communion missal, passport, and other relics from Petrirena's 8 year old self, a shrine to the arrested stage during which his migration took place. The young self represented in the installation is wounded and incomplete. The artist insists that the process of creating such assemblages is cathartic: "I revisit things to heal. I do it for myself."[32] It is a "final letting go."[33] As an artist and father, he transforms himself from deuteragonist to protagonist, and this catharsis is also absorbed as a doctrine for his matured self, when he prohibits such detachment from his own son and reassures him of their constant communion.



The adjoining child figures at the foot of the pedestal birdcage in Mario Petrirena's *Once Upon a Time….* Photo courtesy of the artist.

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[32] Petrirena qtd. in Ana Fernández, curator, *Conversations: Past and Present* (Atlanta: 12th Annual Masters Series, City of Cultural Affairs, City Gallery East, January 2006), n.p.

[33] Petrirena qtd. in Gudmund Vigtel, *Southern Expressions: A Sense of Self* exhibition catalogue (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1988), 26.

While work like Petrirena's passes on a legacy to Cuban-American offspring, other artwork performs the perpetual absence of these children on the island. The 1995 installation series *Los hijos de Pedro Pan* [The Children of Peter Pan] was created by Ernesto Pujol and exhibited in the galleries of La Casa de las Américas in Havana. Sponsored by the National Union of Artists and Writers and the Cuban Ministry of Culture, Pujol's installation was dedicated in part to Pedro Pan artist Ana Mendieta, who had died a decade before.[34] After the revolution, Mendieta had been the first Cuban artist living abroad to exhibit on the island. With *Los hijos de Pedro Pan*, Ernesto Pujol became the second. Though the installations were created mostly from borrowed rations and donations, their exhibition was elaborate and occupied several rooms.

Los hijos de Pedro Pan brought sensations from the child exodus to life for many Cuban spectators. Child-sized furniture and garments are arranged throughout, surrogate representations of lost identities and possessions. A crib rests beneath a canopy fashioned from a white baptismal dress. "Adiós" [Goodbye] is scrawled repeatedly on a tiny blackboard above a pulverized heap of chalk. A clothesline drips suds onto the floor in the shape of the Cuban island. Residing on a carpet of uncooked peas drawn together from portions borrowed and returned to local families, a pair of backless armoires connects to create a progression of doors and personal articles. Nine rocking chairs—each one formal and traditional in aesthetic, but child-sized—are assembled on a bed of fragrant sugar cane shaft. The center of each small seat is occupied by a clay mold in the

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[34] Ernesto Pujol,"Los Hijos de Pedro Pan," Official Website of Ernesto Pujol, www.ernestopujol.com, accessed 10 March 2009.

shape of a pre-pubescent penis. The rocking-chair sequence most vividly summarizes the exhibit's compelling commentary: the gendered organs suggest that a juvenile patriarchy has replaced the ruling fathers of their households, and those elders of the country they have escaped. The marked absence of adult possessions denotes a colony of children left to fend for themselves.

One of five installations in *Los Hijos de Pedro Pan* at La Casa de Las Américas gallery in Havana Cuba, 1995. Photo by Ernesto Pujol.

Pedro Monge Rafuls's short play *Lágrimas del alma* goes a step farther by evaluating orphaned children's responses to their parents. Set in 1994 in the Cuban-American community of Union City, New Jersey, Pedro Pan sisters Lourdes and Iraida confront their mother Clara, when she arrives from Cuba for the first time in thirty years. Clara has not seen her daughters since she sent them to live on their own in the U.S. Though the siblings have long been independent, a powerful role reversal takes place as it is Clara who now needs a family and a home. When Clara marvels at how they didn't

even recognize one another at their belated reunion in the airport—an ironic sequel to the girls' Pedro Pan departure—Iraida delivers an expository explosion of resentment:

> Claro, si no nos veías desde que éramos niñas. *(Pausa.)* Desde que tú y papi nos mandaron para acá, solas…para aquellos campamentos de niños sin padres. *(En una crisis inesperada consecuencia de recuerdo.)* Coño, me cago en todo el programa Peter Pan, coño, coño, nadie sabe lo que es estar sola, sin padres, en un país, lejos de todo el mundo, sin entender lo que le decían a una entre gente que abusaban…coño…mami, coño, ¿por qué nos mandaron*? (Emite un sollozo seco. Se calla porque espera una respuesta que sabe que no vendrá, que no le pueden dar y que además, no es necesario obtener.)*
>
> Of course, because you have not seen us since we were girls. *(Pause.)* Since you and dad sent us here, alone…to those camps for children without parents. *(In an unexpected crisis resulting from the memory.)* Fuck, shit on the whole Peter Pan program, fuck, fuck, nobody knows what is to be alone, without parents, in a country, far away from everybody, without understanding what anyone told him and among abusive people…fuck…mom, fuck, why did you send us? *(She emits a dry sob. She silences herself because she expects an answer that she knows will not come, that cannot be given and that is not necessary to obtain.)*[35]

Clara, in turn, invokes pity from her daughters by relating how much she has suffered—not only because of their separation, but also under the oppressive dictatorship—when all she was really trying to do was "quedarme con mis muebles" [to keep my furniture].[36] Finally ready to relinquish her (long nationalized) territory during Cuba's Special Period,[37] she attempts to relocate to the U.S. homes of her estranged daughters, who now have children of their own. Iraida continues to protest, citing the differences while

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[35] Pedro Monge Rafuls, *Lágrimas del alma* (1994), 5. Manuscript, Cuban Theatre Archive, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami, FL. Translation mine.

[36] Ibid., 1.

[37] The"Special Period," originally termed by Fidel Castro, refers to the economic depression that beset Cuba following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the international Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). The"Special Period" continues to the present day.

unwittingly invoking the similarities in their past and present predicaments:

> Siempre, siempre has decidido sin consultarnos a nosotras. Ya no somos unas niñas…¿Por qué no nos preguntaste? No vas a cambiar, tantos años y tantas cosas y sigues pensando en la patria potestad.
>
> You have always, always made decisions without consulting us. We are not girls anymore…Why didn't you ask us? You are not going to change, after so many years and so many things you continue thinking about *patria potesdad*.[38]

When neither Lourdes nor Iraida claim her, Clara assumes that the U.S. government will care for her, as she has heard they do for all "viejos" [old people].[39] Monge Rafuls's critical comparison of U.S. and Cuban governments borders on satire through his tragically humorous characters. Lourdes clarifies that U.S. policies are similar to those of pre-revolutionary Cuba: "Es igual que antes allá antes de todo eso" [It is like it was there before all of that].[40] Each time she encounters a dead end in her plan to remain in the U.S, Clara invokes Cuba's patron saint, la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. Iraida sardonically protests these prayers: "Por favor, no continúes metiendo a la Virgen en esto, que ella sí supo quedarse al lado de su hijo hasta que se murió" [Please, stop bringing the Virgin into this, because she knew to stay with her son until his death].[41] Iraida's resistance is much greater than her sister's, a difference that may be attributed to the fact that she married an offstage *gringo* who may be far less receptive to this situation than Lourdes's husband Mañuel, who echoes his wife's conservative temperament

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[38] Monge Rafuls, 7.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 8.

[41] Ibid., 9.

throughout most of the play's action. *Lágrimas del alma* designs one of the most intense investigations of independence and culpability in relationship to the Pedro Pan exodus. In the context of the already fragile circumstance of exile, Monge Rafuls draws a potent analogy between the vulnerabilities of youth and old age, enabling a reversal that allows the orphaned offspring to replay their parents' roles.

Still from the film version of Pedro Monge Rafuls's play *Lágrimas del alma* directed by Mario García Joya. Thirty years after she sent her daughters through Operation Pedro Pan, Clara finally arrives in the U.S. to find herself at the mercy of her children.

Monge Rafuls's play amplifies strains of resentment that many Pedro Pan children have been reluctant to express toward their protective parents. This current, as René Buch has noted, is crucial to many Pedro Pan dramatizations.[42] Each artist, however, employs distinct dramaturgies to communicate such sentiments.

[42] René Buch qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan* Transcript, Dos Alas Theatre and Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, New York City, 14 April 2008, 27.

This study draws from a large body of theory on the condition of exile in order to investigate tendencies common among Pedro Pans in composing and dramatizing the displaced self. By particularizing the circumstances that define this exile group, an analysis of modes for staging exile will expose distinct and repeated strategies in dramatic structure and characterization unique to these plays and performances. At the same time, differences in attitudes and approaches divide the group and complicate the evolving "history" that Operation Pedro Pan (now "incorporated") seeks to record and preserve. Performing Pedro Pan proves a primary strategy in the lifelong project of resolving the exiled self.

In Chapter 1, "Dwelling Places," I expose the conflicts behind Ana Mendieta's and María Brito's visual portrayals of having been "uprooted" from their childhood homes. The project of searching for roots navigates Mendieta through a multitude of outdoor territories in search of a "superhome," while Brito retreats inside, reproducing childhood domestic spaces from memory. By performing homes where there are none, the artists attempt to resolve the restlessness associated with Lourdes Casal's description of exile as dwelling in "a place in which there is no house in which we were children."[43] As Pedro Pan exiles, the attachments and detachments that Brito and Mendieta demonstrate in response to irrecoverable objects and places recontextualize nostalgic fantasies of the house as an originary dwelling place.[44] Brito's and Mendieta's work also expands Gaston Bachelard's popular concepts of "Topoanalysis" and "Motionless

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[43] Lourdes Casal, Sonia Rivera-Valdés, "Grandmother's Night," in Ruth Behar, ed., *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996), 226.

[44] Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 116.

Childhood." Their installations, site-specific sculptures, and performances travel back, whether they dramatize physical returns to Cuba, or psychic returns produced through surrogate spaces.

Chapter 2, "Neverlands," examines autobiographical stagings by the prolific dramatist Eduardo Machado and producer, director, and playwright Mario Ernesto Sánchez. Machado explicitly invokes the faerie world of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* to convey his circumstances as a "Pedro Pan" exile, while Sánchez's creation of a Hispanic theatre community in Miami's Little Havana has been said to forge a "Neverland" in the already dreamlike, anatopic Cuban enclave. Citations of Neverland enable investigations of exile as a condition of being not only "out of place" but "out of time" as well, as it allows a Pedro Pan exile to transport himself to a place where childhood continues. As Edward Said writes, the exile experiences "simultaneous dimensions," where habits, activities, and expressions in the new environment "occur against the memory of these things in the old environment."[45] This layering of not only past and present, but present with an alternate possible present, banishes the exile not only from place but also from time. Several theorists focusing upon Cuban-American literature, including Isabel Borland and María de los Angeles Torres,[46] note that the Spanish word for exile is much stronger, "desterrado," cooperating with Mendieta's and others' sensations that they have been "unearthed," "uprooted." Józef Wittlin extends the idea of being exiled from place to incorporate an idea of being exiled also from time:

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[45] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 186.

[46] Isabel A. Borland, *Cuban American Literature of Exile: From Person to Persona* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); de los Angeles Torres, *By Heart/de Memoria.*

> In Spanish, there exists a word for describing an exile, the word *destierro*, a man deprived of his land. I take the liberty to forge one more definition, *destiempo*, a man who has been deprived of his time. That means deprived of the time which now passes in his country. The time of his exile is different. Or rather, the exile lives in two different times simultaneously, in the present and in the past.[47]

Wittlin's concept can be grouped with similar descriptions of land and time traversed, such as Said's "contrapuntal"[48] phenomenon: new and old environments occurring in the mind and memory of the exile "contrapuntally" (as when two independent melodies occur together in music). Other approximations of sensations shared across physical and temporal displacements, such as Thomas Tweed's "translocative"[49] or Carlos Eire's "bilocation"[50] (both connoting the exile moving symbolically between homeland and new land) attempt to capture this overlay but fail in elevating location over time. Regarding Pedro Pan exile, *destierro* and *destiempo* prove crucial in examining Machado's and Sánchez's dramatic work, in which both the physical and temporal play various roles in production, representation, and reception.

Said depicts the exile as divided across space and time, as an occupant of a "median state," never being "totally cut off" or achieving a "surgically clean separation"[51] from the homeland. Chapter 3, "Delayed Flights," compares Pedro Pan protagonists in

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[47] Qtd. in Sophia McClennen, *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures* (Purdue University Press, 2004), 58-59.

[48] Said, "Reflections on Exile," 186.

[49] Tweed, 5.

[50] Eire, 385.

[51] Said,"Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals" in the *Edward Said Reader* (Random House, 1993), 370.

playwright Melinda López's *Sonia Flew* and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*. Close examination of Sonia in *Sonia Flew* and siblings Luca and Luciana in *Hortensia* reveals that though the Pedro Pan exile is not "surgically" removed, as is consistent with other exiles, the "Operation" has crippled him. Expanding on exile as both a physical and metaphorical state, Said concretizes emotional qualities through the body on the way to the house: "The intellectual as exile tends to be happy with the idea of unhappiness, so that dissatisfaction bordering on dyspepsia, a kind of curmudgeonly disagreeableness, can become not only a style of thought, but also a new, if temporary, habitation."[52] The liminality of exile becomes not only a permanent, surrogate *tierra* of its own, but manifests corporeally, through detectable symptoms. "My body has stopped recognizing my age," Luca utters in *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, explaining his physical "illness." Sonia is also afflicted, with a "Delayed Grief Syndrome" that causes her to suppress memories of her migration. These characters' neurotic tendencies dramatize a kind of "schizophrenia of exile," the phrase Maida Watson invented to diagnose the bifurcated self established by destierros.[53]

Other analogies have been drawn between Cuban exile and mental or physical illness: María Cristina García observes in her sociological study, *Havana USA*, that the line separating nostalgic obsession and madness can seem thin;[54] Gustavo Pérez Firmat describes destierros as the "walking wounded"; Michael A. Mason declares that many

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[52] Ibid., 373.

[53] Watson, Maida, "The Search for Identity in the Theater of Three Cuban-American Female Dramatists." *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue* 16 (1991): 189.

[54] María Cristina García: *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida 1959-94*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 24.

exiles suffer from a "malady called el gorrión" whose "symptoms" involve yearning for Cuba and intense nostalgia for what has been left behind on the island.[55] Pedro Pan exile Guillermo Vicente Vidal describes how signs of *morriña*, a very intense homesickness, arise when Cuban songs are played away from the homeland.[56] Because longing and nostalgia may manifest psychophysiologically, I will investigate how, in performing Pedro Pan, illnesses pass between the mind and the flesh as they must be dramatized, as exile must be made visible.

This analysis expands Mason's conclusion that some exiles attempt to deal with problems that have no solution by continually "staging" solutions, acting them out, through rituals, and sacrifices, and props.[57] The repetition of qualities, ideas, scenarios, and character names characteristic in work by Pedro Pans demonstrates Isabel A. Borland's theories in *Cuban-American Literature of Exile: from Person to Persona*, in which *persons* translate themselves into *personas* (roles). Pedro Pan artists are often trying to "work things out," attempting catharses through autobiographical stagings to reclaim the crucial agency of which they were deprived as children. Said suggests that exiles—often becoming writers or other artists—compensate for loss by "creating a new world to rule," one that is unnatural and unreal, "fiction."[58] In *Staging Place*, Una

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[55] Pérez-Firmat qtd. in Booher, Bridget, "Living on the Hyphen: Gustavo Pérez Firmat," *Duke Magazine* (Durham: North Carolina: Duke University, 25 March 2008), http://www.dukemagazine.duke.edu/alumni/dm4/hyphen_txt.html, accessed 5 August 2008; M.A. Mason, *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 48.

[56] Vidal, 106.

[57] While Mason's focus is limited to Cuban exiles performing Santería, his theory can be applied to the solutionless problems of exile outlined by Said, de los Angeles Torres, and Pérez Firmat.

[58] Said, "Reflections on Exile," 181.

Chaudhuri suggests that performance offers a way to "occupy spaces without inhabiting them (a solution to the problem of home)." Adding to the exile's pathologies, Chaudhuri argues that performance can "ease symptoms" of what she calls "geopathic disorders, the suffering caused by one's location."[59] This dissertation reads performances by Pedro Pans as working in these ways, as simulations, stagings of lost tierra y tiempo, and as scenarios given *un escenario*—a stage—a medium to recover what is irrecoverable and to resolve the unresolved.

"Exiles are cut off from their roots," Said explains, and "feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives."[60] While it may be characteristic of exiles to search for "roots," Pedro Pan exiles were cut off not only from *the* beginning, the homeland, but at *their* beginning. The performances investigated here emphasize more than one origin, as the exiles were uprooted from their terrain during a germinal stage of growth. The moment at which they are "frozen" offers more future than past, leaving this young immigrant generation—suddenly propelled into adulthood—with the crisis of reconstructing a self that had only begun to be composed.

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[59] Chaudhuri, 57-58.

[60] "Reflections on Exile," 177.

Chapter 1: DWELLING PLACES
Ana Mendieta and María Brito

"If you are a Cuban, you are a Cuban," insists Jorge Santis, curator of the 1998 show *Breaking Barriers: Contemporary Cuban Art* originating at the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale. *Breaking Barriers* united 91 artists—including Pedro Pan exiles Ana Mendieta and María Brito—in one exhibition with the conviction that "We are all brothers, whether we've grown up under Castro or in exile."[1] Such an idea of community among Cuban exiles is often misinterpreted as a broad uniformity, a lumping together of individualities into an imagined and flattened identity. Exhibits like *Breaking Barriers* reveal many visions of exile, suggesting that there are as many perspectives of Cuban exile as there are Cuban exiles. Each exile also has many stories to tell and, further, many ways of telling each story. Though speaking together, unified by a passionate desire to articulate "Cuban exile," in the *Breaking Barriers* exhibit there were more than 91 stories. Critic Gary Schwan of the *Palm Beach Post* observed of *Breaking Barriers* that "[t]he idea of Cuba is everywhere - a Cuba sanctified, a Cuba wholly pieced together in the imagination, or from the tales of old men, or"—referencing sculptor María Brito's work—"from the memories of childhood." Schwan goes on to characterize Brito's unique constructions as ones that "contain the stuff of adult doll houses."[2] The comment distinguishes Brito's sculpture as relating a particular exile perspective, one that has come

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[1] Joanne Milani, "Cuban style: For These Artists in Exile, the Homeland is in Their Hearts and in Their Art." *The Tampa Tribune*, Bay Life Section, 11 September 1998, 1.

[2] Gary Schwan, "Cuban Art Not as Political as You May Think," *Palm Beach Post*, Arts and Entertainment section, 9 November 1997, 1J.

to be communicated though adult hands, but began with her immigration as an unaccompanied child exile in 1961. Ana Mendieta, whose photographs contributed to *Breaking Barriers* evidence of her remote outdoor performances, arrived on another flight the following year, in 1962.

Both Mendieta and Brito have expressed feeling "uprooted" from their childhood homes—yet they credit being sent to the U.S. from Cuba on Operation Pedro Pan as the single most significant transition responsible for their lifelong careers as artists. Through their work, they have sought to exteriorize the persistent anxiety that came with the displacement they experienced during childhood, making their exile tangible and visible in sculptural performances of home. Mendieta, known for her earthworks involving ritual performances, refused man-made interiors in her bereavement of home, dwelling instead in the Earth's secure terrain. Brito creates indoor installations, duplicating domestic details from layered memories of dwellings from both past and present. Brito's intricate interiors stand in stark contrast to Mendieta's organic outdoor settings. These artists demonstrate the exile's persistent "fantasy of home as originary space,"[3] as expressed by Una Chaudhuri, and develop sentiments verbalized by Lourdes Casal, who describes exile as "a place in which there is no house in which we were children."[4] Because childhood was still in progress when they were sent away on Operation Pedro Pan, sensations of unfinished business surround the lost homes that usually establish firm memorial foundations for exiles. This chapter reveals how Mendieta and Brito fashion

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[3] Lourdes Casal, Sonia Rivera-Valdés, "Grandmother's Night," in Ruth Behar, ed., *Bridges to Cuba/Puentes a Cuba* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996), 226.

[4] Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 116.

surrogate dwelling places through installations and site-specific rituals, performing impossible homecomings to this interrupted youth.

Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), Operation Pedro Pan 1961.

Few spectators have actually seen the live performance art of Ana Mendieta, though many have inspected the burnt armatures of her effigies or photographs of her anthropomorphic stone assemblages and muddy depressions in the earth—narrative relics from outdoor performances typically revived in awkward exhibition against the clean white walls of a gallery. The documents are performative, extending past their fixed image to emphasize liminality over location, transformation over constancy. Mendieta's performances situate "in-between" to construct the condition of exile for the spectator, who—navigating through artifacts of her performances in the gallery—finds him or herself re-performing her myths in the place of her absent figure.

The vacant spaces in Mendieta's work, frequently shaped by her own body, give presence to the loss Mendieta felt as an exile. Mendieta's ever-present absence survives through documents and earth transformed after each site-specific performance—persisting even after her death. Coco Fusco describes photographs of Mendieta's performance work as "bearing a sense of an 'after life' lived out through the appearance of the image."[5] Even Mendieta's live and public gallery performances hinged on her absence. Nancy Spero recalls that in creating *Body Tracks* the artist slid her arms with red paint down a wall canvas to a soundtrack of "Cuban Music"[6] before leaving the

[5] Coco Fusco, *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas* (London: Routledge, 2000), 147.

[6] Nancy Spero interviewed in Nereyda Garcia-Ferraz, Kate Horsfield, and Branda Miller, producers, *Fuego de Tierra* videorecording (New York: Women Make Movies, 1987). While the precise musical soundtrack is not documented from this performance, it is likely that the "Cuban Music" that Spero remembers was heavily percussive, like the traditional accompaniment of a Santerían *toque*.

stained canvas to be accompanied by the soundtrack's lingering beats. Like the photographs of her private site-specific performances, the canvas re-performs her presence by marking her dramatic absence.

The artist customarily exited from still-active scenes, suggesting that her engagement, like her Cuban identity, had only been momentarily suspended. "Mendieta's was a *cubanía* of interruption," José Quiroga declares, comparing the artist's "cuban-ness" to "a sentence left in mid-phrase, a chapter left uncompleted, a book half read."[7] Mendieta was 12 when she left Havana on a 1961 Operation Pedro Pan flight. Like many other Pedro Pan children, she and her sister Raquelín thought they would only be separated from their family briefly before reuniting. However, this "temporary" phase required the girls to transform into not only "Americans" but also "adults" in order to survive five years alone in the U.S. This transitional period was marked with scars that would later make it impossible to return home. Their departure produced visual scenes of rupture, reflection, and flight that would resurface as salient images in Mendieta's artwork. Beginning on the day she left home, the agony of orphanhood collided with the thrill of liberty for Mendieta, creating a dialectic of sensations between which she could vacillate to constantly regenerate her performances. Mendieta's sister describes how the ninety-mile journey fashioned a fantastic escape from the misery that bookended the trip:

> Once we were on the airplane it didn't seem as bad. Somehow there were kids in there and everybody was singing songs and seemed excited you didn't think about leaving this behind but only the adventure that was coming up. But as soon as you got there—reality sort of hit you. That excitement faded and all of a sudden here you were: kids with no family in a country where you didn't know anybody, didn't know the language...you

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[7] José Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 176.

didn’t know anything.[8]

The extreme brevity of the flight over the Florida Straits only served to emphasize the radical whiplash of their sudden and violent departure from family, country, and youth. In just moments, the children were orphaned from all that constituted home. Moments after crying at their parents on the other side of the *pecera*, or the fishbowl-shaped partition in La Habana's José Martí airport, they were munching Hershey bars and shouting "¡*Somos libres*!" on the plane. Mendieta deplaned and kissed the tarmac to commune with her new free home.[9] The kiss was the first performance of many in which the ground would stand in for a universal home, and a return to which signified rebirth.

Mendieta soon stopped rejoicing, but never stopped questioning why she had been sent away. A decade after this departure, Mendieta would perform *Untitled (Facial Hair Transplants)*, in which she would transform into the very image of the new government against whom she had been protected through the exodus. *Facial Hair Transplants* left her countenance resembling what Quiroga notes is a *barbuda*, or bearded revolutionary.[10] Raquel Oti Mendieta recalls why she sent her daughters via Operation Pedro Pan: "We didn’t want our children to live in a communist country and lose their faith in God." She would always remember 11 September 1961 as the date her children departed—"I don’t think I have ever cried more than that day in my whole life."[11] Through *Facial Hair Transplants*, Mendieta believed that she was transferring not only a "beard," but also the "strength" it contained—a remark that recalls the extreme power the uniformed, unshorn

[8] Raquelín Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[9] Robert Katz, *Naked by the Window* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 47.

[10] Quiroga, 174.

[11] Mother Raquel Oti Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

barbudos held over the country and the family.[12] Mendieta's father had served a significant role in the struggle against Fulgencio Batista, and continued to support the revolution until Fidel Castro declared himself a communist. After Ignacio Mendieta resigned from his position as a lawyer for the state department in Cuba, the government continued to monitor not only him but also his daughters once they became engaged by personal acquaintances to distribute anti-communist propaganda.[13] The surveillance served as the final impetus for sending Mendieta and her sister Raquelín away, both of whom wound up in an orphanage in Dubuque, Iowa, exposed to a great deal of racism and feeling "alienated" and "totally misplaced."[14] Without the comfort of an enclave community, removed from the thousands of children who migrated with them, the girls were often the only minorities as they shifted between otherwise racially homogenous, intolerant institutions. Mendieta later performed her 1975 *Untitled (Ape Piece)* at the All-Iowa State Fair, a piece that prefigures Coco Fusco's and Guillermo Gomez-Peña's 1992 *Couple in the Cage* performance. In *Ape Piece*, Mendieta donned an ape suit and confined herself inside a pen in response to her isolation in school, where she was nicknamed and regarded as an exotic "ape."[15] Having spent five years without her mother, she was still to be reunited with her father, who remained a political prisoner on the island for a decade after his involvement with the Bay of Pigs. Mendieta forever

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[12] Mary Sabbatino, "Ana Mendieta: Identity and the Silueta Series," in Donald B. Kuspit and Gloria Moure, eds., *Ana Mendieta* (Galicia, Spain: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 1996), 150.

[13] Katz, *Naked by the Window*, 45.

[14] Ana Mendieta quoted in Linda M. Montano, *Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 395.

[15] Olga Viso, *Ana Mendieta : Earth Body: Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985* (Miami: Miami Art Museum, 2005), 232.

resented both her parents, however, preferring her isolation and orphanhood. She looked toward sculpture and performance as a way of exercising agency over her initially passive exile condition so much that she endured Iowa in order to study intermedia art at the University of Iowa with the program's founder, Hans Breder.[16] She later moved to New York, continuing to produce site-specific performances until 1985, the year Mendieta plummeted to her death, defenestrated from the thirty-fourth-floor of a Greenwich Village apartment owned by her husband, sculptor Carl Andre.[17]

During her life as an artist, Mendieta's domestic nostalgia sustained inspiration from articles and rituals associated with two different childhood houses. The family's Havana house had grand staircases and extravagant wonders locked museum-like inside glass cabinets. The less formal Varadero beach house held more magic for Mendieta. Respectfully nicknaming it the "old house," the family treated it like a delicate grandmother. It was personified to such an extent that each year, on the house's "birthday," the family would celebrate and offer it gifts that would increase its magic and beauty.[18] On the beachfront, Mendieta and Raquelín silently collected and modified bits of debris, using materials from trees at the seashore in Varadero.[19] Images of the houses remained with Mendieta, leaving her feeling forever deterritorialized. In her earthworks, she reconstructed memories of childhood from primitive terrains—finding new homes in leaves, sand, and branches as she always did when *outside* of the family home.

[16] It is widely recorded that Mendieta and Breder also shared an intimate relationship.

[17] Though all legal evidence has been documented extensively by Robert Katz in his book *Naked by the Window*, the details of her death remain a mystery.

[18] Katz, *Naked by the Window*, 38.

[19] Raquel Mendieta, "Childhood Memories: Religion, Politics, Art" in Kuspit and Moure, *Ana Mendieta*, 224-25.

Mendieta's sister Raquelín recalls Ana's report of visiting their childhood home on her first return trip to Cuba: "She told me that she had gone to the house that we had lived in when we grew up, asked to go up, walked in...the place looked the same, the furniture – she went to her old room, sat on her bed, and had a good cry."[20] Her cousin Kaki, who remained on the island, reports:

> She came back to find out all she had lost: to hear all those things again and to see her grandmother, to meet again her roots to find her roots. It was as though in each and every thing she rediscovered her self. She found herself once again. She would walk down a street; it was as of she were reliving or claiming back something that perhaps many times she thought she had lost forever.[21]

For many Pedro Pan exiles, the lost childhood home became particularly significant after their sudden, solo departure. While Pedro Pan artist María Brito's installations attempt to reproduce such domestic imagery, Mendieta's sculpture eschews representations of interiors in favor of a steadfastly earthwork aesthetic. She was reluctant even to *work* indoors because of the difficulty of "emulat[ing] nature. Installation is a fake art."[22] The security and presumed authenticity of an Earth-home extended for the artist from process to product to its persistent after-image.

Mendieta's finished products, however, are experienced indoors; she systematically organized hundreds of her own performance photographs for exhibition and publication. In the gallery, the photographed sites appear dissociated from the larger territories in which they were constructed. For example, a photograph of a mound of

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[20] Raquelín Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[21] Raquel Kaki Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987. Such traveling to relive and re-navigate the streets of childhood resembles the re-mapping marked by Luca's and Luciana's return in Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* (see my Chapter 3).

[22] Ana Mendieta quoted in Linda M. Montano, *Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 398.

mud called "Isla" floats neither here nor there; it is an organic shape evoking the artist's human form and, simultaneously, a miniature Cuba. "Isla" is one of Mendieta's signature *siluetas*, contours made by carving or sinking her own imprint into sand or mud. In 1981, Mendieta described her "Silueta" series as a method of

> carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body based on my own silhouette. I believe this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland during my adolescence. The making of my silueta in nature keeps the transition between my homeland and my new home…I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I re-establish the bonds that tie me to the universe.[23]

The violence with which Mendieta recounts being separated from her childhood home—"torn from my homeland during my adolescence"—distinguishes her work as a Pedro Pan exile artist. Working with nature, Mendieta searched for surrogate homes in site-specific earthworks, modifying existing environments and landscapes that inspired her. The artist insists that this practice "has much to do with Cuba in the sense that I was attracted to nature because I didn't have a land or a motherland."[24] In mourning lost home and childhood, Mendieta turned to nature, myths, and history, learning and creating (instead of inheriting) a culture of pure origin.

Mendieta's process of working with nature as a way of returning to her childhood home becomes layered when considering her surviving family's memories; vivid recollections by her major playmates (her sister Raquelín and cousin Raquel, or "Kaki") develop an overlay of the artist's activities during both youth and adulthood. The careful, fluid, human silhouettes in sand sculptures such as *Silueta de arena* (1978) are adult

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[23] Ana Mendieta quoted in Petra Barreras and John Perreault, *Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective*, exhibition catalog (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987), 10.

[24] Ana Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

sandcastles, recapturing lost territories and childhood activities. The artist's cousin "Kaki" recalls in great detail an early attraction Mendieta had to working with sand near the family's Varadero beach house:

> We used to revolve around this world of sand and water. In the sand we would build castles, bury ourselves in the sand and make bodies on top. Ana would make shapes on top of these bodies. I remember sometimes it was very lush women with huge breasts that would make us laugh. I think these elements that Ana subsequently used in her silueta series have a lot to do with that world, and of course even the materials she used. The world of Varadero is very much interwoven with the elements and symbology that was used in her work.[25]

Though memories of youth poignantly layered with her experiences in exile suggest continuity with Mendieta's artistic child self, Raquelín firmly believes her sister became an artist *because* she left Cuba. Mendieta, a natural performer as a child in Cuba, organized post-siesta skits on the patio and mock ritual masses for the family. Performing as an adult in exile revived old pastimes for Mendieta; it became a way of reliving childhood activities, while functioning as a coping mechanism for life away from home.

Raquelín remembers that she, Mendieta, and their cousin invented another childhood game based on the popular Cuban song "En el tronco de un árbol." The game might be interpreted as a haunting precursor to the tree-trunk-related earthworks that Mendieta created in her adult life as an artist.[26] In the "tronco de un árbol" game, Mendieta, with exaggerated, dramatic movements, "carved" her name into her cousin's body (Kaki stood in for the tree trunk). The action and the personification of the tree—both dictated by the song's lyrics—bring her childhood instincts back into focus through

[25] Raquel "Kaki" Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[26] Kuspit and Moure, 225.

the lens of her search for roots in youth and home. Still struggling with her displacement, an adult Mendieta covered herself in natural materials (mud, bark, grass, and—less natural—gesso, in order for the textures to adhere), her figure nearly swallowed into a tree trunk.

Ana Mendieta, from the *Tree of Life* series, Galerie LeLong, New York

This image, part of her mid-1970s *Tree of Life Series* performed at Old Man's Creek in Iowa, is more striking in its after-life. In the photograph of the event, it is hard to distinguish Mendieta's body from the trunk onto which it seems molded, so near in visual representation are the textures and colors. Her smaller stature suggests that she born from the larger tree, upward into which her branchlike arms extend.

The *Tree of Life* performance unites the artist with the terrain suggesting that her roots, like the tree's, forge again into the earth, reclaiming home. The photograph's tight

frame reveals only the artist's body and a portion of the tree, excluding the surrounding Iowa territory. The tree becomes any/every tree, as Mendieta's home is not Iowa, but Earth. The photograph was exactly ten years old when it became part of the artist's first (and posthumous) retrospective, curated in 1987 by Petra Barreras and John Perreault at New York's New Museum. In his review of this *Tree of Life* piece in the exhibit, Michael Brenson of *The New York Times* suggested that the artist and her covered skin, stretched to associate with her roots, universalizes her ethnicity as well as her home: "Ms. Mendieta stands naked in front of a tree, covered with mud so that her color identifies her with tribal peoples everywhere."[27] This evaluation suggests that Mendieta's search for origins led her to paint her body with nature's (bark: dark, at the surface) and artist's (gesso: white, underneath) materials as a kind of blackface.

Mendieta's strategic change in pigmentation in order to "identify" with presumably autochthonous cultures extends beyond the *Tree of Life* series. In preparing another set of photographs for exhibition during her lifetime, the artist juxtaposed one silueta—her form copied as a mound of gunpowder on the earth—with text narrating a 1817 Cuban legend "La Venus Negra," in which colonists try to "civilize" a young black female native. The folkloric character of La Venus Negra, The Black Venus, is a free-spirited island native wearing seashell bracelets. She is said to have eluded and outsmarted colonizing captors, refusing to eat their foods while sustaining herself only with native plants: yuca, banana, and sweet potato. Mendieta's privileged family, descendants from Spanish settlers who contributed to the displacement of the island's original cultural landscape, appears insignificant in this re-discovered genealogy; the

[27] Michael Brenson, "Works by Ana Mendieta in a Retrospective Exhibition," *The New York Times*, Arts Section, 27 November 1987.

artist seems eager for the country's "origins" to replace her own. Her exploitation of tales of deculturation of "indigenous" peoples functioned in response to her own feelings of displacement as an involuntary exile sent as a child to the U.S.[28] Trying to connect with the past in order to resolve her own interrupted youth, she establishes a bond with a 160-year-old legend that erases her own immediate origins. Her silueta appropriates the image of the Venus Negra just as the *Tree of Life* series seeks a new skin in impersonating "native" cultures. In doing so, the artist reproduces others' bodies in an almost stolen nostalgia.

Mendieta continually sought rebirth and renewal in her site-specific work by creating alliances across borders. She felt particularly at home in Mexico, where she could speak her native language and construct artworks on territories that functioned as a kind of surrogate for lost homeland. Since during the seventies she could not access Cuba, the artist found a substitute "source" in Mexico. Mendieta revealed "Plugging into Mexico was like going back to the source, being able to get some magic just by being there."[29] First visiting Oaxaca with colleagues from University of Iowa's Intermedia Art program, Mendieta later designed annual summer escapes from Iowa City in order to create performances in Mexico, which from 1973 to 1980 (the year she made her first visit to Cuba) she seemed to regard as a proxy for Cuba. Historian and curator Julia P. Herzberg claims that though Mendieta "was already familiar with Mexican archaeology, mythology, and culture, she found Oaxaca a special place that exuded a sense of magic

[28] Ana Mendieta and Bonnie Clearwater, *A Book of Works* (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1993), 17.

[29] Judith Wilson, "Ana Mendieta Plants Her Garden," *Village Voice*, 13-19 August 1980, 71.

and religious aura reminding her of Cuba."[30] Going on to create primarily in Oaxaca and surrounding areas, Mendieta worked extensively with animal blood in making siluetas and other performances, which she carefully documented (or staged for the purpose of documentation). On her "silhouettes with blood" produced during these trips, Ana's cousin Kaki remarks: "I think this is an element that expresses very clearly the internal splitting in her soul, her sensibility, her need to find herself again."[31] The (re)union of human fluid and earthly terrain works like a temporary salve, an imagined purity in penetrating times and places in order to sense an origin, healing the fissure in self and land.

By unifying the earth as one continuous sky, sea, and soil, Mendieta is still home. Unlike her interrupted childhood, she could never be cast out from such a global dwelling place. From the canvas of the earth, she cannot be separated. Mendieta's universal sentiments challenge a presumed binary of attitudes about exiles frequently characterized *either* as enthusiastic converts to the new culture, *or* as miserable discontents. The binary is most popularly termed by Claudio Guillén in the literary arts as "exile" and "counter-exile."[32] Guillén suggests that those who compose *exile* literatures foreground sentiments of loss and displacement, creating work in which "exile becomes its own subject matter." *Counter-exile*, on the other hand, "transcends earlier attachment to place or native origin" with an emphasis toward "universalism."[33] While Guillén's 1976 analysis is

[30] Julia P. Herzberg, "Ana Mendieta: The Formative Years," *Art Nexus*, 1 no. 47 (2003): 54-59.

[31] Raquel Kaki Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[32] Claudio Guillén, "On the Literature of Exile and Counter-Exile," *Books Abroad* vol. 50, University of Oklahoma (1976): 272.

[33] Ibid.

contemporary with Mendieta's work, four decades later Sophia A. McClennen qualified these designations with words more compatible with the artist's sculptural earthworks. Reviewing some of Guillén's own examples, McClennen is able to suggest that *exile* is "terrestrial" while *counter-exile* is "solar." The "terrestrial" response to exile suggests a subject who gazes toward the ground with an attitude of deprivation and impoverishment, lamenting that the new terrain is not his/her remote home. A "solar" response *counters* exile by gazing upward toward the common sun uniting all lands. Restrictive binaries like Guillén's are challenged by McClennen, who believes that the two extremes can co-exist to produce conflicting attitudes within the same individual.[34]

While Mendieta's erasure of borders exhibits coping strategies associated with solar exile, the method proves unsatisfying. As more and more territories "stand in" for home, Mendieta gazes back down at the land beneath her feet, re-producing the conflict, generating more artwork, sustaining the "problem" of exile. Mendieta may have realized that her global approach of melting territories together into a superhome offered too simple a resolution, because she continued to employ attitudes from the opposite end of the binary, always returning to the ground that emphasized her displacement. None of the utopian attitudes explored in her earthworks seemed to console her. Because Mendieta's site-specific performances alternated between the two poles, with little interplay between them, her attitudes toward exile reveal less conflict than contradiction. Her works seem to take on a kind of problem-solution quality, rather than embodying dialectical tensions. Mendieta's attitudes are less dialectical than pendular, alternating between both ends of the binary to sustain a perpetual "inspiration" (homelessness) to

[34] Sophia A. McClennen, The *Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2004), 32.

which she produced infinite dissatisfying solutions (artworks).

Mendieta's essentialist strategies supposed a singular "universal energy which runs through all things."[35] The notion is similar to Santería's affirmation of *áche*, a powerful life force that pulses through everything but can be harnessed or directed by manipulating things at their *essence*—in the state of bones, blood, and ashes. Critic Steven Sherrill observes that "Mendieta, exiled as a girl, sought refuge in flesh and bone early; the body, or its absence, being the only viable conduit between earth and sky."[36] In ascribing to a universal energy, Mendieta, "homeless" since the age of 13, finds a way of returning "home." If the earth supersedes history, it is into the earth that she would design her pure, safe retreat. The entire planet's terrain transforms into a potential stage for Mendieta; onto any place out of doors she may forge what Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins have termed "memory space," or an imaginary space that artists conjure when they find themselves between home and homelessness.[37] Exile, not Cuba or the U.S., becomes a site in which (and on which) Mendieta habitually dwells.

In *Ánima, Silueta de Cohetes* (*Soul, Silhouette of Fireworks*), performed in 1976 in Oaxaca, Mendieta's mark, the silhouette representing her exiled body, burned to vanish between two cultures. The artist set aflame a life-size surrogate for her own body, an armature manufactured from locally grown cane. The sculpture's fiery limbs smoked upward while the form ultimately disintegrated from the fire that animated it, spilling a pile of ashes onto the ground. Like the other siluetas that become eroded or washed way,

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[35] Ana Mendieta, "Artist's Statement," quoted in Viso, *Earth Body*, 35.

[36] Steven Sherrill, "A Day in the Life of Ana Mendieta," *Modern Painters* (June 2006): 138.

[37] Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women's Intercultural Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 98.

the condition of exile produces and occupies a third space that can be neither native nor immigrant. As a Pedro Pan child who has lost the mother/land, Mendieta returns herself again and again to the Earth's womb.

Though returning to Mother Earth *enacted* a solution for Mendieta's persistent orphanhood, surrogate lands proved insufficient. Cuban Poet Nancy Morejón recalls Mendieta's commitment to earthworks as part of her "very special idea about Earth as the concrete conception of homeland,"[38] but Ana suffered permanently the trauma of deterritorialization. The problem remained unsolvable because it had less to do with home as simply "territory" but rather home as an indissoluble union of place with time. Curator Jeff Fleming conflates the two, exposing the dual paradox of Mendieta's quest: "In Ana's work it is obvious that she is searching for a place or an identity...to make a connection with her past."[39] Mendieta's hard focus on lands and territories—*physical* homes—eclipses her own concerns with time; her work interprets exile more as *destierro* (exiled from terrain) than *destiempo* (exiled from time).[40] She became devoted to traveling, ironically obtaining a passport by becoming a citizen of the U.S. because she longed to leave it. After constructing work on countless surrogate soils, ultimately, Mendieta felt that only Cuban land possessed the proper spiritual properties to behave as a true repository and "collaborator" for her work. The artist ached to perform sculptures in Cuba, where she hoped that some of the anxieties she experienced as an exile would abate and that unresolved feelings and experiences might at last resume in taking root

[38] Nancy Morejón in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[39] Jeff Fleming quoted in Todd Dvorak, "Ana Mendieta: siempre en la búsqueda de la pertenencia," *La Opinión*, 10 abril 2005, http://www.cubanet.org/Cnews/y05/apr05/11o11.htm, accessed 20 May 08. Translation mine.

[40] For more on the distinctions between *destierro* and *destiempo*, see my discussion in the introduction.

again with her mother origin.

The Silueta sculptures, most of which existed as site-specific works, revolve around notions of place-claiming, reconstructing and substituting lands. Still, though land travel—in its pragmatism—is superior to time travel, the works never *solve* but *dissolve* territories, melting boundaries and deliberately establishing anatopisms.[41] Iowa, Mexico, and Cuba become indistinguishable in the sentiments left to perform in photographs. The work produces a paradox, promoting both the unresolvable anxiety associated with exile and, at the same time, a borderless utopia. More *desterradas* than *destempadas*, the sculptures are *so* focused on place that they look to the sun and the ground, sustaining terrestrial exile and solar exile. This dual dis/comfort zone is a familiar one: not only does it allow exiles to occupy the new country and the remote home simultaneously, in "counterpoint," but it also allows the exile to remain occupied by a productive misery symptomatic of the exile maladies. These include, of course, that incurable "gorrión" with which Michael A. Mason has diagnosed the hopelessly nostalgic, or the chronic "dyspepsia," that Edward Said insists plagues expatriates, and sustaining injuries like the enclave citizens Gustavo Pérez Firmat casts as the "walking wounded."[42]

Deperately attempting to heal these afflictions, Mendieta incorporates into her work fragments from Afro-Cuban Santería rituals—practices she absorbed from overheard fragments of conversations by her grandparents' housekeepers in Cuba. Because Mendieta's family was devoutly Catholic, she kept her fascination with the

[41] Mendieta's work can easily be described as anatopic—out of place, or displaced, across multiple territories, while its anachronistic qualities stretch back more to prehistory than the artist's youth.

[42] For more on these "exile illnesses," see my discussion of Mason, Said, and Pérez Firmat in the introduction.

rituals secret. Raquelín Mendieta recalls how her sister would "slip down the back stairs" to catch snippets of the Orishas being discussed.[43] Learning of Santería by stealth, as a child, only amplified its magic:

> When the adults were resting at siesta time, Ana and I would sit very quietly amongst the maids, as if we were not there, and listen to them talking about their religious practices, about magic, about sex, about who was cheating on who, about who needed a love potion. We were fascinated, Ana loved listening to this forbidden talk.[44]

The magic of the childhood kitchen manifested in Mendieta's work as scarlet paint streaks, animal blood, or saints' effigies. Indulging in esoteric rites after her migration demonstrates a deliberate resistance to the Catholicism that brought her to the U.S. It was the closing of Cuba's parochial schools with threats regarding *patria potestad* that galvanized the family to seek a way out for the children through Operation Pedro Pan.[45] Mendieta's cousin, Raquel "Kaki" Mendieta, recounts, "Our family—especially Ana's grandmother and grandfather—were very Catholic. So the family separated. They started to think about sending them to the United States."[46] Indexing this syncretic religion reacts against the organizing force of her departure while allowing the artist to link back to her childhood through the remnants of the faith of her youth (neither Santería nor Mendieta abandon the Catholic faith completely). Even as Mendieta admits, "I was raised Catholic and can't deny my heritage," she acknowledges that the Church has

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[43] Arturo Lindsay, *Santería Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 208.

[44] Raquelín Mendieta, "Childhood Memories: Religion, Politics, Art" in Kuspit and Moure, *Ana Mendieta*, 227.

[45] News that the new government might strip parents of *patria potestad*, or parental authority, became the primary motive for the formation and continuation of Operation Pedro Pan.

[46] Raquel Kaki Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

destroyed about as much culture as it has created.[47] Blood, flowers, shells, candles, and hair—materials commonly used in Santería to divine answers, invoke gods, or precipitate events—pervade Mendieta's work. Ritual performances revolve around spectacles in which her physical presence becomes visible after it is absent, revealing the body as a marker of identity that can impress pigment and ethnicity, or leave its trace upon the physical earth.

In 1981, on the shore of Key Biscayne—the southernmost point in Miami—Mendieta molded a mound of sand according to the proportions of her own figure and titled it "Ochún" (the orisha of love, syncretized with Cuba's Catholic patron saint, la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre). Gerardo Mosquera remembers that Mendieta created this sculpture on the shore to be carried by waves to Cuba.[48] But Olga Viso notes that Mendieta may also have made an "Ochún" at the northernmost cays in Cuba.[49] The possibility of a pair of sand sculptures left to drift without destination, to dialogue with each other in the sea, complicates Mosquera's impression of a simple, symbolic return. This double performance also appears to counter the artist's binary impulses. Exile swims in the ocean, a doubled self-journeying neither here nor there.

Also in Miami, Mendieta found a *ceiba*, a very popular tree in Cuba, on which she carved and painted a silhouette. There had grown into the joint of one branch a natural form which appeared to the artist like a pubis penetrating three knots, a configuration

> that happened to look like female genitalia, so I surrounded them with hair that I glued on. It's amazing how Elmer's glue withstands weather, because I did it in 1981 and it's still there. The last time I saw the tree,

[47] Montano, 396.

[48] Gerardo Mosquera in *Fuego de Tierra*.

[49] Viso, *Earth Body*, 93.

> people had added coconuts, chicken wings, all kinds of offerings. For a while they put a figure of Santa Bárbara underneath it, cut an opening in what would be the face, and stuck a shell in the mouth. They have really activated the image and claimed it as their own.[50]

Mixing together artists' materials with traditional offerings produces a kind of *performance* of Santería. Mendieta's search for roots seduced select Orisha-worshipping members of the equally nostalgic and spiritually hungry Cuban population in Miami. Because of this, the *Ceiba* piece unites her with the Miami community as much as it sets her apart. Growing up in Iowa, Mendieta remained isolated and singular, on her own to maintain a sense of *cubanía*. She invented a unique system of healing through her artwork, without the influence or comfort of an enclave community—or as Coco Fusco points out, the "imaginary and often sclerotized vision of a homeland that an exile community usually provides."[51] Mendieta's 1981 trip did not add Miami to her repertoire of surrogate-lands; the practice of using territories as proxies ceased when she finally visited Cuba. The anxiety of exile remained, however, and, with self-dialogues like the Ochún performances, the idea of "home" became lost in the sea.

In 1972, Mendieta performed an untitled (known as "Death of a Chicken") piece as part of her Intermedia studies at the University of Iowa. The performance consisted of Mendieta's attempting to secure the frenetic body of a chicken in front of her body just after it had been decapitated by gallery "stagehands" right center of the performance area. Nevertheless, here blood is not sacrificed for the orisha; instead, it is splattered onto the artist's naked body, standing inexpressively in front of a white gallery wall. Mendieta's

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[50] Ana Mendieta quoted in Montano, *Performance Artists*, 398. Mario García Joya revises Mendieta's version, saying that the artist cut her own hair for the tree. *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

[51] Coco Fusco, *English is Broken Here* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 121.

passive stance does not suggest, as Olga Viso posits, that she is positioning herself as a stand-in for the Orisha, in receipt of the life and energy of the offering.[52] Instead, Mendieta's revision of the syncretic Afro-Cuban religion quotes just as much from the popular body-as-canvas aesthetic that dominated performance art during her time as it does from Santerían ritual.[53] The "Death of a Chicken" performance delivers a citation of ceremonies and redelivers stories overheard from a limited vantage (the corner of the family kitchen she visited in her childhood) and from her textbook studies. In performance, Mendieta "practices" Santería only as a detached observer, borrowing from its visual vocabulary of "healing" images to heal herself, or cope with her own exile. Her devotion is not to the Orishas, and perhaps not even to indexing or corrupting their symbols to convey a *spirit* of authentic and mystic origin. In *performing* Santería, this devotion remains to childhood, her own pure past. It is in this way that the exiled artist attempts to travel through *time* and not just place, that she may recover the unadulterated curiosity of her child self, re-experiencing her interrupted youth through thrilling memories of the magic in the kitchen.

Mendieta became a founding member of El Círculo de Cultura Cubana in 1978, shortly after "El Díalogo" began allowing Cuban-Americans to visit their homeland.[54] Insisting that she was anxious to visit her home and to share it with colleagues, Mendieta collected a group of other artists to visit (and validate her work in) Cuba. These artistic

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[52] Viso, *Earth Body*, 246.

[53] Gloria Moure in *Ana Mendieta*, 25. Contemporary performances by Carolee Schneeman, Mary Beth Edelson, Yves Klein, and Joseph Beuys, for example, also utilized the body as a vacant canvas for pigments and fluids.

[54] El Círculo was founded after Mendieta's failed attempt to travel with the politically neutral group "El Círculo de José María Heredia" in memory of the nineteenth-century Cuban exile poet. Castro regime rejected the group’s visa applications.

travel companions also functioned as a support system lubricating her return, and permitting Ana to feel more like a citizen than she might have if she had arrived alone—the way she left unaccompanied with Raquelín—or only with other Cubans living abroad. Fidel Castro interpreted Ana's yearning for Cuba as pro-revolutionary, and welcomed her "home" to exhibit her artwork alongside Cuban nationals' nineteen years after her Pedro Pan departure. The return revealed an island riven by politics and time. In 1980 Mendieta attempted to make the country of her childhood home again, not by living there, but by carving the Rupestrian Sculptures inside caves in Jaruco State Park on the outskirts of Havana. She named these carvings after various Taíno goddesses, including *Itiba Cahubaba* or "Old Mother Blood," chiseling a matrilineal path back to autochthonous origins, uniting the parentage of Motherland and Mother Earth.

Ironically, this trip was a freedom afforded by the U.S. passport she obtained to release herself from, rather than commit to, her exile country. Though Ana would return to the U.S. after a brief visit, she performed herself as a Cuban "going home." After she carved her presence into rock, leaving the cave-dwelling Rupestrian Sculptures to weather and change with the elements, her absence was re-performed long after she had left her mark. Returning to the site of the caves more than five years later, Cuban critic Gerardo Mosquera evaluated the peculiar persistence of Ana's collaboration with the caves of her mother country:

> She didn't want to make a rock museum here but to make a sort of communion with Cuban land. I came here with her, and now I return for the first time...the pieces have changed in the same way nature has changed and it is beautiful because Ana wanted to work, to be part of nature, to get inside nature. And then it changed with the ecology of the place, in a natural way.[55]

[55] Gerardo Mosquera in *Fuego de Tierra*, 1987.

Communing with the earth by depositing her sentiments in rock, Ana could return without remaining. This second departure from Cuba was a voluntary one; she returned "home" to the United States, and after several more visits vowed never to return to Cuba again after *milicianos* prevented her from traveling back to the U.S. with her grandmother's china.[56] Personal property had long been nationalized by the State, and though Mendieta had embraced the chance to exhibit and create artwork on her homeland, she could not reconcile her domestic nostalgia with this revolutionary idea.

The artist did manage to smuggle a bag of dirt back with her to the U.S., revising an African legend in which eating slowly the soil from home enables one to acclimate to new surroundings. Though she never performed with the soil (nor consumed it to public knowledge), the image is one of the most striking Mendieta ever referenced in producing herself as an exile. Jane Blocker vividly imagines the Cuban soil "crunching between her white teeth."[57] Responding to Mendieta's attraction to the land-eating legend, Cuban curators and scholars have observed that "comer tierra" is a classic expression (recently resurrected since the Special Period) meaning "to cope."[58] On Cuba and coping, Ana composed the following brief poem:

> Pain of Cuba
> body I am
> my orphanhood I live...

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[56] Quiroga, 193.

[57] Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?*, 89.

[58] Both José Ramón Alonzo Lorea and Olga Viso note the Cuban expression in discussing Tania Bruguera's *El peso de la culpa*, which Bruguera performed in response to Ana Mendieta's work. José Ramón Alonso Lorea, "Tania Bruguera o el performance como medio de reflexión," *Estudios Culturales 2003*, Arte y Arquitectura Section, Madrid 2006, http://es.geocities.com/estudiosculturales2003/arteyarquitectura/taniabruguera.html, accessed 22 January 2008; Olga Viso, *Earth Body*, 130.

my whole being is filled with want of Cuba
I go on to make my mark upon the earth, to go on is victory.[59]

The final declaration suggests that constructing earthworks enables her to manage her displacement, and that—perhaps because a true return home is impossible in a lifelong "orphanhood"—*coping* is the only inspirable victory. These lines link Mendieta's orphaned child self as an unaccompanied Pedro Pan exile to her urge to produce artworks, thus reinforcing her sister's sentiments that her flight from Cuba—and not just her artistic young self—was responsible for her artistic career.

Searching for authentic origins, Mendieta recovers not roots but fables, oral histories subject to further revision in her artwork. Quiroga points out that the search for pre-Columbian roots was very much a part of the Caribbean cultural imaginary during Mendieta's time as a way of circumventing unresolved political tensions between Cuba and the U.S.[60] In dispelling the long-standing myth of a "matriarchal prehistory" like the one Mendieta references through Taíno goddesses in Jaruco, Cynthia Eller points out the deceptive "evidentiary power" suggested by artworks, which have served as most compelling "proof" in the urge to "reauthenticate" origins.[61] Gustavo Pérez Firmat insists that searching for roots in Cuba—an immigrant country where there are "no natives...Cuba has *always* been hyphenated Americans"—is a futile project.[62] Instead,

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[59] Ana Mendieta quoted in Nancy Spero, "Tracing Ana Mendieta," *Artforum* (April 1992): 75 and in Katz, *Naked by the Window*, 160-70.

[60] Quiroga, 189.

[61] Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 20.

[62] Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 81. Original emphasis.

exiles use points of a Cuban culture composed of "itinerant impulses" in order to "anchor" themselves while in exile and stave off assimilation. Pérez Firmat points out that rather than preserving roots, Cubans *eat* roots.[63] This image recalls once more the Venus Negra, who defiantly eats only root vegetables to resist colonization and remain close to the soil from which they are exhumed, earth's deepest "origins."

Blocker observes that Mendieta's work sustains rather than assuages exile and that Mendieta continued to "produce" herself as an exile in interviews and notes.[64] A citizen of the earth, both at home and homeless, Mendieta created works that seem literally caught in-between, always deferred but always being located. Deborah K. Ultan observes that Ana "submitted" to exile, "which she naturally projected into her art."[65] Coco Fusco concludes, "Instead of reaching the point of overcoming exile and the idea of redemption resolving itself in communion, Mendieta remains with the idea of the necessity of living a life of sacrifice and solitude."[66] The site-specific nature of her performances articulated her exile as more *destierro* than *destiempo*, but returning home forced Mendieta to confront what Quiroga describes as the "inexorability of time: you could go back to the place you left, or the place you were forced to leave, but ultimately you can never go back and reclaim a decision that was never yours to begin with."[67] Though Mendieta saw her artwork as "a way of purifying [her]self"[68] in her eternal

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta?*, 78.

[65] Deborah K. Ultan, "From the Personal to the Transpersonal: Self Reclamation Through Ritual-in-Performance," *Art Documentation* 20, no.2 (Fall 2001): 30-6.

[66] Fusco, *Corpus Delecti*, 141.

[67] Quiroga, 191.

[68] Charles Merewether, "From Inscription to Dissolution: An Essay on Consumption in the Work of Ana Mendieta," in Moure and Kuspit, 98.

separation from home, this purification proved elusive. Donald Kuspit suggests that the unresolved nature of her work creates an "anti-catharsis" instead of the resolution it so desperately seeks.[69] Mendieta's career as an artist parallels her career as an exile, sympathetically producing sensations of longing, memories and fictions, invented pasts, and revised cultural histories.

The artist's profound interest in Cuba's legends and territories results less from her nationality than from her displacement. Mendieta looked to cultural histories she might never have known had her childhood life been left uninterrupted. Though creating from a particular position, as a Pedro Pan exile, her work performs a universalizing tone of displacement. She privileges the *search* for origin above all else: "There is no original past to redeem: there is the void, the orphanhood, the unbaptized earth of the beginning, the time that from within the earth looks upon us. There is above all the search for origin."[70] Mendieta's process produces no synthesis or solution, sustaining instead the negative dialectic of exile.[71] Her artwork refuses to resolve, instead articulating absence, solitude, wandering, and lack. Not only was the departure from the mother/land not transient, as Raquelín and Ana had hoped, it was a permanent punctuation to childhood—time forever interrupted and irrecoverable. Though she continually returned her orphaned body to the earth that bore her, it was never home.

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[69] Moure and Kuspit, 48.

[70] Mendieta's personal notes transcribed in *Tierra de Fuego*, 1987.

[71] Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno's term is used by Charles Merewether to describe this quality in Mendieta's work, quoted by José Roca in Miriam Basilio, *Latin American & Caribbean Art: MoMA at El Museo* (New York: El Museo del Barrio and the Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 152.

María Brito (1947-), Operation Pedro Pan 1961.

The circumstances of María Brito's exile through Operation Pedro Pan serves as a primary subject in the artist's intensely personal artworks, which brim with domestic artifacts signifying a lingering, interrupted past. The works evoke, as curator Lynette Bosch affirms, a "very particular experience of exile."[72] Miami Herald art critic Helen Kohen insists that Brito's sculptures are "encoded with clues to her childhood."[73] Her artwork investigates anguish through objects, bringing into question the lack of agency the children had in their parents' decision to transplant them. Brito asserts that "the experience of being uprooted and coming to live in the United States since early adolescence…[is] an intrinsic part of the work I do."[74] However, Brito also declares, "Me alegro de que mis padres hayan tenido la visión de haberme mandado para acá" [I am glad my parents had the vision to send me here].[75] As was the case with Ana Mendieta, Brito credits her migration as the most significant stride toward her identity as an artist: "It was a great step to take because I started to become who I am today, by immersing myself in the studies of literature, history and, most importantly, art."[76] Critic Wesley Pulkka concludes from her statements and her work that "Brito became a scholar

[72] Lynette Bosch, "Interview with María Brito," University of Buffalo, 11 August 2005, http://philosophy.buffalo.edu/contrib/events/iabrito.html, accessed 11 January 2008.

[73] Helen Kohen, "Memories of Cuba, Imagined and Real, Create Jewel of a Show." *The Miami Herald*, Arts section, 2 October 1994, p. 11.

[74] María Brito quoted in Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, *Cuba-USA: The First Generation: Exhibition Tour 1991-1992* (Washington, D.C.: Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, 1991), 32.

[75] Minuca Villaverde, "El mundo de María Brito-Avellana." *El Nuevo Herald*, Galeria section, 26 July, 1983, p. 7. Translation mine.

[76] Aurora Rodríguez, "Memoirs on Wood: Cuban María Brito's Realist Sculptures and Paintings Bring Repression to Life in Museum Exhibit." *The Ledger* (Lakeland, FL), Life Section, 3 October 2005, D1.

and artist because of her mother's sacrifice, but the wound of their separation remains."[77] Before they joined her in the U.S., the artist was separated from her parents for one year—a short while compared to the experiences of Mendieta and many other Pedro Pan children.

The installation art created by María Brito, who remained in Miami after emigrating via Operation Pedro Pan at age 13, is often described by critics and curators in theatrical terms. Juan A. Martínez, author of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center's *María Brito*, explicates her work as sculpture articulating "the private in a form reminiscent of the small theatre of the Baroque."[78] Minneapolis critic Mary Abbe designated "Brito's haunting, theatrical sculptures" as stand-outs in the group show *Cuba-USA*.[79] In response to the artist's autobiographical pieces in the Tampa Museum of Art's hosting of the *Breaking Barriers* show, Joanne Milani of the *Tampa Tribune* characterized the sculptor as one who "creates theatrical constructions - some like miniature stage sets."[80] Brito herself recognizes her need to work using "ciertos elementos de teatro"[81] [certain elements of theatre] in order to convert her most private sentiments into an autobiographical form that can be experienced by an audience. In an interview for the Smithsonian Museum Archives of American Art, conducted by her

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[77] Wesley Pulkka, "'La Luz' offers dazzling overview of Latino Art in U.S." *Albuquerque Journal*, 3 December 2000, Arts & Culture Section, p. F5.

[78] Juan A. Martinez quoted in the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center catalogue, http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/research/MariaBrito.html, accessed 16 May 2007.

[79] Mary Abbe, "A potent mix of cultural symbols: CUBA-USA show views are unique." *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), 2 February 1992, Entertainment - In the Galleries section, p. 1F.

[80] Milani, 1.

[81] Juan Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito," *Smithsonian Archives of American Art* 25 October 1997. Transcript, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/brito97.htm, accessed 6 June 2008.

future biographer Juan Martínez, Brito attempted to explain how the intangible reality/irreality of her exile experience becomes relatable through theatrical illusion:

> The work, as I said, is autobiographical in the sense that if it does not reflect something personal of mine, some type of current or passed event, of course, I am using certain elements of theatre, not exaggeration, of course not, I speak of a work where there is a cage and because is autobiographical does not mean that I was put in a cage, or that I felt caged—[82]

The imagery realized by using found or constructed properties, or "certain elements of the theatre," also permits Brito a wider stage than the canvas on which to act out her childhood memories.

Curator John Stringer closes his essay in the exhibition catalogue for the 1989 solo show *María Brito-Avellana: Recent Sculpture* by stating:

> As in theatre, we see a stage, a tableau vivant - which for the moment is devoid of humanity. In this psychological drama, we ourselves have become the subject as well as the audience. Things are not comfortable. There is an uneasy undercurrent of suspense: a break in the dialogue: something interrupted. The bed is still warm. The curtains have not closed. We wait for the action to resume.[83]

Brito began waiting "for the action to resume" when she boarded a Miami-bound plane in 1961, suspending a life in progress, with the rooms in her home intact and personal possessions remaining behind in their places. As was typical for Pedro Pan exiles, Brito left Cuba with only a suitcase (*la maleta* features as a prominent image in her work),

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[82] Ibid. My translation from the original: "La obra, como te dije, es autobiográfica en el sentido de que si no refleja algo personal mío, algún tipo de evento actual o pasado, claro, usando ciertos elementos de teatro, la exageración, no, por supuesto, no, hablo de una obra donde existe una jaula y es autobiográfico no quiere decir que yo estuve metida en una jaula, ni que me sentía enjaulada."

[83] John Stringer, *María Brito-Avellana: Recent Sculpture* (Miami: InterAmerican Art Gallery, 1989), 4.

without knowing that she would not be returning.[84] Stringer's comments point to a distinctive trait in Brito's work that is also common of Ana Mendieta's site-specific assemblages, traces, and carvings: the artist's body, representing the body of the expressive exile, is markedly absent from each stage picture. At first glance, it appears that there are no visible actors in this theatre. This absence might even seem a paradoxical representation of exile, since the body is always retained when articles and geographies are lost. But Brito insists that, in her frequent daydreams about returning to Cuba (symptoms of an affliction she describes as "ongoing yearning"), her sensory self is present while her physical self is absent: "When I see myself there, I am invisible. And in that improbable state, I just *am*. I *feel* places that I used to occupy. Reminiscing. Reliving."[85] A discordant harmony of past/present, and adult-self/child-self, renders impossible any union of actor with set. This is the quality that makes Brito's theatre "sculpture," designated for gallery stages with no formal performers.

Though existing in economical "brief scenes" and truncated spaces, the environments Brito manufactures are of human scale and fully inhabitable. The invitation is irresistible, and it is stunning to see physical recreations of fantastic, irrecoverable spaces or dramatizations of mental states that beg to recover the memory. The body of the gallery spectator fills the vacancy left by the artist. The audience plays at exile, or if the spectator is another exiled subject—even a fellow Pedro Pan exile—they are able to "play the role" of experiencing *Brito's* memories.

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[84] Brito's installations *Whitewash* and *Restricted Passport* incorporate suitcases. Despite the fact that many children actually carried *gusanos*—soft, worm shaped bags made to withstand governmental regulations—the traditional *suitcase* is a common icon for representing Pedro Pan departures. The suitcase features prominently in Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, as well as in the logo for Operation Pedro Pan, Inc.

[85] Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 54.

Unlike Mendieta's site-specific performances, which relied on transience and functioned as raw, scenario-driven, and sometimes impulsive unrepeatable events, Brito's installations are constructed to remain intact; they are preservable, like more traditional museum pieces. Whereas Mendieta's mark is reduced to residual traces of an ephemeral event, surviving only as relics on display, Brito's process *begins* with relics—found materials that she reworks into elaborate and intricately planned structures.

Brito is careful to distinguish between "found materials"—the term she prefers—and the commonplace term "found objects." She explains to Juan Martínez:

> **Juan Martínez**: Pero en ese momento, el material que tú estabas usando, ¿se pudiera llamar "found objects"? [But in this momento, the materials that you are using, we may call them "found objects?"]
> **María Brito**: No. Porque eran "found materials"— [No. Because they are "found materials"—]
> **Juan Martínez**: "Found materials".
> **María Brito**: —from which I created the objects.
> **Juan Martínez**: Ah, está bien. [Ah, that's good.]
> **María Brito**: Sí. [Yes.]
> **Juan Martínez**: Está bien. [Very good.]
> **María Brito**: Sí.
> **Juan Martínez**: Muy importante saber la diferencia. [Very important to know the difference.]
> **María Brito**: Sí.[86]

The found materials Brito assembles collaborate with her in creating an idea and determining the course of the project. While Mendieta might have scripted a "shopping list" for items carefully calculated as necessary to execute any site-specific ritual (red paint, chicken, or white flowers), Brito negotiates with her materials during any sculpture's incipient stage. But her process does not necessarily privilege found materials over the potent, germinal inspiration that often sparks any artist's project. Rather, she speaks of both, of beginning a piece with a vague sentiment—a "feeling, you know...un

[86] Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

tipo de sentimiento, un tipo de preocupación pero más bien emocional, psíquica, emocional. Que poco a poco voy pensando."[87] The feeling helps determine which materials to search for and select, but those materials themselves expand further the realm of spontaneous possibility in realizing the idea: "Cuando yo empiezo una obra, nunca, nunca, nunca yo sé cómo va a terminar. Para mí el proceso de trabajar en ella es más importante todavía que la –esa idea vaga original."[88] As Brito forms a general idea about how she will alter her found materials, a synthesis occurs between herself and the objects that she finds difficult to convey or intellectualize. She best describes it as an almost divine communication, or a productive dialogue, "un diálogo."[89] Linking reveries, materials, and theatrics, Brito reveals, "I just daydream sometimes. You look at something and start thinking–it is like players in the theatre, or positioning players on a stage–and I start."[90] This improvisational process seems distinctly Cuban; Pedro Pan exile Luz Irene Díaz attributes such a focus on artistic process as a "remnant from having lived in a place where people often walked without a destination."[91] It also re-characterizes the uncertain journey of Operation Pedro Pan, migrating with undetermined time and circumstances.

For Brito, the actor is present only in the process, as the artist interacts with her materials in order to find the way to realizing an evolving sentiment. The role becomes

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[87] "A kind of feeling, a kind of preoccupation but more emotional, physical, emotional. That little by little I go on thinking." Ibid.

[88] "When I start a work, I never, ever, ever, ever know how it's going to end. For me, the process of working is still more important than this vague original idea." Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Lynette Bosch, "Interview with María Brito."

[91] O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba*, 67.

recast in exhibition. Richard Maschal described the encounter in the *Charlotte Observer*: "Entering the gallery is like walking into a dream in progress. It's not your dream. It's the artist's dream. But so intense is her feeling and imagery that it soon becomes your own."[92] The spectator's body fills the vacancy left by Brito in finding a way to relate to the human scale environment.

The finished objects themselves also seem to stand in for human presence. Brito often regards her materials animistically, on the way to exposing a self that can best be revealed (or communicated) through objects. She insists that her memories of Cuba—recalled through the reveries in which she remains "invisible"— "are usually linked to a physical space and to objects."[93] "Hay objetos que 'imply' la presencia humana," Brito explains to Juan Martínez, "[c]omo, por ejemplo, en éstas que están aquí para mí son sillas sentadas en un banco...o sea son personas las sillas, personifica o sea 'symbolizes' a person...sentada en este banco. O sea, no existe la figura humana." She later clarifies, "Es una manera de interpretar lo que es la persona."[94] This attitude remains true as Brito manipulates mediums. "When I come up with the objects, I see reflected the things that I feel internally," Brito reveals.[95] "Coming up with the objects" reads across media or stages of process: painting representations of objects on canvas, painting on dimensional objects, or transforming found materials into objects.

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[92] Robert Maschal, "Like Images Ripped From Her Dreams: Brito's Show at Spirit Square Pulls you into Intense Visions." *Charlotte Observer*, 29 July 1990, Arts section, 1F.

[93] O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba*, 54.

[94] "There are objects that 'imply' human presence…like, for example, in these that are here to me are seats in a bank…or the chairs are people, each personifies or symbolizes a person…sitting in this bank. That is to say, the human figure is not present. It is a way of interpreting what the person is." Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

[95] Milani, 1.

The environments in Brito's installation work are most often domestic—portions of rooms, homes, or houses—unlike Mendieta's performances, which dismiss the domestic house with distrust, designating the Earth as the only secure and "originary" home. The lost *house* is an easily dramatizable metonym for lost *homeland.* It is typical for exiles to imbue lost objects with supreme importance, or even substitute them for the self, as a portion of one's identity might be presumed to be lost with the loss of personal properties. The attachment these exiles have to irrecoverable objects and places recontextualizes Gaston Bachelard's concepts of "Topoanalysis" and "Motionless Childhood," in which, through memories of the *house*, we live through memorials, "fixations of happiness."[96] Bachelard distinguishes between memories of the "outside world" and dreaming "of the house we were born in," insisting that the enclosed protection of the house produces a container for memory: "something closed must retain our memories." He also draws an analogy between the house and distinct images of childhood: "Before he is cast into the world...man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle."[97] The cradle—*la cuna*—features prominently in several pieces by Brito, including *El patio de mi casa* [My House's Patio], *Come Play with Us*, and *Introspection: Childhood Memories*.

In discussing *El patio de mi casa,* Brito produces a meaningful parallel between the cradle and a kitchen, which she explains can be thought of as "la cuna de donde sale el alimento para la familia."[98] Thus, penetrating the already existing domestic memory

[96] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6.

[97] Ibid., 6-7.

[98] "The cradle where the food of the family originates." Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

space and proceeding further inside the house-cradle, infinite cradles can be found. The image becomes literal in *Come Play with Us*, as stairs lead from one crib to another, reducing in size and disappearing into a wall. Though here the largest crib is still of human (child) scale, it is of skewed proportion, its bars and platform set vertically on end. Minuca Villaverde of *El Nuevo Herald* interprets one crib containing toys as a "pequeña jaula"[99]—a little cage. The crib in *Come Play with Us*, like the broken cradle in *El patio de mi casa*, would be awkward to occupy. To echo Stringer's words, "Things are not comfortable."[100] *The Miami Herald*'s Elisa Turner comments that Brito typically "packs her constructions with objects that appear to belong to a home, but remain cramped and dysfunctional, distorting any sense of comfort."[101] Such visions of the house challenge the presumed security associated with childhood, mixing moods of pleasure and misery to produce a unique nostalgia.

Images of childhood rendered through adult hands possess a peculiar potency. *El Nuevo Herald* art critic Armando Alvarez Bravo offers that Brito's perfectly planned and executed sculptures also "have a childlike side….they are enormous childlike constructions. They have a playful style. This makes them more intense."[102] These images claim and reinterpret for the Pedro Pan exile the illness or agony that commonly describes exilic experiences. The child/adult who occupies Brito's structures might be suffering from Edward Said's "dyspepsia," Michael Mason's "gorrión," or else take the

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[99] Villaverde, 7.

[100] Stringer, 4.

[101] Elisa Turner, "Culture Class." *The Miami Herald*, Arts section, 9 December 2001, 3M.

[102] Armando Álvarez Bravo, "María Brito: La búsqueda y el exorcismo." *El Nuevo Herald*, Galería Section, 14 June 1998. My translation from the original, "tiene un latido infantil....son enormes construcciones infantiles. Tienen un estilo lúdico. Esto las hace más intensas."

form of one of Pérez Firmat's "walking wounded."[103]

The nostalgia for the childhood home for Pedro Pan exiles like Brito is doubly significant. Reliving memories of the protective house comforts a restless adult, but, for the child interrupted, losing the home/homeland in mid-childhood has added significance. Lynette M. F. Bosch describes Brito's "experience of exile and split identities" as a haunting urge to create artwork that reveals the "demons of possibilities she did not pursue."[104] When memories of previous houses revisit us, Bachelard insists, "we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood," which stalls the daydreamer in a suspended mental state.[105] He terms the systematic psychological study of these sites as they relate to our intimate lives "Topoanalysis"—simply, analysis of place.

Processes of memory nostalgically reconstructing (or re-membering) previously occupied domestic sites happen on a kind of stage of the mind, a

> theater of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles. At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability—a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to "suspend" its flight.[106]

Bachelard's description of this staging approaches something similar to María Brito's dialogic sculpting process and the finished installations that reproduce a theatre in miniature in the gallery. The sculptures are of human proportions, but Brito does

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[103] For more on these "exile illnesses," see my discussion of Mason, Said, and Pérez Firmat in the introduction.

[104] Lynette M. F. Bosch, *Cuban Art in Miami: Exile, Identity, and the Neo-Baroque* (Lund Humphries, Britain, 2004), 110.

[105] Bachelard, 5.

[106] Ibid., 8.

incorporate out-of-scale "miniatures" in her stage pictures. For example, in *El patio de mi casa*, a piece in which a wall divides two brief representations of rooms—a kitchen and a child's bedroom—there are two small houses within the "life-size" environment. One is a small house inside a broken cradle in the child's room. This little house, Brito says, represents the "self."[107] On the kitchen counter a glass jar contains an even smaller house. Compared with the very detailed environment to which it contributes, the house in the jar is crude and lacks embellishment. Its unfinished, whitewashed appearance continues as a raw, undetermined canvas on which further memory can be projected. That such indeterminate detail establishes an unfinished space for further contemplation reinforces the metasculptural or mise-en-abyme aesthetic. The house inside a house inside a house, like the case of the infinite nesting "cradles," is a signature quality in Brito's installations.

María Brito, *El patio de mi casa*. Smithsonian Institute Archives.

[107] Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

These are details so tiny that they might escape the gallery spectator's attention. A fissure in the floor near the wall divides the child's room (past) from the kitchen (present). Noting this fissure, Bosch insists that "[t]he theme of *El patio de mi casa* can be summed up as Cuba/Miami, but there are elements in the work's imagery that give shades of meaning to this straightforward summation."[108] Additionally, Brito observes of her own work, "Claro, son detallitos pequeños que, no sé, que quizás pasen inperceptibles así a las personas."[109] Of miniature and memory, Bachelard suggests that larger ideas are often animated by such inversions of size. For example, he points out that two geometric figures represented at two different scales contain exactly the same angled measurements. Reductions of scale can prove to be the imagination operating in a way that allows us to access, occupy, or contemplate larger spaces. The theatre of the mind knows no measurement; its stage has no scale, and in the dream-logic of examining the past we might be larger than the memory-specimen we wish to ingest. Once we mentally occupy the little home, its interior space can seem vast, even infinite. When we are overcome with topophilia, imagined miniature homes or dollhouse-size reproductions not only allow us to regress into childhood's playthings, but go "beyond logic to experience what is large in what is small."[110] Bachelard insists that by miniaturizing, we take possession of the space or object remembered. Possessing the house in this way becomes especially significant when noting that Brito's only representations of domestic exteriors—like the house in the jar—are in miniature. None of Brito's life-size works depict the house as a

[108] Bosch, *Cuban Art in Miami*, 106.

[109] "Of course, they are details so small that, I don't know, perhaps they go unnoticed by some people." Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

[110] Bachelard, 150.

dwelling from the outside. Perhaps a full-scale exterior would suggest that the lid could be shut on the container of memory.

The exterior of the labyrinthine configuration of rooms representing a house in the elaborate installation *Merely a Player* reveals another interior—a strange illusion, a mind-trick like a two-headed coin. This interior on the exterior is a living room that serves as a general access point to the house's private, hidden rooms. Critic Sherry Chayat describes it this way: "The labyrinth's exterior is the public room, covered with fleur-de-lys wallpaper and containing a couch, a lamp and several books."[111] The continuous interior signals the infinite recesses of memory, while its liminal, threshold-like relation to the rest of the installation/house suggests that this space is limitless because it is neutral, paused, "waiting for the action to resume."[112]

It should be noted that some critics term Brito's life-size installations "miniatures" simply because the environments they represent appear brief or truncated (such as a section of a kitchen, or perhaps an uncomfortably small kitchen). Or, the environments might also seem comparatively miniature when dwarfed by the museum or contained in the gallery space. Curatorial and spectatorial attitudes might also view them as blown-up versions of miniature-memories, treating the life-sized work like a dollhouse display because it is not a "real house." No one *lives* in the house in the gallery, so it must be a *play* house.

Though it seems crucial to make the distinction, the idea of a miniature is already in common usage to suggest not a size difference but an ersatz version of a remote

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[111] Sherry Chayat, "Hispanic Art Spurs Vandalism, Protests, Reflection." *The Post-Standard* (Syracuse), 5 December 1993, Stars - Art section, p. 15.

[112] Stringer, 4.

"original." When a displaced community re-forms around the idea of preserving a culture, the adjective "little" is frequently used to distinguish between the new location and the place for which it attempts to substitute—"Little Italy, " for example. Of course, "Little Havana," describes how a Cuban enclave has reproduced Havana in the district surrounding Calle Ocho in Miami. "The adjective 'little,'" Pérez Firmat points out, "is equivocal…[w]hat is 'little' about little Havana is not only its size…but its diminished status as a deficient or incomplete copy of the original."[113] Pérez Firmat terms the process by which these little communities form "substitutive."[114] The same way the Miami enclave substitutes for Havana, Brito's reproductions—even if they are, like Little Havana, life size and fully functioning—may still be perceived as being *smaller*. Mendieta's process also functions by means of substitution, whether it is a *little* mound of earth signifying the island of Cuba (*La Isla*) or one *large* country (Mexico) standing as proxy for another (Cuba). Memories and representations are generated as coping mechanisms; they become "little ways" of accessing the homeland.

While miniaturization does not actually allow lost spaces to be recovered, it can work to preserve the sentiment associated with any memory. Memories become layered in miniature until it is uncertain what we are recalling. A memory inside a memory inside a memory. Or, a memory of a memory. As critic Gary Schwan observes of Brito's mini memories: "She will create an entire miniature house inside the museum. In making the house, Brito 'walked through' her own memories—and, more specifically, the tales of

[113] Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*, 7.

[114] Ibid.

Cuban life related by her family."[115] Pedro Pans, having immigrated as unaccompanied children who were later followed by their parents, often work through layers of memories. For example, certain autobiographical episodes might become "re-formulated" after numerous recollections. Some memories might also exist as little more than collections of the recollections of mothers, grandmothers, fathers, and grandfathers. Brito fears that she will never return to Cuba, but her sentiments about what home was like "bring with them a magical comfort...I think I am afraid that the magic will just go away."[116] For many exiles there exists an anxiety of losing the *feeling* of home or ownership that remains even after the loss of place and properties ("I *feel* places that I used to occupy"[117]), of being dispossessed of not only the place but the *memory* of the place.

There is no patio represented in *El patio de mi casa*. The title enters the picture from Brito's sculptural process rather than the sculptural product. While constructing the piece, there played a song in Brito's mind that "wouldn't let go"[118]:

> *El patio de mi casa no es particular*
> *Se llueve y se moja como los demás*
> *Agáchate niño vuélvete a agachar*
> *Porque si no te agachas no sabes jugar...*[119]

Brito learned this *canción de cuna* (literally "cradle song" or nursery rhyme) during her

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[115] Schwan, 1J.

[116] O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba*, 54.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Martínez, "Oral History Interview with María Brito."

[119] "The patio of my house is nothing special/It rains and gets wet just like the others/Bend down boy bend down again/Because if you don't bend down you don't know how to play…" Bosch, *Cuban Art in Miami*, 106.

childhood in Havana.[120] The piece, however, does more than simply duplicate a selection of attitudes and memories from childhood. It establishes a kind of bifocal lens that produces an anachronistic and anatopic juxtaposition, recollecting a Cuban childhood through the perspective of a U.S. adulthood; it is a story of exile. Oakland museum curator Suzanne Baizerman describes this piece by using language that recalls phrases once spoken by Ana Mendieta: "This work really represents - you see the big fracture under the crib - she's been ripped apart from her homeland."[121] The piece reveals the Pedro Pan child-qua-adult all at once, a leap in place and time without transition, a narrative caesura, two stages of development spliced together.

Of course, "two stages" in *El patio de mi casa* can refer not only to developmental stages, but also to those of dramatic representation. The bifurcated set demarcates the threshold between past/present, child/adult, nursery/kitchen, and Cuba/U.S. An old calendar on the counter suggests that this present-day kitchen, or at least its exiled occupant, exists within a community of suspended time, *una cultura congelada* [a frozen culture].[122] The open cabinet reveals another detailed interior—again a container within a container—in which we find yet another receptacle of memory: a bottle. This bottle might appear empty, but Brito has left it to contain "air from the past,"[123] a manufactured article illustrating the attempt to make material elusive recollections of a remote time and

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[120] Jonathan Yorba, *Arte Latino: Treasures from the Smithsonian Art Museum* (New York: Watson-Buptill, 2001), 20.

[121] Suzanne Baizerman in Monique Beeler, "'Arte Latino' defies cultural stereotypes." *Alameda Times-Star*, 9 December 2002, Bay Area Living section.

[122] For more on this term, see my discussion of *cultura congelada* in the introduction.

[123] Andrew Connors, "Interview with María Brito," *¡Del Corazón! Latino Voices in American Art*, Smithsonian Institution, 1995, http://delcorazon.si.edu/artistas_05.cfm, accessed 29 June 2008.

place. The idea cooperates with comments made by Brito describing how she learned to express herself through sculptural material—when "you're dealing with a feeling that you cannot touch," it is "a revelation to be able to make a three-dimensional object that you could touch and feel."[124] Like the bottle in the kitchen cabinet, the sculptures themselves figure not only as ways of "bottling the past," but also as a process of rendering the intangible.

At the same time, the open kitchen cabinet suggests a temporary lapse of human presence. To recall Stringer's words, the scene suggests that there is "a break in the dialogue: something interrupted..."—an interruption suggested formally by the wall division and more violently by the fissure in the floor. The spectator contemplates the actor, the creator of this place, its inhabitor who is here in the middle of something, and "wait[s] for the action to resume."[125] Though Brito's spontaneous and evolving process of realizing an environment may finally reach completion, the inspirational sentiment—along with the dialogue between the sculptor and her materials—remains like the past: deliberately inchoate and forever incomplete.

Audiences play a more active role in *Merely a Player*, navigating through a fantastical recreation of Brito's house in Cuba, encountering nostalgic relics simulating past possessions. Of Brito's memory house, Andrea Herrera testifies that the "evocation of [this] living room, open like a stage set...also serves as the entrance to the installation. Beyond this point, as the viewer physically enters the structure, the installation takes the shape of a labyrinth with corridors and rooms containing imagery related to the various

[124] Lynette Bosch, "Interview with María Brito."

[125] Stringer, 4.

stages of life, existential change, and transformation."[126] As in *El patio de mi casa*, the environment here is segmented into stages that behave as both representations of stages of development and dramatic stage sets.

Brito emphasizes that the scene for *Merely a Player* should read as a "metaphor for the human psyche,"[127] a kind of travel through the mind. Curator Olga Viso uses similar descriptors, relaying that it was "a 'house' constructed within the museum. Visitors can walk through the house. They go from middle-class living room; down a barren hallway...This is a claustrophobic trip through the artist's memory and psyche."[128] Both Brito's intention and Viso's impression lend the piece a distinctly monodramatic quality, one that allows the spectator to be surrounded by reveries and recollections, occupying the recesses of the artist's memory. Exchanging their bodies for the artist's, spectators experience and extend the dialogue that Brito began during the process of her constructions.

A peephole in the environment gives access to yet another vision, another vein of memory. Peeping through it is like peering into the open cabinet in *El patio de mi casa*, or the cradles en abyme in *Come Play with Us*. Through this tiny aperture, "Cuba" becomes accessible by remote, present here through recorded media, as filmic representations serve as a stand-in for the "past." The images were not filmed in a Havana home, however, but in a Little Havana apartment, thus rendering the film a surrogate of a surrogate. This reproductive practice recalls Ana Mendieta's stand-in

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[126] O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba*, 55.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Olga Viso quoted in Gary Schwan, "'Borders' Gets Personal: Claustrophobic Trip through the Artist's Memory and Psyche." *Palm Beach Post*, 30 September 1994, TGIF section, 35.

locales and materials, or the copy of the copy of the statue of the Virgin who made blessed rounds to the Pedro Pan children's camps and performs in place at Biscayne Bay's *Ermita de la Caridad del Cobre*.[129]

The film reveals an image of another corridor, long and narrow, containing further possible arteries for exploration: a series of closed doors. However, the rooms we presume to lie behind them are inaccessible, not only to us (because we are not in the film) but to the film's protagonist, a young girl—who is, for the spectator, the only other "actor" to appear in Brito's work. The girl crisscrosses the corridor to try the doors, but none open. The film loops, playing over and over the same reel, emphasizing the liminal, suspended action that is already captured by the film's imagistic narrative. When the film ends, it begins, or rather "there's no beginning or end."[130] Stringer observes, "The curtains have not closed. We wait for the action to resume."[131]

A poem written by the artist accompanied *Merely a Player* in the exhibition catalogue produced by Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum. This text adds a silent script to the image, verbalizing a layer of lost childhood articles, themselves the real and metaphorical symbols that pervade Brito's work: a bed, smiling dolls, a staircase to the sky. The poem situates itself between the minds of the artist, the spectator, and the child represented in the film: a hybrid monologue capturing what might be experienced by the exile, the actor, and the spectator/surrogate. In this way the monodrama produces multiple vectors. The exile is divided between present and past, and narrations spill from

[129] For more on the background and significance of this statue, see my discussion of the statue and hermitage at Biscayne Bay in the introduction.

[130] O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba*, 55.

[131] Stringer, 4.

a split protagonist. All are engaged and detached, citizen and exile, observer and participant, awaiting and creating action. Brito captures what is characteristic of all Pedro Pan artists who translate their childhood experiences from the vantage point of adulthood; performed out of the mouths of babes are the words of elders.

Portraits of Brito on the walls of the "house" are altered to represent both photos of a pre-exile child self and an eternally unknowable Other, a constructed hybrid reality exacerbated by crossing borders. Some portraits suggest childhood faces overlaid with adult countenances. Perhaps these are images of the person Brito never became, or of the person she was suddenly forced to become. The installation's title is borrowed from Jaques's melancholy monologue in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* to express the passive role the children played in this migration, as the subjects but hardly the agents of their own destinies. The sentiment that each Pedro Pan child was "merely a player" cooperates with the view of 1.5-generation immigrants as "second actors" or deuteragonists, as expressed by Rubén Rumbaut and his son in *The Dispossessed*.[132] In Brito's case, Rumbaut's concept of "inherited circumstance" has a curious extra layer of passivity, since the *act* of immigrating, flying from home and making a new home in the U.S., was carried out *solely by* the deuteragonist. The act is laced with false agency as the absent first actor continues to act through the second actor. Viewed this way, the Self/Other represented in the altered portraits suggests not only the child-qua-adult that Pedro Pan exiles became all at once, nor just the past self (child)/present self (adult), but the child (deuteragonist) and the parent (antagonist). Carol Damian articulates Brito's sharp critique: "she evokes the pain of isolation, the shedding of masks with their pretense to

[132] Rubén G. Rumbaut in Peter I. Rose, ed. *The Dispossessed: An Anatomy of Exile*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 340. For Rumbaut's full quote, see my introduction.

false roles and identities, and the quest for eternal peace. In a small house that is as much a laboratory of self-introspection as a trap that warns of the errors of the past."[133] The memory house, however, is a labyrinth of limited options. A multitude of doors leads nowhere. The actor, the spectator, and the artist all become stalled by an unlived and irretrievable past.

The 1991 group exhibition entitled *CUBA-USA* featured fifty artists whose work conveyed a strong sense of "Cubanness and their yearning for their roots."[134] The artists represented a diverse community of Cuban exiles unified by their "shared identity as both Cubans and Americans, and their deep nostalgia for the homeland they have lost."[135] Brito and Mendieta were two of the fifty represented in that show. While closer in theme and experience than their fellow Cuban-American artists, they remain separated by the distinctly different aesthetics used to convey their exile. Brito's contribution, entitled *A Theory on the Annihilation of Dreams*, featured a child's bed pierced by a stream of spear-like directional arrows, a violent invasion of the past. Mendieta's piece was a silueta from her *Sand Woman* series, a small anthropomorphic mound of sand blanketed with seashells. Brito's indoor scene and Mendieta's outdoor scene both transport the spectator by bringing "little" representations of remote and inaccessible homes into the gallery space.

María Brito and Ana Mendieta were also exhibited together in a 1994 show

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[133] Carol Damian, "Maria Brito: Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale," *Art Nexus* no. 30, January 1999, 145-46.

[134] Paul Richard, "In a Cuba State of Mind: Tri-Venue Show Reflects Yearnings of a Lost Homeland." *The Washington Post*, 26 May 1991, Art - Sunday Show section, p. G1.

[135] Ibid.

curated by Viso, *Transcending the Borders of Memory*. In evaluating artwork of this smaller exhibition of Cuban-American artists in exile, Viso notices a common sense of the "fragmentary nature of memory."[136] Brito, who installed *Merely a Player*, and Mendieta, whose twice-absent figure was represented in photographs of her carvings and siluetas, constituted half of a quartet of artists attempting to forge a meaningful reconnection with the past.[137] Having migrated as Pedro Pan children, Brito and Mendieta share a unique history with which to come to terms. Mendieta's sentiments invoke imagery from Taíno cultures to articulate her involuntary exile, attempting symbolic healings for her wounded child/adult self and quoting from the same Santería rituals she found irresistible as a child. María Brito expresses a similar perception in having been transplanted as "merely a player." Both use sculpture and performance as a means substitution, creating ways to revisit lost childhoods through symbolic (and sometimes "miniature") reproductions of home. Both feel "uprooted" from home and orphaned by family, and both perform an elusive search for "roots" through their artworks.

"Roots" are literally incorporated into both artists' work. Mendieta, covered in bark, clings to a thick oak in Iowa and fashions a holy virgin out of a *ceiba*'s visible roots in Miami. In *El patio de mi casa*, Brito's kitchen sink contains a weak, disembodied root; the spectator's exploring eyes find a second root firmly planted and overgrown, spearing the child's crib in the room representing the "past." Mendieta performs outside, trusting her works only to a surrogate Mother Earth, in order to come closer to an originary

[136] Viso quoted Schwan, "4 Cuban Women Trace Memories in 'Borders'."

[137] Brito's and Mendieta's works were installed next to pieces by María Martínez-Canas, whose parents moved with her from Cuba to Puerto Rico shortly after she was born in 1960, and María Magdalena Campos-Pons, born in 1959 Cuba of Nigerian ancestry and who moved to the U.S. in 1990 after marrying a Bostonian.

womb-like protection from which she can never be ripped. Conversely, Brito's safety can only be found inside, in highly detailed, packed, preserving shelters. Brito's environments suggest that their occupant might return at any minute, while in Mendieta's the central figure seems eternally absent. Both express the interruption of having lost youth and country as impotent but pioneering deuteragonists. Their work demarcates childhood memories, synthesizes biographical artifacts through performance, and dialogues forever with an incomplete past.

Chapter 2: NEVERLANDS
Mario Ernesto Sánchez and Eduardo Machado

Performances of Operation Pedro Pan have extended beyond installation and performance art onto the formal stage. The exodus has yielded two noteworthy American theatre pioneers: Mario Ernesto Sánchez, founder of Teatro Avante and producer of the International Hispanic Theatre Festival, and Eduardo Machado, author of over 40 plays and Artistic Director of International Arts Relations (INTAR), a leading producer of Latino Theatre in the United States. Empowered by the theatrical medium, Sánchez and Machado have both used the stage to revisit pivotal episodes from their own migration on Operation Pedro Pan. Their plays merge past and present selves to reveal the lasting impression this transformative period made on their adult lives. Though the two dramatists' experiences share similarities—in 1961 they were both young males flying without their parents from villages outside Havana—they represent opposite ends of the spectrum of possibilities for young Pedro Pans. While Sánchez joined thousands of boys at Miami's Camp Matecumbe (the most popular temporary residence for unaccompanied Cuban boys), Eduardo Machado was one in a minority of orphaned children who were rescued by relatives at once. Sánchez grew up and remained among Miami's Cuban enclave community, whereas Machado's family settled in California. These fundamental circumstances divide the boys' cases sharply, but a close examination of each of their plights exposes significant common hardships experienced during their lives as exiles. Machado's journey is marked by the same sensations of rejection and solitude that Sánchez relates were characteristic of the orphanage, thus dispelling the myth that a

sustained family union might ease the transition for young Pedro Pans. Both Sánchez and Machado, fueled by lingering pain and resentment, create probing psychological portraits of protagonists who felt and continue to feel tormented by their past displacements.

Mario Ernesto Sánchez (1951-), Operation Pedro Pan, 1961

Director Mario Ernesto Sánchez emigrated from San Antonio de Las Vegas, Cuba, on Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. Eighteen years later, he founded Miami's Teatro Avante, host of the annual International Hispanic Theatre Festival, and in 1995 showcased his own play about the exodus. "Pedro Pan Finds Neverland in Hispanic Theater," reads one of the many headlines Sánchez has inspired within the Miami community.[1] His play *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan* (*Matecumbe: the flight of a Peter Pan*) takes its name from the camp in the West Kendall section of Miami to which Sánchez and most other Operation Pedro Pan boys were sent. Teatro Avante's 1995 production opened with a special ceremony commemorating the exodus and honoring Monsignor Bryan Walsh, who sat in the audience with Elly Chovel (founder of Operation Pedro Pan, Inc.) and dozens of other former Pedro Pan children. "Welcome to Matecumbe," Sánchez greeted International Hispanic Theatre Festival attendees, indicating his intention to sensorially transport them through space and time. The production's sound design further immersed spectators into the world of Camp Matecumbe by featuring an extended opening sequence with percussive Matecumbe Indian tribal pulses mixed with the crows, hoots, and howls of wild animals that inhabited

[1] Gary Greenberg,"Pedro Pan Finds Neverland in Hispanic Theater," *The Islander News*, Key People, http://www.key-biscayne.com/islander/people/ernesto.htm, accessed 16 May 2007.

the 22 acres surrounding the camp. Monsignor Walsh and local Pedro Pan alums were "returning" to the world of Camp Matecumbe, while others were experiencing their first and only impression.

Because the play offers a particular view of what life in the camp was like, Sánchez insists that spectators remember that his play is titled: *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan*. He insists that "the a and the un" be emphasized "because it's very important for audiences to know my play is solely based on my experiences and no one else's. Not everyone felt the same way."[2] This marks a very deliberate revision; the play was originally titled *Matecumbe: el vuelo de Pedro Pan* (minus the un), but as spectators have responded, it has been rephrased to reflect Sánchez's distinct biographical interpretation. Nevertheless, the characters in the play remain nameless and seem universal. The play suggests that "no todo fue color de rosa" [not everything was rose-colored] in Camp Matecumbe—in addition to the emotional difficulties expected in a house of children missing their parents—despite "las buenas intenciones de las organizaciones involucradas" [the good intentions of the organizations involved].[3] Though accounts of life in this largest camp remain as varied as its former occupants, recorded testimonies and other reports have remained largely favorable, especially in Miami's public media. A community television documentary boasts: "Camp life was great. There was always somebody willing to go out and play basketball, run around…."[4]

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[2] Mario Ernesto Sánchez qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan* Transcript, Dos Alas Theatre and Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, New York City, 14 April 2008, 5.

[3] Beatriz J. Rizk, "Miami: Meca del exilio cubano y escenario medido aunque efervescente," *Latin American Theatre Review* 34:1 (Fall 2000): 237.

[4] Gerardo Simms qtd. in Cardona, Joe, *The Flight of Pedro Pan: An Untold American Story* videorecording (Miami, FL: WPBT Community Television Foundation of South Florida and Florida International University, 1998).

The Miami Herald has quoted former residents of Camp Matecumbe testifying that "this is like my Ellis Island" or "it was like summer camp" or "this group of guys relying on each other…we were our own family."[5] For Sánchez's *Matecumbe* to paint a controversial portrait of the camp—especially with the Operation's founder and other Pedro Pan devotees in the audience—was daring to say the least, and the ultimate title change reflects something about its reception.

Teatro Avante's performance consisted of a sequence of haunting, often wordless, scenes choreographed by Leandro Soto and directed by Sánchez himself. Beatriz Rizk describes the production as "una radiografía del pasaje fisico y spiritual de un adolescente por los campos destinados a los niños "Pedro Pans" [an x-ray portrait of the physical and spiritual journey of one adolescent in the Pedro Pan camps].[6] Sánchez's dramatization spans the time a fifteen-year-old boy spent as an "orphan," parentless, in Camp Matecumbe. The boy's condition there is introduced by a glimpse into his final moments in Cuba, when he shares an extended airport goodbye with his mother—a scene that appears all too familiar for Pedro Pan children and the parents who sent them. The two cling to one other, but because of the Revolution's authoritative claim to *patria potestad*, they know there is no alternative.

At the time of Sánchez's own departure, Fidel Castro had already sent teams of youth away from their parents, either to the Soviet Union or to remote island provinces as part of the new "army of education" literacy campaign. The new government had denounced the family and substituted the country's traditional Catholic education with

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[5] Jennifer Mooney, "Cuban Exiles Reunite to Help Dedicate Historic County Park," *CubaNet*, http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y03/nov03/24e6.htm, accessed 14 January 2009.

[6] Rizk, 237.

Socialist doctrine. Castro's brother Raúl explained that this change was motivated by "priests [who] are trying to poison the minds of our children against the revolution."[7] Memories of this abrupt shift in educational method remain especially vivid for Pedro Pan exiles. Florida Senator Mel Martínez, who was sent to Miami through the Operation at age thirteen, recalls that "[m]y schools had been closed. The priests who were teaching us had been thrown out of the country."[8] The closing of the Catholic churches, newspapers, and schools was one of Fidel's earliest Revolutionary measures. Sánchez has vivid memories of his childhood activities at the time this transition:

> I dressed like I belonged to *la patrulla juvenil*. They gave me a wooden rifle, my pride and joy. I used to march through the streets of San Antonio de las Vegas, where I'm from…It was a lot of fun. But then they started closing the public schools, the newspapers, the churches, and I thought to myself, "this is not for me."[9]

In Sánchez's play, the mother presents her son with a wooden crucifix to mark their separation, the cross signifying the religion that he must take with him as well as the Catholic Welfare Bureau facilitating the unaccompanied children's safe migration.

Shortly after this rite, the boy is suddenly separated from his mother by militiamen who strip search him and steal articles from his *gusano*, or the vermiform canvas pack that served as the customary carry-all for fleeing youth. Since the new Cuban government had nationalized even the smallest personal possessions, the lightweight, commodious gusanos became the standard for stashing the permitted four pounds of clothes and anything else that might masquerade as an invaluable trinket to Castro's armed guards. In fact, these gusanos grew synonymous with the immigrants

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[7] Conde, 29-31, 44.

[8] Mel Martínez qtd. in *The Flight of Pedro Pan*.

[9] Mario Ernesto Sánchez qtd. in *The Flight of Pedro Pan*.

who carried them, and the term became a derogatory metonym to describe those Cubans of all ages who escaped Castro's Revolution.[10] Avante's minimal and highly physical staging exposes the deeply private invasion a child may have felt as the militia violated their belongings and bodies. In the same forceful grasp, the boy is separated from his brother and shoved toward a search area where he is made to bend forward so that his back forms an examination table for his own luggage search. Thrusting the boy's gusano open and upon him, the men compete for ownership of certain articles that they confiscate from his pack. Before he is permitted to stand erect again, the boy is strip-searched, the naked body of the actor representing the youth in full view of the audience. Sánchez spares nothing in revealing the indignities the children endured during their difficult departures.

Though Sánchez's narrative is largely expressionistic, revealing the Pedro Pan experience almost exclusively through the eyes of its young protagonist, the mother appears drawn beyond his impressions and deep attachment to her. The richness of her character contributes, like the contemporary written histories of the Operation, a portrait of the ordeal not only through the child's eyes, but a "reenactment of what our parents must have gone through when they decided to send us out of Cuba alone."[11] This two-way experience is accentuated when the mother and son gaze between isolated pools of light suggesting the pecera, or the glass "fishbowl" partition that separated children from their parents in Havana's José Martí International Airport.[12] The pecera offers a popular

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[10] See *The Flight of Pedro Pan* and Conde, 37-38.

[11] de la Campa, Román, *Cuba on My Mind: Journeys to a Severed Nation* (London: Verso, 2000), 54-55.

[12] The pecera is described at length in Conde, 1, and Carlos Eire, *Waiting for Snow in Havana* (London: Scribner, 2003), 377.

opportunity for Pedro Pan artists to physicalize the painful separation of children and parents; the partition provided the first and most dramatic recognition of their immediate disconnection. Victor Triay explains how "beyond la pecera's entrance…the children were separated by the glass walls from those they loved. It was inside la pecera that many Pedro Pan children truly absorbed the enormity and the seriousness of what was happening."[13] Carlos Eire characterizes the Revolution's decision to leave parents and children visibly separated for hours across a glass enclosure as "sheer torture."[14] Conde terms the pecera a "silverless mirror holding both past and future" while young passengers sat "looking at their bereaved family across the glass."[15] In effect, the pecera behaved as a kind of set prop erected by the Revolution in order to torment immigrants, and it took on a second theatrical identity in *Matecumbe*.

Lighting designer Luis Felipe Rosa's decision to fabricate the pecera with intangible barriers of light and dark conceives the partition as a more psychological than physical construct, and the chiaroscuro landscape it produces proves remarkably vivid. The pecera's re-creation adds a second layer of performance to the playwright's powerful mode of re-collecting the experience. "Mami!" the boy waves furiously across the "glass" to communicate with his frowning, solitary mother, "Ten fe pronto nos volveremos a ver" [Have faith we will see each other again soon].[16] Like most Pedro Pan children, Mario Ernesto Sánchez believed they would. They remained apart for nearly

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[13] Victor S. Triay, *Fleeing Castro: Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children's Program* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 72.

[14] Eire, 377.

[15] Conde, 1-2.

[16] Mario Ernesto Sánchez, *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan* videorecording (Miami, FL: Teatro Avante, 1995).

two years—an eternity to a child and his parents, but much briefer than many other Pedro Pan separations.[17]

This theatrical representation of the playwright does not, however, remain a boy throughout *Matecumbe*. Sánchez introduces a convention of direct-address early in the play in order to establish the split-character role of his autobiographical protagonist—the actor portrays both a younger self, fresh to the experience of migration, *and* himself as an adult narrator who comments upon his past plight. The technique echoes the challenges behind the playwright's efforts to divulge his childhood story as an adult. The child's chronicle flows from a grown man's pen and becomes mapped onto the body of an adult actor (Juan David Ferrer). From the mouths of elders come the words of babes. We can never know the child's story as it might be told from the child's perspective; a reflective, matured self must mediate it.

The actor leaves the heartbroken "boy" behind in the airport as he drops his gusano to assume the role of the "adult": "Yo mismo me preparé para el viaje" [I prepared my own trip], he begins, explaining exactly how a friend assisted him in obtaining a money order and the visa that led to his exit. The adult narrator reveals that his younger self had anticipated an adventure: "Nunca había volado en un avión" [I had never flown on an airplane before], he reports, recalling his expectations and fantasies about traveling up to "el cielo…con las nubes…cocoteros...flamencos…" [the sky…with the clouds…palm trees…flamingos…].[18] The testimony is nearly identical to one Mario Ernesto Sánchez delivered himself, as an interviewed subject in South Florida's WPBT

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[17] Greenberg.

[18] *Matecumbe* videorecording.

1999 television documentary *The Flight of Pedro Pan*. There, Sánchez described the adventuresome spirit that encouraged his departure from Cuba: "I always wanted to come to Miami on vacation. I had never ever been on an airplane before. To me Miami was a place in the sky, with clouds and flamencos, and for me it was a very nice adventure."[19] In *Matecumbe*, similar sentiments are delivered by an adult version of his boyhood self, an extension of the character whom Sánchez fashions to behave as a kind of hyper-informed counterpart to the child. The strategy affords the playwright the opportunity to reflect and remark upon his condition, as well as to educate an audience about the Operation as it "happens." This bifurcated sense of identity also exhibits the exile divided by time (forever contemplating the past from the present) and place (Cuba/Miami), and emphasizes that he experiences both *destiempo* (out of time) and *destierro* (out of place). This convention of expanding a protagonist into a partnership of identities exemplifies much more than the fundamental exilic principles behind Pérez Firmat's "hyphen"— it exposes the conflict between childhood and adulthood selves that is characteristic for Pedro Pan exiles.

The image of the "boy" in the body of an adult actor multiplies as others accompany him on his flight, which is simulated by a transparent plane façade filled with "children." The actors indicate that they are also "boys" by chewing their nails, hunching over to assume insecure postures, or hanging their heads in sadness over their departures from home. The lineup of boys cycles through the boarding process several times to simulate a "full flight" with the production's limited company. Ana Viña, who had played the boy's mother in the previous scene, returns as the flight's stewardess,

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[19] Sánchez qtd. in *The Flight of Pedro Pan*.

cheerfully repeating over and over to each boy, "Chicle!…chicle!….chicle!…" as she awards each one a stick of imaginary gum. The technique of mollifying frightened young travelers by distributing gum or candy on board, or before or after landing, was routine. Raquelín Mendieta recalls that each of the children on her flight was given a Hershey bar. Some passengers seemed temporarily consoled by sugary sweets, while other Pedro Pan children saw through the game. Iraida Iturralde remembers the first greeting she and her sister received after landing at Miami International Airport: "'Do you want chewing gum? Do you want chewing gum?…As if chewing gum was going to replace—."[20] Yvonne Conde points out that such sweets were something particularly extraordinary to these young passengers: "Many children share the memory of being offered gum, an item no longer available in Cuba, by airport officials upon their arrival."[21] The stewardess's incessant offering of "Chicle…!" in *Matecumbe* underscores the absurdity of this hollow but well-intended gesture.

The actor playing the boy is transformed into his adult self in order to divulge the details of his arrival at his assigned Camp Matecumbe, where older boys were usually placed. After he narrates a short history of the area and the Native American tribe who once inhabited it (significantly, he reveals, they were first recorded tribe to have converted to Catholicism), he expresses how dark this vast territory seemed on the evening he first arrived.[22] In the reverie, the character seems to vacillate between his past and present as well as between his two identities. He is half adult and half boy,

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[20] Conde, 72.

[21] Ibid.

[22] *Matecumbe* videorecording. See also Triay, 59. Triay states that the camp was "named for Florida natives converted to Christianity by eighteenth-century missionaries."

experiencing sights and sensations that were/are nothing like those about which he daydreamed on the plane: "Matecumbe es un lugar muy peculiar" [Matecumbe is a very peculiar place], he observes, "siempre huele como Navidad. Fuimos rodeados por pinos que crecen hasta el cielo. Los pinos hablaban con el viento pero yo no los entendia porque yo no hablaba inglés" [it always smells like Christmas. We were surrounded by pines that seem to go up to heaven. The pines spoke with the wind, but I couldn't understand them because I didn't speak English].[23] Camp Matecumbe's pungent pine forest seemed odd and infinite to young travelers who were suddenly thrust away from their families, residences, and country and into the middle of "nowhere." In *The Flight of Pedro Pan*, Sánchez remarks that his new sleeping quarters seemed especially remote when traveling there from the Miami's busy airport, and further still when he trod the dark, meandering path from the Camp's main office to his cabin:

> This priest, tall skinny—he was a mixture between Frankenstein and the birds by Alfred Hitchcock—welcomed me. He said, "Welcome home, to your second home in Miami," and ordered some of the other kids to take me to my bed, to my cabin. In order to get there you had to walk to a long road, because the office was very close to the street. The cabin was way inside. As I walked through that road, the other kids would come out jokingly from the side of the road and scare me. And they succeeded. I was scared shitless.[24]

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[23] *Matecumbe* videorecording.

[24] Mario Ernesto Sánchez quoted in *The Flight of Pedro Pan*.

The exaggerated image of a Frankensteinian priest reveals the extreme fright Sánchez experienced as a child so far away from familiar surroundings. The fear translates into *Matecumbe*'s expressionistic aesthetic: eerie uplighting distorts figures and the haunting sound design puts howls in the mouths of what first appear to be beastly creatures but turn out to be fellow camp-mates. "¿Hay alguen aquí?" [Is there anyone here?],[25] the boy desperately cries into his new, shadowy surroundings, whose darkness amplifies the helplessness he felt upon arrival. True to Sánchez's personal account, light suddenly bounces off of distorted faces as bodies leap and frightens the protagonist. When he finally reaches the cabin, his new comrades blindfold, surround, and shove him until an authoritative, offstage voice exclaims, "¡Está bueno ya!" [That's good, enough!]. He is forced to take the very top bunk in a tall stack of beds, three layers of boys in the air. The boy is attacked once more with punches and pillows until the voice of authority sounds "¡cio!" [silencio; silence]. Subtle lighting and musical cues shift the boy back into his adult version, who tells the audience that life inside this grim, combat-style *cuartel* [barracks] was tough to endure. He plays off having been sent to the highest bunk—"pero a mí no me importa la altura, porque yo sabía que así yo estaba más cerca a Dios" [but I didn't mind the altitude, because I knew that that way I was closer to God].[26] Despite this refuge and reassurance, the child remains vulnerable.

Certain details in both Sánchez's true-life testimonials and dramatic representations would match the account of any veteran of Matecumbe; for instance, Raul Iglesias observed that it was a camp "rule" for each new young lodger to receive a

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[25] *Matecumbe* videorecording.

[26] Ibid.

standard "welcome to your second home" greeting and Martín Ling is still able to cycle through a list of initiation rites that were typical for new boys.[27] However, Sánchez's focus does not rest on creating a character to represent all of the camp's residents. The action is almost exactly as Sánchez lived it. In fact, it is almost impossible to distinguish what is dramatized in *Matecumbe* from Sánchez's actual experience. He divulges a portion of his experience in the television documentary *The Flight of Pedro Pan* divulges:

> From the outside it looked like one of those barracks that the soldiers use just before dying in combat… I went in and someone put a grocery bag on my head and everyone started hitting my head…. [The supervisor] finally said, "That's enough," and they took the bag from my head and they offered me my new bed, which was on the third floor. It was one of those army beds. It was very high for me. I couldn't sleep that night because I used to wet the bed sometimes. And I thought "My God, if I wet this bed today, I will never hear the end of it." In the morning, Matecumbe was ready for me.[28]

Reports from other residents and inspectors have also expressed unfavorable evaluations about life in Matecumbe. After visiting the camp, former Army commander Alfred Schwartz alerted Health, Education, and Welfare secretary Abraham Ribicoff that the camp had squeezed "400 boys in wooden shacks and tents. They sleep in three high bunks…there are SIX (6) toilets and TWELVE (12) showers…the camp is located in an isolated area which abounds in coral and rattlesnakes, clouds of mosquitoes."[29] Robert M. Levine declares that "Matecumbe, near the Everglades, was isolated and mosquito-

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[27] Triay, 82 and Raul Iglesias, "From Cuba to Texas: In 1962, a teenager started his new life in the U.S." (Austin American-Statesman , 4 January 2009), http://www.statesman.com/insight/content/editorial/stories/insight/01/04/0104tales.html, accessed 22 January 2009.

[28] Mario Ernesto Sánchez qtd. in *The Flight of Pedro Pan*.

[29] Alfred Schwartz qtd. in María de los Angeles Torres, *The Lost Apple: Operation Pedro Pan, Cuban Children in the U.S, and the Promise of a Better Future* (Boston: Beacon Press), 156.

ridden, and children cried themselves to sleep."[30] Sanchez's play suggests that the lack of privacy and sheer number of boys and only boys at Matecumbe meant that any child had to learn to defend himself, despite the lurking presence of strict Catholic guardians. After being physically harassed at every turn—in the bed, at the sinks, and in the outdoor showers by the swimming pool —the boy finds himself no more secure than he was while being frisked by *milicianos* at José Martí Airport. Still, some accounts maintain that these attacks were no more than "novatadas" [initiations], very different than "the people from the *pecera*—they were…just acting like little jerks."[31] There exist several recorded reports of unwanted sexual activity in the all-male camp, airs of homoerotic machismo, and *bugarrones*.[32] Despite other testimonies that might corroborate Sánchez's portrayal, both Operation Pedro Pan's founders and Operation Pedro Pan, Inc. have resisted negative representations of Camp Matecumbe. The only publicly endorsed disparagement is the acknowledgment that the camp was popularly nicknamed "un infierno verde [a green hell]" because of its acres of pines and snakes.[33]

The playwright's revised subtitle—*The Flight of a Pedro Pan*—is especially appropriate when considering its 1995 staging, as characters and environments were revealed through highly stylized, mental-subjective sequences to convey Sánchez's impressions. As both playwright and director, Sánchez demanded that the audience not only consider his particular plight but experience it. His close control of the production's

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[30] Robert M. Levine, *Secret Missions to Cuba* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 45.

[31] Daniel Merida qtd. in Triay, 82.

[32] Conde, 78-79; de La Campa, 46.

[33] Conde, 81 and "Veterans of Camp Matecumbe," http://www.campmatecumbeveterans.com/, accessed 1 February 2009.

mise en scène, as well as the scope of what is seen—through strategically frozen action, the patterned use of direct address, tightly focused specials and pinspots, calculated stage pictures, and precisely choreographed action—navigated spectators through his autobiographical character's circumstances. Though the spectacle was framed by the proscenium arch of Coral Gables's El Carrusel Theatre, the meticulous command the director-playwright exerted over this expressionistic journey led *Matecumbe*'s audience to be piloted in ways similar to viewers of María Brito's Pedro Pan-themed sculptural installation *Merely a Player*.[34] Critical receptions of that work suggested perspectives similar to *Matecumbe*, as when, for example, Olga Viso described Brito's corridor of images as a "trip through the artist's memory and psyche."[35] Though these artists work in two different mediums, Brito and Sánchez both exploit bold visual cues to convey the anxieties that still linger within them decades after Operation Pedro Pan.

The extreme level of autobiography in *Matecumbe* elaborates Isabel Alvarez-Borland's argument that Cuban-American literature of exile travels from "Person to Persona," meaning that persons—or writers—translate themselves into personas—or characters—through the reflective distance achieved by their creative process.[36] Though both "person" and "persona" seem captured by *Matecumbe*, another layer, the playwright's personal post-production response that synthesizes both his dramatization and his actual experiences on which it is based, still exists outside the formal frame of its action. Román de la Campa suggests that though few people questioned a presumably

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[34] See my Chapter 1.

[35] Olga Viso qtd. in Gary Schwan, "'Borders' Gets Personal: Claustrophobic Trip through the Artist's Memory and Psyche." *Palm Beach Post*, TGIF, 30 September 1994, 35.

[36] Isabel Alvarez-Borland, 1998. *Cuban-American literature of exile: from person to persona* (Charlottesville, Va: University Press of Virginia), preface, x.

heroic Operation Pedro Pan, one that "saved so many children from communism," the "middle-aged curiosity of the very protagonists of that story" grew as time moved on, motivating the need to "come to grips" with history by taking a "Peter Pan flight into its own past."[37] For Sánchez, the play is an investigative flight into the past; theatre offers a medium to make this meditation possible. Reflecting on the lasting impressions his boyhood migration made on his adult self, Sánchez insists that if a second production of *Matecumbe* were to be mounted, the actors must remember that:

> We were young boys, unaware of the magnitude of the crisis going on around us, afraid of being alone, but trying our best to reverse our fate into an adventure never to be forgotten. It was a lifetime educational experience that shaped our character and personality, that taught us "empowerment" years later, to eat everything on our plate, to be patient when waiting for a wish, to appreciate family life, and to realize that the human race was not perfect.[38]

Coming from *Matecumbe*'s playwright, its first director, and its inspiring protagonist, Sánchez's advice to actors reveals certain teleological attitudes in response to his own plight. Though *Matecumbe* communicates an anxious and cynical portrayal of camp life, his subsequent contemplations discover a kind of "solution" to the "problem" of exile. The torment he expresses as part of everyday life in the camp after all instilled in its boys great power, patience, and appreciation. Sánchez's comments are consistent with the idea that Pedro Pan artists endeavor to "work things out" by attempting catharsis through autobiographical stagings of exile. Sharing a perspective with Sánchez and with de la Campa's premises, Michael A. Mason reasons that some exiles try to deal with problems

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[37] de la Campa, 54-55.

[38] Mario Ernesto Sánchez qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays*, 5.

that have no solution by continually "staging" solutions.[39] Creating *Matecumbe*, and presenting it to the public international community and the Operation's originators, facilitated Sánchez's discovery. By acknowledging that the hardships he and other boys experienced as a result of their unaccompanied migration made them fundamentally better people, Sánchez achieves some level of resolution through this production. His conclusion stands in great contrast to the anti-catharsis exhibited by Ana Mendieta's performances or the suspended sentiments of nostalgia produced by María Brito's installations discussed in the previous chapter.

Despite the critical representations of Camp Matecumbe's aggressive young teens and substandard facilities, it was homesickness that made lodging there almost intolerable. Ironically, in these communal, overcrowded barracks many boys felt a profound sense of isolation. Raúl Iglesias remembers that he "began to worry about never seeing my parents, my relatives or my homeland again…[t]hough I was surrounded by other kids my age, I felt incredibly alone, almost like an orphan."[40] *Matecumbe*'s protagonist embodies this quality of loneliness; he constantly disengages mentally from the camp's atmosphere in order to fantasize about a reunion with the mother who left him at the airport. The audience travels with the boy on these imaginings, which consist of dramatized hallucinations just beyond the walls of the stifling dormitory. Nearly undressed, the boy gazes from his elevated bed to discover the spectacular image of La Virgen de Caridad del Cobre, the official Vatican-crowned Catholic patroness of Cuba. Costumed in blue and white, the Virgin sits motionless just beyond his quarters. He

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[39] While Mason's focus is limited to Cuban exiles performing Santería, his theory can be applied to the solutionless problems of exile outlined by de los Angeles Torres, Edward Said, and Gustavo Pérez Firmat.

[40] Iglesias, http://www.statesman.com/insight/content/editorial/stories/insight/01/04/0104tales.html.

travels down to her and animates her with his touch. *La Virgen* unfolds her arms, releasing a wreath of flowers to embrace him. Slowly he lies across her lap, relaxed in her comfort. The pair assumes a posture resembling a pietá; the lights change so that they are illuminated by an ethereal golden hue as they sustain the pose. The inspiration for this tableau comes from a statue of the Virgin that was prominently featured outdoors in Camp Matecumbe and remains standing on its verdant property to this day. Sánchez's citation of this statue calls attention to the fact that the children are in Catholic custody while at the same time she represents the child's lost mother and motherland. He resurrects this protective symbol as a fantasy-surrogate for his missing mother, desperately clinging to the only continuity existing in the unaccompanied children's lives—their religion.

This idea that country and family might become accessible through one semblance of stability was a shared optimism among Cuban exiles in general. Many Cuban-American exiles continue to visit the shrine devoted to the Virgin in Miami, which has been erected at the city's southernmost point (the area of land closest to Cuba). Thomas Tweed's book *Our Lady of Exile* chronicles and contextualizes the popular pilgrimages made by exiles to the hermitage, known in Miami as La Ermita de la Caridad del Cobre [The Hermitage of Charity of Cobre].[41] At the site, a 15-inch statue depicts the virgin holding a boy Jesus—an image like the one recreated by actors in *Matecumbe*. This Marian effigy is also in exile; she was smuggled out of Cuba in 1961 on her feast day, 8 September. With the Operation Pedro Pan exodus still in full swing at that time, one of the statuette's first major appearances—before she came to rest in the permanent

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[41] Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

shrine built in her honor—was a thorough tour of the children's camps. This tour is part of the history of the hermitage that is recorded on its official website:

> The image of the Virgin then began a tour of camps for exiled Cuban children who had to leave Cuba without their parents because they could not leave...today we know them as the children of Operation Peter Pan.[42]

Victor Triay discusses the Virgin's tour as one that was conducted to meet the children's "spiritual needs," as camp staff members endeavored to make young residents feel as if they were at home to the extent of even "stag[ing] celebrations of Cuban holidays" and taking care that the Virgin statuette newly arrived from the homeland "made its rounds of the camps."[43] This performance continues every day as the small figure now looks out from her place by the Florida Straits. Tweed connects the Virgin's history with the personified, miraculous status she has been awarded since entering the enclave community: "The Miami Virgin had been enshrined in the parish of Guanabo in the province of Havana before her exile in 1961. Both her origin in the homeland and her exile in Florida add to the image's sacred power. Our Lady of Charity, the exiles believe, is one of them."[44] *La Ermita*'s location at the mouth of the Florida Straits becomes a site that exhibits the translocative condition of Cuban exile life in Miami, or the quality that many Cubans spend their lives—spiritually, at least—both "here" and "there." In *Matecumbe*, this translocative power translates into a mental escape the boy is able to

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[42] Official website for La Ermita de La Caridad del Cobre, http://www.ermitadelacaridad.org/ermita.html, accessed 25 January 2009. My translation from the original: La imagen de la Virgen comenzó entonces un recorrido por los campamentos para los niños cubanos exiliados que se encontraban solos, habían tenido que abandonar Cuba sin sus padres, pues no les permitían salir…hoy los conocemos como los niños de la operación Peter Pan.

[43] Triay, 57.

[44] Tweed, 103-104. While the touring statuette became the feature of the site at *La Hermita*, another statuette of *La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, presumed to have been featured in the children's camps, is preserved at The Pedro Pan Archives at Barry University in Miami Springs, Florida.

design from the camp by using this effigy of the Virgin. Double casting in *Matecumbe* adds another layer to the power suggested by the image; significantly, the Virgin is played by Ana Viña, the actress who had played the boy's grief-stricken mother and also his comforting flight stewardess. In later scenes she also portrays the camp's cook and resident English teacher, some of the many roles that were considered to offer "mother figures" to Camp Matecumbe's parentless boys. The actress is always costumed purely in blue and white. The play exhibits ideals associated with Marianismo (or perhaps "Cobrismo," given the strong association with Cuba's virgin patroness) in representing only sacrificial female characters, subservient to militiamen or priests and beloved by the boys. Triay notes that some residents would call Matecumbe's nurse Sara Yaballi

Stills from Mario Ernesto Sánchez's *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan*. *Left:* An image of La Virgen summons the boy from the camp's crowded bunks to form this "pietá" tableau. *Right:* A cook struggles to serve tray after tray of food while a priest restrains the camp's hungry boys.

"mother" or "Aunt Sara,"[45] and Conde outlines the close relationship that instructor Margarita Otesia shared with the boys.[46] Both of these surrogates even received letters from residents after they left the camp. Sánchez's *Matecumbe* makes it clear that the

[45] Triay 92.

[46] Conde 83.

presence of female personnel played a critical role in mitigating the disorders imposed by an all-boys residence, as when the cook emerges in a glowing white apron to offer a sack of food to the boy after the voracious appetites of his more aggressive bunkmates left him with too little food in his belly. The production's convention of role-doubling conveys that the female cooks and teachers of the camps typically "performed"—in their service through the Archdiocese of Miami—the roles of virgin and mother.

Another significant part of daily life at Matecumbe that posed a challenge for its onstage representation was the camp's Olympic-sized swimming pool. A feature of the property that was restored with the boys' arrival, the pool relieved some of the difficulties of overcrowding and hot temperatures. "When it got so hot that they couldn't bear it, then they had the swimming pool," Conde reports to reveal how the boys endured Miami's long summer months with so many bodies competing for the limited cool air that circulated in the camp's confining indoor spaces.[47] The pool also featured prominently in the boys' initiation rites, in which some newcomers were subject to a customary "dunking in the pool—fully clothed"[48] or worse. As veteran Martín Ling recalls, "they would tie you up in a chair and throw you in the pool."[49] However, the featured presence of this body of water did not signal refreshment, amusement, or recreation for every one of the boys. Raúl Iglesias verbalizes one innocent image that has remained with him for years:

> I remember one boy who sat by the pool every day. With a broken pine branch, he would make it look as if he was rowing. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied, "I am going home." He did this all

[47] Ibid., 85.

[48] Ibid., 78.

[49] Triay, 82.

> morning and afternoon. When I left Matecumbe four months later, he was still there.[50]

This poignant recollection portrays the pool as a place of reflection, one that might encourage homesickness and feelings of solitude. The pool also proved to be a place of great exposure and vulnerability, as the boys were often required to shower under its adjacent outdoor rinsing stations. Ling explains: "Because there were not enough bathrooms and showers, many of us had to bathe in the showers that were outside the pools, which were made just to rinse…. I had never bathed in the nude in front of anyone, and in November it is already quite cool."[51] Sánchez's representation conveys the mixture of all these varied sensations. When a whistle blows after the conclusion of an English lesson, a group of boys race to undress and dive in. From a stage left platform, the actors' bodies dangle, leap, and plunge into a luminous prism of imaginary water. Slow movements indicating flailing arms and legs resisted by water are accompanied by sustained hypnotic chords in the production's sound design. The boys engage in horseplay above the water, where the chords transform back into shouting and whistles blowing. Rhythmic trills from the whistle choreograph synchronized gymnastic movements among them, but the boy protagonist remains isolated. The alternation between designated under—and above—water noises and the contrast between individual and grouped bodies expresses the idea that the pool was regarded both as a place of solitude and communality.

While interaction between the boys seems relatively good-natured inside the pool, tension mounts as they head to the showers. The boys' naked bodies are obscured by

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[50] Raúl Iglesias, http://www.statesman.com/insight/content/editorial/stories/insight/01/04/0104tales.html.

[51] Triay 82.

darkness while pin spotlights dance across them to reveal glimpses of action. The boy protagonist waits to bathe alone, but the gang reenters to invade his private ablution and to mercilessly heap themselves upon him. The audience's limited vantage, with moments of complete, sustained darkness, leaves spectators wondering whether the boy has been a victim of a sexual attack or of merely another initiatory novatada. Reports from children and counselors at Matecumbe suggest that homoerotic activity was not entirely uncommon at the all-boys camp, thought it is unclear how much of it was conducted consensually between boys discovering their homosexuality, or forced by bugarrones. Sexual episodes were sometimes coupled or alternated with aggressive ones; one Matecumbe resident confronted his assailants by announcing: "I don't know why you are beating me up when some of you have been intimate with me."[52] Román de la Campa explains the distinction between homosexuals and bugarrones when charting his own Operation Pedro Pan experiences in "A Peter Pan Story," noting that a bugarrón—a word with no established English equivalent—is "not categorized as [a] homosexual in Cuba…[t]he sexuality of bugarrones is based on positionality and availability…in the absence of women, they act on men."[53] De la Campa also notes that the bugarrón identity links qualities associated with both "machismo" and the "acceptance of sexual contact among men," forming a "homoerotic machismo."[54] The blurred male fleshscapes in *Matecumbe* address these ideas obliquely. These suggestive representations help to establish a polarity with the *Marianismo*/*Cobrismo* that distinguishes the play's dutiful,

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[52] Conde, 79.

[53] de La Campa, 45. Though de la Campa did not stay in Camp Matecumbe, he did stay at another large all-male Florida camp for Pedro Pan children.

[54] Ibid., 45-46.

and Virgin-like female characters. The contrast between machismo and marianismo helps to construct the oppressor/savior tension that establishes and ultimately resolves *Matecumbe*'s plot. After surviving many difficult days in the camp, struggling with English and feeling alienated from many domineering co-habitants, the boy is "rescued" by his mother. *Matecumbe* ends with a poetic reversal of the opening scene: mother and child happily reunite, thus ending the boy's temporary but protracted orphanhood.

Though the playwright has remarked that the boy leaves the camp with valuable lessons learned, it is implied that he does so still without having acquired a skill critical for a schoolboy in exile in the U.S.: English. Though the play's action is largely visual, with only the leanest dialogue (excepting the few monologues delivered by the narrator-protagonist, most language is incidental), a small number of English words are spoken during one representative English lesson. Though the English teacher is characterized as a wholesome, charitable instructor—with a mellifluous voice, costumed in blue and white florals, and moving with exaggeratedly graceful gestures—the new language torments the boys.[55] The teacher enthusiastically repeats the English greeting "Good Morning!...Good Morning!...Good Morning!..." to each pupil as she hands him a pencil—a variation on the "Chicle!" salutation the boys received earlier from the plane's stewardess. The lesson officially begins: "Tom is a boy!," she sings cheerfully to the group who spits back the meaningless English sentence. "Tom is a boy!," they repeat over and over again, in the same singsong tone. The cacophonous expression tortures the students as they plug their ears and turn into dark silhouettes against the resplendent figure of the teacher. "Tom is a

[55] The teacher is a version of Margarita Otesia, who typically arrived down the camp's dirt road in what is remembered as "Mrs. Orestia's safari" a car from which the boys would unpack a chalkboard and books for their outdoor lessons. See Conde, 82 and Triay, 82-83.

boy!" they flail their bodies, zombie-like, under the tent of their makeshift, outdoor classroom. Distorted music underscores their grotesque dance until a light cue signals the restoration of "normality." The teacher collects the pencils—"Goodbye!...Goodbye!...Goodbye!"—and with a final flourish of her umbrella, she is gone.[56]

The English lesson sequence is one scene in which the group appears united with the protagonist in his interior world. Their environment transforms to reveal the new, alien sounds in their heads as they feel tormented by the English language. De la Campa remembers the pressures associated with learning English as a Pedro Pan exile: "Language becomes the most valuable currency…the world seems totally beyond your reach when its sounds and signs don't speak to you."[57] The statement recalls some of the boy's first impressions in *Matecumbe*, when he felt instantly lost in the green hell where "Los pinos hablaban con el viento pero…yo no hablaba inglés [The pines spoke with the wind, but…I didn't speak English.]"[58] Both during and after his stay in Camp Matecumbe, Sánchez struggled with English. His greatest strides came when he committed himself to the self-imposed task of translating an American history book word for word. Though he failed English in college, facility in the language eventually came to him by virtue of living in South Florida throughout the 60s and 70s.[59] Living in Miami's "mundo bicultural" [bicultural world] and studying at Florida International

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[56] *Matecumbe* videorecording.

[57] de la Campa, 47.

[58] *Matecumbe* videorecording.

[59] Gary Greenberg, http://www.key-biscayne.com/islander/people/ernesto.htm.

University inspired Sánchez to promote dramatic work in both languages.[60]

Sánchez founded his own company in 1979 in order to initiate meaningful change in the light fare offered by Miami theatre scene at the time, which was mostly dominated by Spanish *zarzuelas*.[61] As founder, director, and producer, he has declared that his mission is to preserve Hispanic language and culture in the U.S. In 1987 Sánchez's Teatro Avante began producing the International Hispanic Theatre Festival (IHTF), expanding its three-year-old predecessor's "Actuando en Conjunto" [Acting Together] offerings to include works performed in English.[62] He acknowledges that "One of the main obstacles we had in the beginning was how to incorporate Americans. With so many Hispanics arriving, there were language problems, but after 46 years of exile it is no longer a barrier."[63] He continues to promote Teatro Avante's Spanish language productions to a wider audience, using supertitles and international exposure "to make the plays more accessible to non-Spanish speakers."[64] However, as *Matecumbe* evidences,

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[60] Luis de la Paz, "Entrevistas: Mario Ernesto Sánchez," *El Ateje* (Diario de las Américas, 1999), http://www.elateje.com/0309/entrevistas030910.htm, accessed 17 January 2009. Despite the dedication to bilingual theatre that Sánchez expresses here, he has rarely supported English Language theatre. During the "Escenificando a Nilo Cruz" panel at the XXIII annual International Hispanic Theatre Festival, Sánchez went as far as to confront Pulitzer Prize winning Nilo Cruz about why he would write in English, insisting that he should compose his Cuban (American) plays in the Spanish language.

[61] Lindy Zesch, "Miami's Theatrical Cache," *American Theatre* 13:9, 1996. The zarzuela is a distinctly Spanish genre of musical theatre featuring spoken and sung interludes that blend operatic and popular music with dance. The 20th century Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona composed a number of zarzuelas, making the genre a traditional one for Cuba as well.

[62] Pamela Gordon, "The Importance of Being Ernesto," *Miami New Times*, 1 June 1995, http://www.miami newtimes.com/content/printVersion/235925, accessed 17 January 2009.

[63] Maximiliano Barrientos, "Sánchez busca un teatro de calidad, uno que haga pensar," *El deber: Escenas* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 17 April 2005), http://www.eldeber.com.bo/anteriores/20050417/ escenas_5.html, accessed 17 January 2009. My translation from: "Uno de los principales obstáculos que tuvimos al comienzo fue la problemática acerca de la asimilación del estadounidense. Con tantos hispanos que estaban llegando, había problemas con el idioma, pero después de 46 años de exilio ya no es una barrera."

[64] Greenberg, http://www.key-biscayne.com/islander/people/ernesto.htm.

the lush visual theatre that Sánchez creates with this company transcends language. His is a stage where conflicts are most frequently dramatized through movement-based action and sumptuously minimal mise en scène. Sánchez's process is so unconstrained by language that he shaped his play *Matecumbe* while he directed his actors, and no written script survives. This non-linguistic aesthetic, however, can erect as much of a barrier for some audiences as language. Sánchez argues that the theatre in his exile country is a place "where language is so sensitive. I think that is because Anglo theater is based on text; Hispanic and European theater is more symbolic."[65] He restates what he sees as a country-wide issue on a Miami scale:

> In this country, language becomes a big hassle. My audiences may go to shows at Area or New Theatre, but it doesn't work the other way around. New Theatre and Area audiences are afraid they won't understand the production if they don't understand the language. But good theater is good theater, and you don't need to understand the language to understand that.[66]

Audiences who patronize the English language theatres in Miami are not the same populations who support Spanish language productions mounted either at IHTF or the small houses confined to the Little Havana area, and reviews do not always cross over from *El Nuevo Herald* to *The Miami Herald*. Sánchez's festival does much to sustain a tradition of Spanish language theatre in Miami, supporting future generations trained at Miami Dade College's Prometeo Theatre, and recently premiering MaderaMen, a new group of young practitioners led by Frank Quintana—a member of the 1995 cast of *Matecumbe*.

Reflecting on both his play *Matecumbe* and the childhood self it reanimates,

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Gordon, http://www.miaminewtimes.com/content/printVersion/235925.

Sánchez contextualizes his life-long belief that the theatre is "more than a luxury it is a necessity, especially if it involves a theatre that is not commercial, that reflects our society and reveals the conflicts we have."[67] As the first to stage a dramatization of the unaccompanied children's exodus, *Matecumbe* might have had wider commercial appeal if Sánchez had chosen not to exploit such controversial conflicts. His unrestrained approach (with his organic method of writing-as-staging), however, designed a cathartic, meditative practice for exorcising his Pedro Pan demons. *Matecumbe*'s pat reunion-based resolution distances its adult narrator from the remote green hell that shaped the first years of his exile. He is able to escape the world he reveals, stepping into a spotlight to calmly reflect on the scene in a presentational address to the audience. This final image eerily echoes Sánchez's pre-performance "Welcome to Matecumbe" curtain speech honoring Bryan Walsh and Elly Chovel. Sánchez's prominence within the Miami community ensured the attendance of these and other representatives from Operation Pedro Pan, Inc., though they do not endorse his play by listing it with other creative works about the exodus included in their official website. *Matecumbe*'s resistance to commerciality, however, allows this former Pedro Pan exile to "come to grips with a complicated national history that affected [the children] so deeply at an age at which they could not act for themselves." [68] It is a history that he can fly back to as a playwright, producer, and director, confronting the past by simulating and reflecting upon it through the theatrical medium.

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[67] Barrientos, http://www.eldeber.com.bo/anteriores/20050417/escenas_5.html. My translation from: "Más que un lujo es una necesidad, sobre todo si se trata de uno no commercial, que refleje nuestra sociedad y muestre los conflictos que tenemos."

[68] de la Campa, 55.

Eduardo Machado (1953-), Operation Pedro Pan 1961

Unlike Sánchez's *Matecumbe*, Eduardo Machado's *Havana is Waiting* and *Kissing Fidel* are chiefly text-based, naturalistic in tone and linear in structure, and possess a sense that events unfold in "real time." Though the two playwrights expose a great deal of autobiography in their work, Sánchez's world remains expressively interior, while Machado's world operates in terms of verbal confrontations, challenges, and declarations. Like Sánchez, Machado creates autobiographical personas who, "unfinished," attempt to recover lost spaces and time from a vanished adolescence. Nostalgia and drug-induced hallucinations suspend characters in a realm where homecoming might be imminent. "A valium makes you feel like you are floating in a warm beach," Miriam insists in *Broken Eggs*, "If you take three you get to Varadero, Cuba."[69] Modeled after himself and other members of his Cuban exile family, these representations remain "psychologically adrift," swimming like poached meringues in seas of custard or *Islas Flotante*, the Cuban dessert that inspired the title of Machado's 1985 tetralogy *The Floating Island Plays*, which concludes with *Broken Eggs*.[70] "A floating island…that's me," Machado acknowledged when discovering this title for his first plays. "I had mined some of the most powerful themes and secrets from my family's history," he revealed, with the hope that "I would be able to float, past my own insecurities, through this hurricane of conflicting realities, into my new life as a writer."[71]

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[69] Eduardo Machado, *Broken Eggs*, in *The Floating Island Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1991), 176; 216.

[70] David Richards, "Another Epic, with 4 Plays in 6 Hours," *The New York Times*, 10 November 1994, C20.

[71] Eduardo Machado, *Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile's Hunger for Home* (New York: Gotham Books, 2007), 230; 240.

It was not until his first return home to his native Cuba, however, after which he composed *Havana is Waiting* (2001) and *Kissing Fidel* (2005),[72] that the playwright dramatized personal sentiments about having been a Pedro Pan child.

In *Kissing Fidel*, Oscar—a grown Pedro Pan exile like the playwright himself—insists that though he was very young he remembers Cuba well because "it is the only happiness I have ever known . . . fiction."[73] This cynical quote reveals Machado's critical routine of self-reflection; some of his characters may wax poetic about an idealistic past, but at the same time others dismiss the memory as pointless nostalgia. Oscar's line further emphasizes the playwright's process as one that seeks to rein in the past for examination on the stage. As Edward Said suggests, exiles often become writers or artists in order to compensate for their loss by "creating a new world to rule," one that is "fiction."[74] Theatre becomes the means through which Machado is able to create this world—one which still charms him and his character Oscar, though he acknowledges it is only a fantasy.

This combination of skepticism and nostalgia marks Machado's 1.5 generational classification; he shares perspectives that are situated between an earlier generation of wistful exiles and their assimilated U.S.-born descendants. However, Machado's general dramatic tone has been interpreted as one that parodies older, nostalgic generations of

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[72] Both plays were produced by International Arts Relations (INTAR), of which Machado is artistic director. An earlier version of *Havana is Waiting* was presented at the 25th Annual Humana Festival of American New Plays at the Actors Theatre of Louisville in 2001 under the title *When the Sea Drowns in Sand*.

[73] Eduardo Machado, *Kissing Fidel* (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 2006), 41-42. Eduardo Machado also uses this quote to introduce his biographical program note for the 2005 INTAR production of *Kissing Fidel*.

[74] Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 181.

"frozen" Cuban exiles. Jorge Huerta affirms—while obliquely recognizing the playwright's Pedro Pan status—that "[a]lthough Machado was born in Cuba, he was only eight years old when he was brought to the States and he does not seem inclined to return, satirizing the older generation that does."[75] Many of Machado's first generation characters journey without end toward an impossible homecoming, when they will inhabit their old houses again. In *Fabiola*, the second of the *Floating Island Plays*, Cusa, "the lady of the *house*,"[76] finds herself painfully exiled from her residence even before she physically leaves it: "I can't let them touch my things," she insists, when militiamen arrive to inventory her home and seize not only her property but even photographs of dwellings and possessions, "[p]hotos of my old farm, photos of my old car, photos of my old house."[77] In *Broken Eggs*, first-generation exile Miriam Márquez places a phone call from the U.S. to Cuba, not to connect with family, but merely to dial up her old house: "I sometimes think that I live at the same time there as here. That I left a dual spirit there…[t]hat's why I had to call. I miss the floor, the windows, the air, the roof."[78] Ricardo L. Ortiz points out that in Machado's work characters place greater attention on the retention of memories related to domestic Cuban properties than people.[79] This trend among exiles in general may be because people are moving into exile, while remembering places, as David Rieff discusses in *The Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami*,

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[75] Jorge Huerta, "Representations of 'Home' in Three U.S. Latino Plays," IV Congreso de Teatro Latinoamericano, Latin American Theatre Today (University of Kansas, 29 March – 1 April, 2000), http://www.dramateatro.arts.ve/ensayos/n_0002/plays.html, accessed 9 December 2008.

[76] Machado, character description for Cusa in *Fabiola*, in *The Floating Island Plays*, 50. Emphasis mine.

[77] *Fabiola* in *The Floating Island Plays*, 50; 105-6.

[78] *Broken Eggs* in *The Floating Island Plays*, 198.

[79] Ricardo L. Ortiz, 165.

may suggest that the past is secure, or that "memories are firmly in place."[80] Spaces still standing suggest that one may go home again.

Machado's characters' sentiments connect Gaston Bachelard's concept of "topoanalysis"—in which memories of the rooms and articles associated with one's originary home suspend one's adult self in a kind of motionlessness[81]—with the sensation defined by Said's "contrapuntalist" theories.[82] Differently than Fernando Ortiz's 1947 *Cuban Counterpoint*,[83] which transculturally historicizes the country's productive integration of tobacco and sugar, Said's notion, inspired by the musicological term "counterpoint," postulates that past and present (or, in music, two melodies) run counter to one another within one exiled self (or one musical composition). Experiencing old and new nations contrapuntally may make exiles feel as if they exist in "simultaneous dimensions"[84]—like Miriam's "dual spirit"—as lands from home and the new country map over one another in mind and memory. "A while ago I looked out at the dance floor and thought I was in the ballroom back home," Miriam reports.[85] Miriam in *Broken Eggs* was the first Machado created in a sequence of first-generation exile characters who habitually transport themselves into the protective shell of the memory-house, superimposing its image over everything that is seen in the present.

Twenty years after *The Floating Island Plays* were composed, this quality is still

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[80] David Rieff, *The Exile: Cuba in the Heart of Miami* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 58.

[81] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6.

[82] *Reflections on Exile*, 86.

[83] Fernando Ortiz and Harriet De Onis, *Cuban Counterpoint; Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947).

[84] *Reflections on Exile*, 186.

[85] *Broken Eggs* in *The Floating Island Plays*, 198.

apparent in both of Machado's "Pedro Pan plays," *Havana is Waiting* and *Kissing Fidel*. Machado's technique proves as static as his character, still called Miriam in *Kissing Fidel*: "When you go to the house," she instructs her nephew Oscar before he travels back to Cuba, "say hello for me. Say, 'House, Miriam says hello.'"[86] When Machado himself first returned to the island of his youth—forty years after he had left it—he experienced sensations that resembled Miriam's as much as Oscar's. "It's my house!" he exclaimed to the proprietor when he was refused entrance to the school that had been created from his family's old home. In *Havana is Waiting*, his character's words echo his own: "It's my house!" Federico protests as a Pedro Pan child come home, waving the birth certificate that bears his childhood address—palm-sized proof that his former self existed, "another person that was me."[87] In the play, the number and street are the same as the playwright's family's old residence: "330 Maceo."[88] In his 2007 (prose) autobiography *Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile's Hunger for Home*, Machado recounts his emotions as he re-encountered this building forty years after he had left it:

> And then I saw it. My home. I proceeded cautiously, step by careful step. Images of the houses in all my plays collided with memories of this building from my past, the force of their meeting keeping me at bay until I felt safe enough to get closer. Each time I looked at the building I felt threatened by the possibility that it would just dissolve into nothing. Spectres of actors who had lived there in my plays seemed to appear in the courtyard, playing out scenes of secrets and intrigue. I felt like one of my worlds could easily swallow the other, and I had no idea which one was real.[89]

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[86] *Kissing Fidel*, 81.

[87] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 15.

[88] Eduardo Machado, *Havana is Waiting* (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 2008), 23; *Tastes Like Cuba*, 280.

[89] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 281.

Staging confrontations with his childhood past from a now-adult perspective, Machado's native and exile realms demonstrate an extra layer of counterpoint; not only do remote and immediate territories overlap, but so do individual places, personalities, and their theatrical representations. Machado sat on his family's former property with the impulse to "stake [his] claim" though he could not (re)gain entrance.[90] Significantly, he sat on a "round cement stage" near the dwelling, an area where—as a child—he composed and performed his first plays. Only now, he recounts, "there was a whole world contained in that stage that hadn't been visited for forty years. And it was playing out before me as if I had never left."[91] He regressed while he staked claim on this childhood stage, anticipating a reoccupation of the rooms that were still vibrant in the minds of Miriam and many of his other first generation characters:

> I was eight years old. It was Christmas and the pigs were being slaughtered. The characters in my play were dancing in the ballroom, partying in the last throes of a lifestyle that would soon be obsolete. They were my kindred spirits. They shared something with me. We faced different futures, but they were equally uncertain. I sat, sharing the blurred space between fantasy and reality with the characters in my mind…they became more real to me than the people in my past, more real than I myself felt in that moment, and the whole effect was strangely comforting. Was I really home?[92]

The round cement stage is also preserved on the property of Federico's 330 Maceo; the "fictional" scene in *Havana is Waiting* is nearly (if not completely) identical to Machado's "factual" account.[93] Machado's staged reveries relate a highly metatheatrical version of Bachelard's notion of the "theater of the past," one that is "constituted by

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[90] Ibid., 283.

[91] Ibid., 282-83.

[92] Ibid., 283.

[93] *Havana is Waiting*, 36-38.

memory, [where] the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles"[94] while elaborating it within the context of child exile. It is more than just a natural reflection on the comforts more familiar to his child self that prompts Machado to plot his course through the house of his past. Four decades of anxieties relating to his lost childhood have become staged and restaged from that yard forward, and now back again.

Havana is Waiting preserves the same sequence of events as Machado has reported they unfolded during his 1999 trip to Cuba. Federico is hungry after his unsatisfactory visit to 330 Maceo: "Lunch. *La Terasa*. The restaurant my father used to take me to."[95] After failing to gain access to the interior of his old house, Machado also sought to satiate his "hunger for home" by dining at *La Terasa* restaurant, an old family haunt he thought he would never see again.[96] Once there, the playwright stared out of one of its windows to gaze into the water at the reflected image of his hometown. His sensations of occupying this culinary home-away-from-home again become layered with the representations in his dramatic work: "A breeze hit my face, the breeze that I had described so many times in my plays, a breeze that symbolized safety and security for my characters."[97] Oscar in *Kissing Fidel* mentions *La Terasa* only with sarcasm, as one in a collection of places he must "face" in order to make peace with the past: "The street, the house, the room upstairs…La Terasa, where we all ate paella and looked down at the poor."[98] His aunt Miriam details a recurring dream in which she castrates Fidel and

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[94] Bachelard, 8.

[95] *Havana is Waiting*, 39.

[96] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 284. A reference to the book's surtitle, "An Exile's Hunger for Home."

[97] Ibid., 285.

buries his testicles "in the sand in front of La Terasa" before celebrating inside with a mojito.[99] Machado and his Federico occupy a middle ground between Miriam and Oscar, proving to be less cynical than *Kissing Fidel*'s characters.

Using the familiar restaurant as a substitute for home is one illustration of the writer's common tendency to use food to represent lost time and space. Dining becomes a performance in itself, a Proustian strategy of recovering youth through familiar flavors, and a way of representing his physical and temporal dislocation—*destierro* and *destiempo*—exiled not only from the place but from the time of his childhood. Machado's recipe-laden memoir *Tastes Like Cuba* demonstrates this most overtly, but food almost always plays a significant role in the plays. The alimentary motif originates in a detailed monologue about the history of coffee in *Modern Ladies of Guanabacoa*, the first of the *Floating Island Plays* cycle, and surfaces most prominently in his 2004 play *The Cook*, which was inspired by a visit to a *paladar* (a private restaurant run out of a family home) during his long-postponed travels back to his native Cuba. Through the magic of revisiting a familiar restaurant, Machado declares in *Tastes Like Cuba*, "[f]or better or worse, I had been able to return to Never Land." [100] This deliberate reference to Peter Pan touches on the eponymous Operation on which Machado departed and defines the fictional Neverland quality that Cuba still maintains as a distant, inaccessible homeland.

When the plane took off for his return to Cuba, Machado relieved his anxiety like Oscar in *Kissing Fidel*—by popping a Valium and by writing a poem. "Took off to /

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[98] *Kissing Fidel*, 53.

[99] Ibid., 83.

[100] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 285.

Never /Never / Land," he wrote in dedication to his brother, who had accompanied him in the other direction on Operation Pedro Pan 40 years before. He questioned himself: "Who was waiting for me [in Cuba]? The same frightened child that left forty years earlier? I did not know if I wanted to feel him again."[101] The airplane, and the travel distance between nations, becomes a liminal field between home and exile territories as well as between youth and adulthood. In *Kissing Fidel*, Oscar suspends himself in flight: "I'm always this scared kid on an airplane leaving it…home…island…Maybe I'm not really a man…Maybe I'll always be a boy being sent away alone."[102] The sentiment originates from the months Machado spent parentless in the U.S.: "I took to calling Cuba Neverland. I felt like Peter—after all, I came to America on one of his planes. But I wasn't free like him. Neverland was a dream from the past, a place I had been sent away from. I was stuck in the real world and all I wanted to do was fly back."[103] Both Oscar's and Machado's testimonials resemble several of Federico's lines in *Havana is Waiting*:

> **Federico.** …little boy lost, looking for my own home. Should I fly in the window? And take away all the little school children? That have little desks in what used to be my bedroom. And tell them, "We are flying to Hialeah, then LA, then New York. Your little selves will always be here but...your voice will turn into something you won't recognize."[104]
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> The palm trees still sway. What I dreamt of all my life. Coming back to "Never Land." The sand will be white. And there's a volcano inside of me. A volcano called regret.[105]

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[101] Ibid., 265.

[102] *Kissing Fidel*, 37.

[103] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 74.

[104] *Havana is Waiting*, 33-34. The cities Federico lists—Hialeah, LA, and New York—name in order those in which Machado has lived since arriving in the U.S. in 1961.

[105] Ibid, 24.

> Peter Pan. Peter Pan. Tinker Bell. I believe. I believe in fairies. I believe in Communists. I believe you. I believe you suffered. I believe we wanted to strangle the life out of you…. I believe your living in isolation, was worse than my living isolated from you.[106]

Federico alludes to J. M. Barrie's "lost boys" in relationship to Operation "Peter Pan" in order to suggest his perception of frozen former selves whom he imagines live on, his "dual spirits" in counterpoint. Citations of communism and regret juxtapose the decisions of his parents (to move into exile) with those made by his new patria (to maintain the embargo)—both of whom he forcefully contradicts. The slim cast of *Havana is Waiting* leaves the protagonist's family unrepresented, an unusual circumstance for Machado's oeuvre, but one that is related to the playwright's technique of creating unadulterated autobiography. (His family, of course, did not accompany him to Cuba.) The family does, however, resurface in *Kissing Fidel*, bearing the familiar names of past characters.

The repetition of scenarios and character names throughout Machado's oeuvre demonstrates Borland's "Person to Persona" theories relating to Cuban-American writers even more literally than Mario Ernesto Sánchez's *Matecumbe*.[107] *Kissing Fidel* protagonist Oscar Marques, like his creator, is a writer born in Cojimar, Cuba. Both Eduardo Machado and Oscar Marques were sent to the U.S. from Cuba via Operation Pedro Pan at the age of eight. Machado was received immediately by relatives, so he did not go into an orphanage like most Peter Pan children. This unique bit of biography reveals itself in *Kissing Fidel*:

Miriam: You were not Peter Pan!

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[106] Ibid, 66.

[107] Borland, Preface, x.

> **Oscar:** Yes I was. That was the visa they sent me on.
> **Miriam:** But I was here waiting for you. You did not go to an orphanage.
> **Oscar:** You were worse than an orphanage.[108]

Machado's memories of Cuba, with the tensions he has observed in his own exiled family, provide material for nearly all of his dramatic work. When *The Floating Island Plays* was staged as a mammoth six-hour, two-part production at The Mark Taper Forum in 1994, it was reported that the playwright sometimes left rehearsals muttering "I can't spend any more time with my family."[109] Family names are used and recycled as character names in many of Machado's plays. "Oscar," Machado's most frequently used character name, began with Oscar Hernández, a character in *The Floating Island Plays* modeled after his maternal grandfather, also named Oscar Hernández.[110] "Oscar" in *Kissing Fidel*—a descendant of Oscar Hernández, and representative of the Oscar in *Broken Eggs* fifteen years later—has unresolved feelings about his passage as a Pedro Pan child. Oscar's aunt Yolanda resembles Machado's aunt Yolanda, who tortured him with the idea that he would never see his parents again once they sent him to the United States. *Kissing Fidel* takes place 33 years after the character's unaccompanied migration, in a Cuban funeral parlor in Miami. The family's matriarch, Oscar's grandmother, has just died when he arrives with the shocking announcement that he is going back to Cuba to kiss and forgive Fidel. Chaos ensues, and hundreds of cups of Cuban coffee are drunk from jittery hands, continually dispensed from two large urns center stage. Cuba shifts from an actual setting to a virtual memory—as it has shifted in the minds of the exiles the characters represent. Though they can no longer feel at home in the country for which

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[108] *Kissing Fidel*, 39.

[109] Ben Brantley, "Creator of a Paradise Lost" in *The New York Times* 23 October 1994, 6:38.

[110] Ibid.

they are longing, the memory of home sustains many characters. Ricardo L. Ortiz remarks that Machado's characters are "addicted" or "hooked" on visions of homecoming, taking "hits" off of fantasy as frequently as they sip café.[111] What is real and what is imagined is of no consequence; the fantasy of Cuba has become real for it colors every aspect of their lives.

Cuban fantasies keep *Kissing Fidel*'s Hernández-Marques family challenging each other in vicious arguments, even attempting to disengage somehow from familial bonds. Loyalty to the homeland prevails above loyalty to the home. The exaggerated setting suggests "the most expensive Cuban funeral parlor"[112] in Miami, and a tense point just across the straits from the exiled characters' lost country. The family longs to return, but the land they call home is the Cuba of 1958. Only 90 miles away, it remains constantly present, though just out of reach. INTAR Producing Associate Megan Smith notes that Oscar's aunts, Yolanda and Miriam, regard their lives in Miami "as a dream (or a nightmare) from which they will someday wake. Their lives as refugees, their lives in exile, are not their real lives. Their real lives cannot resume until they return to Cuba."[113] Exile is blamed for all of the family's flaws, sins, and neurotic tendencies. Oscar's aunts check themselves:

> **Miriam.** This is not our real life, right?
> **Yolanda.** Miami?
> **Miriam.** Yes.
> **Yolanda.** I hope not.
> **Miriam.** Good because in my real life I want to be a faithful wife.[114]

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[111] Ricardo L. Ortiz, *Cultural Erotics in Cuban America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 144.

[112] *Kissing Fidel*, 10.

[113] Megan Smith, Program note for *Kissing Fidel* (New York: INTAR, Kirk Theatre, 2005), 1.

[114] *Kissing Fidel*, 82.

The family's inchoate collective identity becomes amplified into hysteria after Oscar announces his plans to kiss Fidel. Machado's writing itself seems "overstimulated to the point of hysteria," as noted by critic Charles Isherwood in his review of INTAR's production. Isherwood also observes that the play's wandering structure stems from Oscar's "debilitating struggle to forge a cohesive identity" after "the trauma of being uprooted" from his homeland at age eight.[115] Oscar's arms are cut from multiple suicide attempts, but his father, Osvaldo, still disowns him for wanting to visit Cuba in order to restore "meaning" to his life—meaning that has been missing since childhood. The eccentric funeral parlor display escalates to reveal Oscar's radical instability, and bizarre impulses are released among the family. The chaotic scene is interrupted by the late entrance of a new character, Ismael, a cousin from the island. Sunburnt and filthy from his dangerous raft escape, Ismael incites a convulsive collision of perspectives. Because the balsero risked his life to escape the tyrannical Fidel, Osvaldo wishes he could exchange him for his own son. Miriam rushes to make sure that her classless relative is bathed and dressed up before anyone sees him—and before he soils anything in the upscale Cuban funeral parlor. Meanwhile, Oscar kisses and sexually molests Ismael (who comes directly from Cuba) in order to ingest a bit of home. Oscar even suggests payment after a resistant Ismael admits fornicating with tourists in order to eat in Cuba. Despite his leftist proclamations, Oscar samples Cuba like an assimilated American capitalist—by consuming it.

The incestual chain does not end there. U.S.-born Daniel, Miriam's son, moves

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[115] Charles Isherwood, "Planting Big Wet Ones on the Face of Cuba," *The New York Times*, 22 September 2005.

closer to a mythical Cuba he has never seen by falling in love with his cousin Oscar. It is also revealed that Oscar and Miriam have shared not only Valiums, but their bodies as well. INTAR's 2005 production elaborated upon the physical relationship that is intimated between Oscar and Miriam in the script, adding deep-mouthed kisses and groping embraces. Jesus Hernández Cuellar sums up Machado's dramatis personae as "caricature representations of the Cuban family in exile,"[116] while *New York Times* critic Isherwood comments on Machado's suggestion that exiles with "no fixed sense of home find it impossible to establish emotional boundaries in their lives."[117] Machado insists that his plots of incest and other extremes are his way of exploiting the dramatic medium in order to "purge" himself in a way impossible in "real life."[118] Influenced by Wilhelm Reich after Freud, Machado conflates the dramatic catharsis with orgasm as a cure for neuroses.[119] Ricardo L. Ortiz elaborates on the playwright's "perver[sion] of the institution of the Cuban family," suggesting that through his characters Machado implies that Cubans have listened "too seriously to Marx and not seriously enough to Freud."[120]

Oscar's "fear of childhood" manifests itself corporeally—his unresolved anxieties about the past revive symptoms of an illness that began after his solo migration. He is "sick" with exile. Oscar screams and spits and flogs himself, vividly recalling hallucinations that have haunted him from childhood. Men surround and poke him with

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[116] Jesus Hernandez Cuellar, "Cultural Exchange Goes Only One Way," *Contacto Magazine*, 10 October 1998, *CubaNet*, http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y98/oct98/07e3.htm, accessed 3 February, 2009.

[117] Charles Isherwood, "Planting Big Wet Ones on the Face of Cuba."

[118] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 236.

[119] Ibid., 190. See also Reich, Wilhelm, Mary Higgins, and Chester M. Raphael, *Genitality in the Theory and Therapy of Neurosis* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux), 1980.

[120] *Cultural Erotics in Cuban America*, 167.

silver-tipped canes, molesting him sexually and declaring, "We are waiting for you in Cuba;" and his dead uncle assures him he will never pass to heaven until he comes home to Cuba first.[121] This vision isolates Miami as a kind of purgatory—a waiting place, that is neither Cuba nor really part of the U.S. The character's neurotic tendencies dramatize the "schizophrenia of exile"—a phrase Maida Watson invented to diagnose the bifurcated self established by some destierros.[122] One strong shot of café revives Oscar after each "attack." While these psychophysiological "attacks" allow Oscar's exilic agony to be made visible for an audience, the strategy also demonstrates a continuation of the long line of analogies that have been drawn between exile and illness. Said has diagnosed exiles with a chronic "dyspepsia," resulting from having grown accustomed to homelessness.[123] Relating specifically to Cuban exiles, Pérez Firmat termed his in-group the "walking wounded,"[124] sociologist María Cristina García has associated nostalgia with madness,[125] and Michael A. Mason has diagnosed Cubans with a malady he dubs that of the "gorrión" whose "symptoms" involve an insatiable yearning for Cuba.[126] Mason suggests that exiles often prompt themselves to "stage solutions" when none are

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[121] *Kissing Fidel*, 53.

[122] Ana María Simo, Exiles, unpublished manuscript qtd. in Maida Watson, "The Search for identity in the Plays of Three Cuban American Female Dramatists," *Bilingual Review/Press* 16:2-3 (Tempe: Arizona State University, December 1991): 194.

[123] Edward Said, *Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals* in the *Edward Said Reader* (Random House, 1993), 373.

[124] Pérez-Firmat qtd. in Bridget Booher, "Living on the Hyphen: Gustavo Pérez Firmat," *Duke Magazine* (Durham: North Carolina: Duke University, 25 March 2008), http://www.dukemagazine.duke.edu/alumni/dm4/hyphen_txt.html, accessed 5 August 2008.

[125] María Cristina García: *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida 1959-94*, (University of California Press, 1996), 24.

[126] M.A. Mason, *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 48.

available in the real world.[127] While acknowledging the family-based inspirations that culminated in *Kissing Fidel*, Machado notes that this piece and its Pedro Pan protagonist are the most recent participants in a struggle to understand his life there in the context of his exile and his family. He confirms that through his playwriting process he "struggled to find enlightenment and peace"[128] concerning his "unresolved issues"[129] about Cuba and his family. Familial conflicts in exile continued to link him back to Pedro Pan. After being reunited with his parents for almost a decade, Machado left his parents' California home when his father forbade him to study theatre. As a former Pedro Pan child, Machado answered his mother's desperate "How can you live without your parents?" with "I've done it before!"[130] The family tried to alter Machado's professional course away from the theatre by sending him to his old Cuban psychiatrist, now practicing in Queens. He began taking "massive doses of Valium" several times a day—a habit he cites in all his plays, including *Havana is Waiting* and *Kissing Fidel*, to dramatize the ineffectual coping strategies employed by exiles.

While popping Valiums, Oscar explains his belief that if he kisses Fidel, "the separation between us" will end.[131] When his aunts contest that it was *Fidel* who separated the family, Oscar shifts the agency to the older members of the family who "left" (and decided that he was leaving), thus separating *themselves*. Miriam threatens the

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[127] While Mason's focus is limited to Cuban exiles performing Santería, his theory can be applied to the solutionless problems of exile outlined by Said, de los Angeles Torres, and Pérez Firmat.

[128] Machado qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays*, 9.

[129] Everett Evans, "Hispanic Playwright Keeps Sights on Cuba," *The Houston Chronicle*, 13 October 2006, Cuba Direct, http://cuba-l.unm.edu/?nid=16979&cat=cu, accessed 4 February 2009.

[130] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 185.

[131] *Kissing Fidel*, 44.

resentful nephew she once guarded after he arrived in the U.S. on Operation Pedro Pan:

> **Miriam.** Don't ever speak to me again. If you go. Don't ever come to talk to me. Don't ever ask me for anything.
> **Oscar.** What difference would that make to me? I never speak to you anyway. I'm going to Cuba.
> **Miriam.** Not while I am alive.[132]

This charged confrontation brings on another "attack," a physical and sexual hallucination of the men with canes. In *The Exile,* David Rieff explains that the typical Cuban family living abroad in Miami attaches a stigma to any trip made back to the island during Fidel's "ephemeral" reign. Rieff quotes one Cuban mother addressing her son after he has returned from such a visit: "When you left, I thought I would die, and while you were gone, I did die a little each day." Such guilt-inducing remarks are characterized by Rieff as "more than simple histrionic posing…posing and performance" because they contain "anguish" that is very real.[133] Machado's own return to Cuba, with the plays that have both anticipated it and resulted from it, have allowed him to "shed angst" that has him declaring that he no longer regards writing as compulsory.[134] Both Oscar's fictional and Machado's real resentment toward relatives on either side of his Pedro Pan migration counters the guilt imposed on them by their parents. This resentment generates the dramatic conflict for *Kissing Fidel*.

Ramón de la Campa notes that the impulse for Pedro Pans to come to grips with a past during which they couldn't act for themselves leads to a journey that is "ticklish, if not risky." He questions, "Can people ever sit in judgment on their family, Church, and

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[132] Ibid., 30.

[133] Rieff, 22.

[134] Christine Dolen, "Playwright brings to the stage a portrait of Cuban exile experience" *The Miami Herald,* 1 May 2003, Entertainment News, 1.

nation, even after they turn fifty? Can they ever recapture a lost past, or register suspicions about historical events that engulfed everyone, most of all themselves?"[135] De la Campa's questions about grown Pedro Pans state the objectives of Machado's autobiographical protagonists Federico and Oscar, who throughout *Havana is Waiting* and *Kissing Fidel* challenge their families' decisions to send them away unaccompanied at the age of eight and struggle to resolve anxieties that have plagued them since leaving Cuba. Machado has expressed feeling deep resentment and hatred toward his parents, who sent him on Operation Pedro Pan with the extra obligation of becoming a little father to his little brother.[136] He has focused more on the harmlessness of doctrine than on regulations relating to *patria potestad*: "They were teaching us Marxism in school...but my parents treated it like they were gassing us," Machado told *The New York Times*. This comment earned him more than one angry letter to the editor.[137] As a one-and-a-halfer Machado remains on the border between characteristically nostalgic and assimilated generations and demonstrating characteristics from both. Because of this, the playwright's collection of attitudes can be found not only within this one conflicted character, but in all of the characters in the play, as Machado presents a range of religious, familial, and political viewpoints. It is too simplistic to rest on the assumption that Machado is merely staging the older generations of family members in relationship to himself. Most of the represented older generations have passed, but their clashing political perspectives and exile experiences continue to reside within Machado, who

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[135] de La Campa, 55.

[136] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 81.

[137] Mireya Navarro, "A Return to Cuba, A Search For Himself," *The New York Times*, 21 October 2001, AR6. José Lucas Badue, "Operation Pedro Pan; Look to Castro," *The New York Times*, Letter to the Editor, Arts and Leisure Desk (4 November 2001): 4.

remains "adrift."[138] Huerta observes that Machado's tendency to transform his most influential relatives into characters produces a full "spectrum of today's upper middle-class Cuban family."[139] Though in *Havana is Waiting* it is Federico and in *Kissing Fidel* it is Oscar who best aligns with Machado's autobiography, the playwright seems to fracture his conflicted self into pieces or "versions" to establish the other characters in this familial spectrum. Once his own discordant attitudes exist in a multitude of personas, his interior conflicts may be played out.

The process is similar to the one Augusto Boal prescribes as a remedy for social ailments plaguing any individual in *Rainbow of Desire*. Boal suggests that dividing one's unsolved tensions into clearly definable strains may produce a "rainbow" of personalities that behave as "constituent parts of the protagonist" who can then "control them, or at least try to control them" as they battle it out.[140] Machado's reports on the early formation of his writing process reinforce this: "how do I write a play?...I really found the conflict inside myself and gave some to each character."[141] A therapeutic exercise of writing an imaginary letter of forgiveness to his mother—toward whom he had felt resentment since his solo migration—also played a role in birthing his very first dramatic conflicts.[142] Given the fusion of roles in the orchestration of Operation Pedro Pan—

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[138] David Richards, "Another Epic, with 4 Plays in 6 Hours," *The New York Times*, 10 November 1994, C20.

[139] Huerta, http://www.dramateatro.arts.ve/ensayos/n_0002/plays.html. Huerta discusses this spectrum specifically in association with *Broken Eggs*.

[140] Adrian Jackson, Trans., Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (Taylor & Francis, 1995), 152.

[141] Eduardo del Rio, *One Island Many Voices* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 62.

[142] Laura Deni "Afternoon Tea," *Broadway to Vegas*, http://www.broadwaytovegas.com/December4,2005.html, accessed 1 February 2009.

parents who dictated the actions of their children who in turn assumed parenthood for self and siblings—compound identities must be sorted for introspection. Machado declares that there is a side of him who feels that "in being sent here, my real voice was taken away from me."[143] Creating a spectrum of characters is an attempt to recover that voice. Through performance, the "deuteragonist" status of all passive unaccompanied children transforms into the more active position of "protagonist."[144] Staged representations constitute, as Said suggests, a "new world to rule."[145] Though the circumstances remain unchanged, one may confront the past by restaging it. Theatre becomes the battleground for Machado, a Neverland space where he can hope to resolve the hostilities that have lingered since his arrested childhood.

"Someone doesn't write 30 plays about Cubans without seeing all sides of the struggle," Machado insists.[146] He scripts portions of Cuba's conflicted viewpoints through Ernesto, a Cuban resident in *Havana is Waiting*. Ernesto offers Federico a revolutionary's perspective on Operation Pedro Pan:

> **Ernesto.** Peter Pan. What an odd name. We sent thirteen thousand children away from their bicycles, their dolls, their toy guns. The parents that loved them—even though they were misguided.[147]
>
> Shameful…So many kids, thirteen thousand. Sent to the U.S. Like cattle, all because of a CIA plot and an English woman living here in Cuba. She was a spy, when she got old the CIA sent her a wheelchair. She died here.[148]

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[143] Evans, http://cuba-l.unm.edu/?nid=16979&cat=cu.

[144] See my Introduction and Chapter 1, and also Rubén G. Rumbaut in Peter I. Rose, ed., *The Dispossessed: An Anatomy of Exile*, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 340.

[145] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 181.

[146] Dolen,1.

[147] *Havana is Waiting*, 67.

[148] Ibid., 18.

Ernesto refers to Penny Powers, a British schoolteacher who taught in Havana and was the "heart of the [clandestine] network"[149] that made Operation Pedro Pan possible. In *Operation Pedro Pan: The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Children*, Yvonne Conde reports: "Penny Powers died in Cuba a frail old woman. Before her death she had received a much-needed wheelchair from the Pedro Pan Group, whose members are the same children she had aided more than thirty years earlier."[150] In response to the account Ernesto delivers in *Havana is Waiting*, Federico asks, "Was her name Wendy?"[151] He thus suggests that Penny Powers was female counterpart to Bryan Walsh and James Baker, who engineered the movement of all Peter Pan "Lost Boys" between Neverland (Cuba) and the real world (U.S.).

Havana is Waiting dramatizes one particular event that stands as the most significant of Machado's performances in letting go of years of pain and angst since his unaccompanied migration. During his first trip "home" to Cuba, still unsatiated after visiting his old house and dining at La Terasa in Cojimar, Machado followed a line of protesters along *el Malecón* (Havana's seawall) to a "stage set up in front of the United States intersection."[152] The mass assembly was demonstrating for the return of Elián González from the U.S.—another unaccompanied child drama that the Cuban press analogized to Pedro Pan, which had already cost the nation "14,000 Eliancitos [little

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[149] Byran O. Walsh, "History of Operation Pedro Pan," (Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., 2001), http://www.pedropan.org/history.html, accessed 9 January 2009.

[150] Conde,70.

[151] *Havana is Waiting*, 18.

[152] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 286. The "intersection" to which Machado refers is the United States Interests Section of the Embassy of Switzerland on Havana's Malecon, the closest entity to any U.S. Embassy in Cuba.

Eliáns]."[153] Machado found catharsis in communing with the group and using the opportunity to dispute his own past. The crowd chanted a rhythmic cry "Return Elián, Return Elián!" in a spirit of spontaneous communitas[154] that appealed to Machado's unsatisfied hunger for home and resolution. The playwright recalls: "I found myself joining in. I heard myself screaming at the top of my lungs. 'Return Elián! Return Elián! Motherfuckers. No more Peter Pan imperialists! Return Elián! Return Elián!' I had found a way to put to good use all the rage I had held back in Cojimar."[155] In *Havana is Waiting*, Federico identifies with Elián's deuteragony: "I didn't decide to leave here. It was not my decision…Any more than Elián.... I was sent away. I was, my childhood was stolen."[156] Federico's experience in joining the mass protest is indistinguishable from Machado's real-life account. After the character attempts to enter the old family residence at 330 Maceo and after he dines at La Terasa, he finds himself holding a poster of Elián González and shouting "Return Elián! Motherfuckers."[157] The episode functions as a kind of catharsis for Federico, allowing him to feel momentarily free despite the guilt he sustains for contradicting his parents.

Machado uses his Cuban-resident character Ernesto, rather than his Cuban-American protagonist Federico, to directly attack the enclave community in *Havana is Waiting*. The producers who backed his production at New York's Cherry Lane Theatre

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[153] de los Angeles Torres, *The Lost Apple*, 2.

[154] See my introduction and also Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982).

[155] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 286.

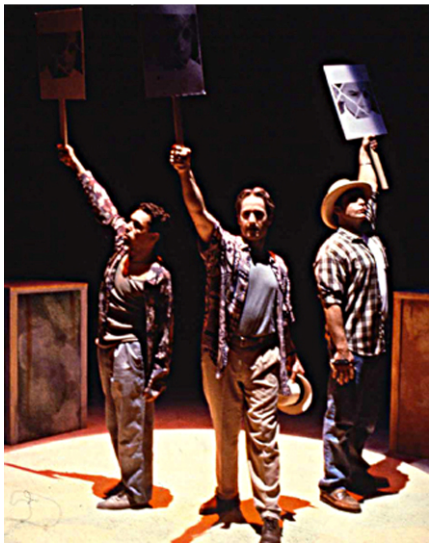
[156] *Havana is Waiting*, 54.

[157] Ibid., 47.

urged him to alter the play's final monologue, but Machado refused. It remained:

> **Ernesto.** Miami Mafia, Yankee politicians. Exxon and United Fruit Company. Meyer Lansky and all his disciples. Motherfuckers. You've kept us apart long enough. Return us. Motherfuckers! You've kept us apart long enough. Return us. Us. Elián. Peter Pan. Give them back. Give them back to us. Motherfuckers! Let us come together. End the embargo. Please. Fuck you. Motherfuckers! Give them back![158]

The controversy concerning whether or not to include this concluding address was exposed by the *New York Times* alongside additional comments by Machado relating to U.S. ignorance and imperialism, which invited more protests and hate mail. The *Times* called the playwright's stance "risky" while acknowledging that he had—very ironically—"spoken like a true American."[159] Machado, who has never acquired a U.S. passport, is deemed more "American" after—and as a result of—his return home to his native soil.



Machado's characters demonstrate for the return of Elián González in *Havana is Waiting* or *When the Sea Drowns in Sand* at the 25th Humana Festival of New Plays

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[158] Ibid., 74.

[159] Mireya Navarro, "A Return to Cuba, A Search for Himself," *The New York Times*, 21 October 2001, 2:6.

Nowhere has the controversy surrounding Eduardo Machado been more severe than in Miami, where the Elián struggle "divided the community more than anything before,"[160] creating a "tale of two cities" between Cuban and non-Cuban citizens.[161] Father Francisco Santana, representing Miami's *La Hermita de la Caridad del Cobre* shrine, insisted in PBS's Frontline documentary *Saving Elián*:

> That's why Elián is so important, because the exile community or the Cuban-American community, whatever you're going to call it, began precisely by the concept of "Save the Children." After the Bay of Pig invasions, lots of parents began to send their children by themselves [via Operation Pedro Pan] just to save them from communism.[162]

An overwhelming percentage of Miami's Cuban American population—90 percent according to *The Miami Herald*, and 78 percent according to Florida International University's Cuba Poll—was of the opinion that Elián should remain in the U.S.[163] The opinions expressed by Machado and by his characters clearly opposed those of the enclave, and thus supported Jorge Huerta's point that the playwright is a representative of "but not necessarily *representative of*" the Cuban community.[164] Unlike Mario Ernesto Sánchez, Eduardo Machado never again lived in the Miami area after the first months he spent in Hialeah post-Pedro Pan. His mother, on the other hand, was as enchanted with the city as some of Machado's characters: "To be so near home," she once rationalized to

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[160] Ofra Bikel, "Saving Elián," PBS Frontline Documentary transcript, 6 February 2001, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/elian/etc/script.html, accessed 11 February 2009.

[161] Lisandro Pérez and Guillermo Grenier, *The Legacy of Exile: Cubans in the United States* (New York: Allyn & Bacon, 2003), 110.

[162] Ofra Bikel, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/elian/etc/script.html.

[163] Pérez and Grenier, 107.

[164] Jorge Huerta, http://www.dramateatro.arts.ve/ensayos/n_0002/plays.html. Original emphasis.

her son, "a hundred miles away is the Gulf of Mexico, and across the Gulf is Cuba, and in Cuba there is La Habana, and next to La Habana there is Cojimar, and in Cojimar is our house."[165] After his parents arrived, however, his father was offered work in California through Catholic charities. Eduardo remained on the west coast with his family—far away from his aunts and Miami's exile politics—until he traveled to New York to pursue a life in the theatre.

While *Havana is Waiting* unsurprisingly never played Miami, audiences there are familiar with Machado's work. A scandal had broken out three years earlier, in 1997, when Repertorio Español toured *Revoltillo* (*Broken Eggs*) throughout Cuba. The production was directed by New York-based Cuban and Repertorio founder René Buch. "When the Cubans in Miami found out," Machado remembers, "all hell broke loose."[166] The Miami-based media scandalized the play; there were bomb-threats, and protesters hounded Repertorio in New York.[167] When Ana Margarita Martínez Casado, star of WPBT South Florida's popular 70s sitcom *¿Qué Pása U.S.A?*, travelled to Cuba as part of the cast of *Revoltillo*, Miami's Pan American Hospital cancelled her advertising contract, and her TV commercials ceased running.[168] Despite the delight Machado always derives from making audiences angry, he still could not "find the courage to go home." He had also lost his Cuban passport, and felt "stuck in limbo" without American

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[165] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 167.

[166] Ibid., 254.

[167] Ibid., 255, and Margo Jefferson, "Castro: Patience Heals Economic Rift," *The New York Times*, 7 September 1998.

[168] Mireya Navarro, "Building a Bridge: A Theater Troupe From the U.S. Is Embraced by Havana," *The New York Times*, 29 September 1998, A12; Cuellar, http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y98/oct98/07e3.htm; *Tastes Like Cuba*, 254.

citizenship.[169] His eventual return to Cuba was motivated by the premiere of his first film at the 1999 Havana Film Festival and by the fact that his "writing needed to go somewhere else. It is very hard to write about this place that you were eight years old the last time you saw it."[170] When Machado faced an audience at the film festival, he spontaneously led them in song after the extended applause he received for being introduced as a "Peter Pan kid who had come home."[171] With this impromptu communal "performance," Machado offered to his Cuban comrades a little theatre with his film.

When Machado's Miami relatives gathered at the 2003 premiere of *Once Removed* at the Coconut Grove Playhouse, he felt that the opening night party helped him conquer his "fear" of childhood and make peace with family about whom he felt anxious since his arrival in the U.S. This catharsis followed the spectacle of *Once Removed*, a play that he "knew would piss off at least a few" Miami Cubans.[172] Machado notes that the enclave community's reception of the play was eased by leading lady Lucie Arnaz – "it was hard for them to hate a play that Desi Arnaz's daughter was in"—though one Cuban audience member left in haste after a humorous line relating to the Bay of Pigs fiasco.[173] Machado insists that he does not "see Cubans in Miami or in Cuba as villains. I see history as the villain."[174] Still, some Miamians see Machado as the villain. Despite the fact that he never stayed in any of the children's camps, Machado's name has been

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[169] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 255.

[170] del Rio, 60-63.

[171] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 294. Though Machado had occasion to visit Cuba during Repertorio Español's tour of his *Revoltillo* in 1995, it was not until this film premiere that Machado made the trip.

[172] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 314; 316.

[173] del Rio, 66.

[174] Machado qtd. in Dolen, 1.

added to the "Veterans of Camp Matecumbe" roster with the accusation that he has "attacked the Pedro Pan movement." The entry conflates the "author of 40 forgettable plays" with his character Oscar, quoting Machado to have said "It's time to forgive Fidel."[175] Miami's popular online Cuban-American "Babalú Blog" also accuses Machado of "attacking his own besieged people" with his dramatic work.[176]

The Coconut Grove Theatre, where *Once Removed* and a number of other English-language Cuban-American plays had appeared, closed its doors in 2006. Miami's Cuban-American theatre scene continues to be dominated by Spanish-language plays, which Machado does not write. The founding of Teatro Avante in 1979 by Mario Ernesto Sánchez established and still sustains a large portion of the enclave's theatre. Avante shares more with the Latin American companies featured in its annual International Hispanic Theatre Festival than with local English-only houses. Conversely, Machado's English-language theatre began in California and continued in New York.[177] He remembers how his Spanish transformed into English:

> I spoke Spanish all the time. My mother doesn't speak English. I had this wonderful English teacher in high school who really believed in me. I took his Shakespeare class, and I think I got all my intellectual ideas in English. And then, as an actor, I only acted in English. Everything I know about a play was always in English, and I think that's why I create characters in English.[178]

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[175] "Veterans of Camp Matecumbe," http://www.campmatecumbeveterans.com/alumni-btm.htm.

[176] "Broadway Basura," *BabaluBlog*, 3 September 2005, http://www.babalublog.com/cgi-bin/mt/star.cgi?entry_id=2279, accessed 9 January 2009.

[177] *Revoltillo*, Repertorio Español's Spanish language version of *Broken Eggs*, was translated by René Buch and Alfonso Manosalvas Jr.

[178] del Rio, 62.

During Machado's quest to establish himself as an actor, his first New York vocal coach advised him: "Let go of your Spanish melody." At first he resisted modifying his accented English (fearing "what if I get lost?"[179]), Machado now not only speaks but often also *writes* in an English that bears no trace of Cuban inflections. His recent memoir *Tastes Like Cuba* substitutes many English words for Spanish ones in referencing flavors from old Cuba—"plantains" instead of "plátanos," for example—which he did not even "untranslate" for a Cuban-American audience during the book's debut reading in Coral Gables.

Despite the significant differences in language and location (Mario Ernesto Sánchez *only* addresses audiences in his native Spanish), Machado's autobiographical theatre bears a strong relationship to Sánchez's. While Sánchez is a celebrated part of the Cuban-American community in Miami, *Matecumbe* also did not pass entirely without controversy; the performance alienated the very audience it most welcomed when Monsignor Walsh and Elly Chovel expressed disappointment with the portrait the production painted of Operation Pedro Pan despite the pre-curtain tributes they were paid. While Machado did not reside in a cramped camp for Pedro Pan children, he and his younger brother battled for bunks with several unsympathetic cousins in his aunt's two-room shack in Hialeah.[180] Like Sánchez's opening scenes in *Matecumbe*, Machado and his brother also spent long, lingering moments staring at their parents on the other side of the pecera in José Martí International Airport. It was only his younger brother Othin, however, who longed to touch their Mother again, while Eduardo began to fume

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[179] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 199.

[180] Ibid., 68.

with rage ("all of this while I sat in the fishbowl…I was furious. I hated myself for hating them."[181]). He narrates this through Federico in *Havana is Waiting*: "I saw my mother on the other side of the glass. She let me go on a plane without her. It could have been forever. I held my brother's hand….They searched my butthole for diamonds."[182] As graphically dramatized by Sánchez, Machado's young body was also searched by airport *milicianos*. He recounts the experience in *Tastes Like Cuba* in an episode that recalls the airport scene in *Matecumbe*: "[The *miliciano*] frisked me thoroughly, opened my pants, and felt inside. For what? For hidden diamonds, a hundred dollar bill? I imagined the treasures I wasn't concealing. I turned away as he searched me."[183] Rieff points out that such vivid recollections discourage the already narrow group of adult exiles who contemplate returning to the island, as renewed "contact with the Cuban authorities" may trigger "stark, unreconciled memories of the humiliations they underwent heading the other way."[184] Machado's character Federico expresses such reservations in *Havana is Waiting*: "That little boy with the militia prodding his ass. That's what's waiting for me. Back there…down there in Havana. That's home. You want me to get on a plane and face that?"[185] Revisiting these memories through the dramatic medium can be equally distressing. Federico's line and *Matecumbe*'s explicitly staged strip search demonstrate the remarkable courage that both playwrights exhibit in encountering their former selves.

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[181] Ibid., 62.

[182] *Havana is Waiting*, 13.

[183] *Tastes Like Cuba*, 162.

[184] Rieff, 23.

[185] *Havana is Waiting*, 14.

More than thirty years after their solo migrations, Sánchez and Machado have commanded therapeutic, introspective journeys through detailed dramatizations of their departures and returns. That *Matecumbe* remains producer-director Mario Ernesto Sánchez's only play reveals how even this "non-playwright" felt compelled to harness the stage in order to confront a past in which he had *acted*, but over which he had no control. The strategy can be interpreted as one first initiated by J. M. Barrie; it was he, as psychologist Ann Yeoman points out, who suggested that "one may reach the Otherworld through dream, imagination and play."[186] The alternate realm proposed by Peter Pan's Neverland has been compared to multiple sites occupied by both Sánchez and Machado, including the theatre community Sánchez has established in Miami, the Miami enclave community itself, and a mythical Cuba accessible only through memory. Neverland marks the condition of exile not only in relationship to place (*destierro*) but to time as well (*destiempo*), as its interplay between child and adult worlds compares with staging the past from a present-day perspective. The titular character of Barrie's fantasy play and novel has lent its name to this mass child exodus, whose children are compared to Neverland's lost boys. Federico, Oscar, the boy in *Matecumbe*, and the playwrights who scripted them may each be described as Peter Pan is explained by Yeoman:

> Caught between two worlds, he is lonely, an isolate…[a]ccess to the Otherworld is both a blessing and a curse…he knows something of both worlds but belongs fully to neither, existing on the margin of the seashore, as it were, in the luminal twilight of the imaginal…. This essentially intermediate region is also known to the teller of tales as the place from which story arises. It is both without and within: at once a physical geography whose landmarks tell countless histories of soul, and an imaginal inscape that speaks of our experience of the world once it is

[186] Ann Yeoman, *Now or Neverland: Peter Pan and the Myth of Eternal Youth* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1998), 114.

given voice through story.[187]

Theatre travels back to realms made impossible by exile, and re-creating or confronting past selves, territories, and scenes in the elusive world can produce abreactions whose effects—including relief, awareness, resolution, and agency—may be applied in the real world.

Though Machado has claimed that the plays following his trips to Cuba have left him with the sensation that he does not "*need* to write any more; now, I really like to write,"[188] writing in relation to Pedro Pan has not vanished from the playwright's recent work. In 2007 Machado premiered *Afternoon Tea*, a one-act musical about Peter Pan author J.M. Barrie. The play marks a significant departure from the playwright's usual themes, as on the surface it has nothing to do with Cuban-American exile whatsoever. His 2009 *In Paradise*, inspired by a foray Machado made into Tennessee Williams's work, seconds the departure. The Cuban exile theme reigned from *The Floating Island Plays* to his *Tastes Like Cuba* memoir. *Kissing Fidel* was the last of his plays to premiere before this stylistic shift.

In the translation of persons into personas, characters and the individuals they represent eventually conflate in the minds of creators and audiences. New additions to the Operation Pedro Pan archive at Barry University include creative literatures that have sprung from storytellers; they are now preserved alongside historical documents chronicling Pedro Pan. The Marian figures in *Matecumbe* cited the camp's teachers and cooks who in turn performed the roles of missing maternal protectors for the

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[187] Ibid, 117.

[188] Dolen, 1.

unaccompanied children. They live on in the surrogate of the Virgin at Biscayne Bay's frequently patroned hermitage. Machado visualized his own characters passing in and out of his former home when he arrived, especially when he was not able to penetrate its doors himself. The inaccessibility of remote "Otherworlds" promotes their performance. Re-collecting home expresses a past that even dramatists may come to realize was perhaps always, as Oscar says, "fiction."

CHAPTER 3: DELAYED FLIGHTS

Sonia Flew by Melinda López and *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* by Nilo Cruz

Other Cuban-American theatre artists have followed Pedro Pan playwrights Mario Ernesto Sánchez and Eduardo Machado in dramatizing the exodus. Two new plays written by relatives of Pedro Pan exiles and featuring adult characters who were Pedro Pans continue to be widely produced in the U.S. and abroad. *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* by Nilo Cruz premiered in 2001 at the New Theatre in Coral Gables with subsequent productions at the Victory Gardens Theatre (Chicago) and The Finborough Theatre (London). *Sonia Flew* by Melinda López premiered in 2004 at Boston's Huntington Theatre, with productions following at The Laguna Playhouse (Los Angeles), Coconut Grove Playhouse (Miami), The Miracle Theatre (Portland), and New York City's Summer Play Festival.

The action of both plays depends on deep-rooted psychological afflictions of protagonists who once emigrated on Operation Pedro Pan flights. These adult characters struggle to come to terms with the fragmented child selves they have left behind in migration. *Sonia Flew* flashes back to dramatize a Pedro Pan departure, while *Hortensia* follows two Pedro Pans as they return "home" to Cuba. The title character Sonia's dysfunctions are, ultimately, neatly resolved, leaving López's play a topical interpretation of past-and-present politics. *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, on the other hand, remains character-driven and refuses resolution. Both plays employ "suppressed memory" strategies in order to layer the present with the past. In this way, López's and

Cruz's pieces relate to Eduardo Machado's *Kissing Fidel*, which features a Pedro Pan protagonist struggling with perverse but tempting mental demons. *Hortensia*'s Luciana, however, represses memories of an incestual relationship associated with her early days in exile, and Sonia's repressed memory behaves more as a device allowing for expository flashback episodes to explain the past. Sonia has long held resentment for the parents who sent her away (and with whom she never reunited)—resentment which resurfaces only now when her son Zak announces his intention to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. In *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams,* two siblings reunite in Cuba after having become estranged in the U.S. Both plays explore the layered loss of country, parents, and childhood while structural parallels are drawn between past and present political scenes. This chapter examines how each play pilots characters through delayed emotional flights as a strategy for resolving anxieties harbored since the Operation Pedro Pan airplane flights interrupted their pasts.

Sonia Flew

Born in Colombia to Cuban exile parents, Melinda López did not learn of the difficult migration her older cousins endured via Operation Pedro Pan until she had reached adulthood. When the discovery prompted her to read published accounts of other Pedro Pan children, she was struck by an anecdote she found in Yvonne Conde's book *Operation Pedro Pan: The Untold Exodus of 14,048 Children*. Conde had included the personal account of a mother who experienced an anxiety attack at the airport when she suddenly recalled her own solo flight on Operation Pedro Pan—a flight she took when she was the same age as the daughter she was sending on a family visit. López explains

that the play was inspired by "the idea that you could have a normal life and never think you had anything buried that would sneak up on you and slap you upside the head."[1] She experienced a growing empathy for Pedro Pans about whom she read and interviewed. "It's a privilege to grow old where you were born," she insists, adding that being forced away from one's home, waiting and hoping with no real possibility of return is "a loss I can never imagine."[2] Also informed by her own family's narrations of how they were affected by Pedro Pan, she at last felt compelled to bring the exodus to life on the stage.

López created Sonia, a character whose plight she based on the collection of oral histories gathered from these family members and other Pedro Pans interviewed, as well as the recorded histories about the Operation studied in preparation for the project.[3] Her approach was one that would not simply "retell" the story of the Operation, but draw significant parallels to current U.S. politics, resonating with second-generation exiles and their contemporaries. With an achronological two-act structure, *Sonia Flew* represents its Pedro Pan protagonist at fifteen, the age of her departure from Havana, only *after* we see her as the woman and mother she became in her adulthood forty years later in Minneapolis, U.S. (in 2001). The play's sharp structural place/time division between acts suggests that this character has been able to cope and carry on by *not* citing her Cuban childhood in an exiled existence. Unlike many other representations of Pedro Pans, Sonia resists the *past* instead of the present or the future.

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[1] López quoted in Catherine Foster, "Her Chance to Fly: Melinda López Gets Her Big Break with an Ambitious Play about Cuban Exodus," *The Boston Globe*, 3 October, 2004, Arts/Entertainment, N1.

[2] Mike Rosenburg, "Bedford Grad's Play features Cuba" The Bedford Minuteman, MA, 10 November 2004, on CubaNet, www.cubanet.org/CNews/y04/nov04/11e9.htm, accessed 1 June 08.

[3] Fabiola Santiago, "Lucie's Love," *The Miami Herald*, Tropical Life, 17 April 2006, 5.

While her character does not return to Cuba like Nilo Cruz's protagonists, Melinda Lopez's new play layers Sonia's 1961 Pedro Pan departure with a similar domestic portrait from 2001. As the contemporary story unfolds first, in Act One, grown Pedro Pan exile Sonia exposes that she has suppressed in her memory the circumstances leading to her involuntary flight from her home, family, and nation. Act Two reveals a younger Sonia, played by the same actress portraying the exile's daughter in Act One. Unlike the other Pedro Pans examined in this dissertation—María Brito, Ana Mendieta, Mario Ernesto Sánchez and the boy in *Matecumbe*, Eduardo Machado and his character Oscar in *Kissing Fidel*, and even Cruz's Luca and Luciana in *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*—the character of Sonia in *Sonia Flew* never reunited with her parents.

Melinda López dramatizes what in psychology is called "Delayed Grief Syndrome" as Sonia is forced to recollect a past she has suppressed.[4] Sonia never forgave her parents for sending her away, and it is not until she has children of her own—when her son Zak enlists in the Marines and goes to war—that she revisits the horrible memory of being sent away from her family forever on Operation Pedro Pan. The first act is set in Minneapolis, December 2001. The second act is set in Havana, April, 1961. At two different points in the play, Mother and Son deliver almost identical monologues revealing that their mothers had read them the story of Peter Pan during their childhoods. Sonia's monologue is delivered as she begins to break through her mental block and reflect back upon her own youth during Act I:

Sonia: My mother used to read me a book. In Spanish it was called Pedro

[4] Victoria M. Follette and Josef I. Ruzek, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies for Trauma* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 292. Pedro Pan Lourdes Rodríguez describes how her "delay-grief process" kept her from dealing with her exile until she was an adult in Victor Andres Triay, *Fleeing Castro: Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children's Program* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 98.

> Pan. The boy who could fly. Neverland. The lost children. Wendy was the mother to them all. And she told them stories about the lives they had left behind. So they wouldn't forget. And one day, Peter got sad, and he missed home so much that he flew back there, across the ocean. He flew to the window of his bedroom. But his mother had locked it. And he couldn't get back in. I always used to wonder, what kind of a terrible mother would do that? Even after years and years, wouldn't you keep the window open? Even through blizzard and rain and heat and locusts, wouldn't you keep the window open? In case? Just in case? Wouldn't you? Would I?[5]

Later, in Act II, Zak delivers a kind of companion monologue:

> **Zak:** My mother used to read me Peter Pan. The boy who could fly. He lived in Never Land with all the lost children. And one day, Peter got sad, and he missed home so much that he flew back there, across the ocean. He flew to the window of his bedroom. But his mother had locked it. And he couldn't get back in. I always used to wonder, what kind of a terrible mother would do that? Even after years and years, wouldn't you keep the window open? Even through blizzard and rain and heat and locusts, wouldn't you keep the window open? In case? Just in case?[6]

The words of mother and child complete López's cyclical comparison of the two children whose politics forge rifts between themselves and their parents. Sonia obliquely accuses the offstage mother whose decision it was to send her to the U.S. on an underground flight in response to her commitment to Cuba's Association of Rebel Youth. In turn, Zak accuses Sonia of figuratively "locking the door," referencing her rejection of his decision to enlist in the marines in order to serve his country during wartime. Zak's challenge gains momentum when he asserts that his mother's politics are the same as his, "you're no different from me," a statement that contributes to Sonia's growing anxiety to confront her past.[7]

In much the same way that Cuba's youth were influenced to join a society for

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[5] Melinda López, *Sonia Flew*, author's own unpublished manuscript, 51.

[6] Ibid.,108.

[7] Ibid., 24.

young revolutionaries, Zak's political opinions transform after being influenced by a military recruiter. After meeting with resistance from his family, Zak protests, "I'm not brainwashed. I give a shit."[8] The play's action begins just three months after the World Trade Center's collapse, and the events of 11 September 2001 serve as a comparison point for national transformation in the play, paralleling the 1961 revolution in Cuba. Zak appeals to his sister to help him convince his mother of the urgency and significance of his political awakening: "They're still burning, Jenny. The towers. I went, you know, and they're still burning."[9] Sonia, who so deeply resents being sent away from Cuba by her parents that she has blocked out the event along with her childhood, is desperate to draw Zak away from his impulse to join the marines. Sonia demonstrates pacifistic attitudes about the war in Iraq and begs Zak to make a different organized commitment, to the "war on poverty" and the Peace Corps where he might not "have to use ammunition."[10] She resents the recruiter's influence, interpreting it as a kind of national indoctrination and becomes desperate to exert equal leverage from the home: "You never came to me. And your father. To even ask what we thought. How can you?"[11] That Sonia is revealed here first as an adult attempting to control her child's departure becomes significant when the audience learns of her resistant response to her own parents' decision to send her away. Sonia's desire to keep Zak from the imminent war is more than a mother's instinct; she reacts while simultaneously occupying her child self, fueled by deep-seeded fear and resentment.

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[8] Ibid., 8.

[9] Ibid., 10.

[10] Ibid., 22.

[11] Ibid., 23.

Sonia's characteristically steadfast spirit begins to break down. Early in Act One, Jen insists that her mother will "be okay. Mom's always okay."[12] Zak echoes his sister's sentiments, confronting his mother with "You were never afraid of anything. And now all of a sudden…."[13] Sonia's composure begins to be shaken with news that would recall her own remote flight from home and the political involvements she began and abandoned with that departure. The airplane explosions on 9/11 incite a panic disorder for Sonia, but the new fear of flying, of course, is inspired as much by past as it is by current destructions. The anxiety begins to trigger "flashbacks" which allow Sonia (and the audience) to explore the memories of childhood, finally breaking through to deal with her "delayed grief." She relays details of her first anxiety attack to her husband, Daniel:

> **Sonia:** Everything went black, And then I was burning up. Couldn't breathe. I guess I was crying. Moaning they said.
> **Daniel:** That's what the stewardess said.
> **Sonia:** I guess I was disturbing first class.
> **Daniel:** They said you threw a punch or two.
> **Sonia:** I didn't want to be on that plane. I can't describe it. It was just a stupid conference. There wasn't any need for me to go to a stupid conference. They found a better speaker. Next time, it'll be fine.
> **Daniel:** It's too much, all the holidays. We try to cram in too much. Too many Gods. Next year, we simplify.
> **Sonia:** Next year in Jerusalem.
> **Daniel:** Next year, in Havana.[14]

A sensitive parallel is also drawn here, between Cubans—who are sometimes dubbed the "Jews of the Caribbean" and Jews, who have suffered similarly in exile. In fact, another mass exodus, *Kindertransport*, took place during the Holocaust (years), flying hundreds

[12] Ibid., 9.

[13] Ibid., 24.

[14] Ibid., 34.

of unaccompanied children to remote countries.[15] Similarities between Operation Pedro Pan and Kindertransport are mentioned in the Sonia Flew's Coconut Grove Playhouse production program note and in the *Jewish Advocate*'s review of the original Boston production.[16]

Daniel's and Sonia's sentiments, "Next year in Jerusalem" and "Next year in Havana," allude to popular toasts made by exiles forced to commemorate new years and other occasions out of the home country with glasses clinked away from home. As many exiles sustain hope that their displacement is temporary, these toasts have circulated in celebration of a transient present and an imminent yesterday (which will happen tomorrow). Though we didn't return home this year, we reserve good spirits for a return sure to happen next year. The present is not toasted, emphasizing an existence frozen in time, *una cultura congelada*, a future that looks like the past. The toast is indexed by the title of one book by Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Next Year in Cuba*, thereby encapsulating the exile attitudes he critiques. Willy Chirino's concerts feature celebratory songs like *Nuestro día ya viene llegando* [Our Day is Coming] with crowds of thousands euphorically chanting "¡Cuba Libre!," metaphorically "raising their glasses," convinced that a free Cuba is around the corner. Sociologist Lisandro Pérez observes that such toasts persist with a self-acknowledged irony, passed down through a "legacy of exile." He predicts that some future exile generations will still be celebrating *Nochebuena* [Christmas Eve] with the traditional *lechón* [roast pig] quoting that the next one will be

[15] See Olga Levy Drucker, *Kindertransport* (New York: H.Holt, 1992).

[16] Program note, Playbill for *Sonia Flew*, Coconut Grove Playhouse, Miami Florida, 19 April 2006, 34.

eaten in a free Cuba.[17]

In López's play, Sonia's and Daniel's exchange makes a tongue-in-cheek reference to these attitudes, half-believed and half-abandoned. It expresses the family's hybridity and, at the same time, Sonia's cultural assimilation in relationship to the past she has suppressed. By marrying a U.S.-born citizen who practices a different faith, she can "convert" further toward traditions that have nothing to do with her own heritage. Sonia's marriage to Daniel and the "American" family they have created enables her divorce from the past. The *Jewish Advocate*'s Jules Becker invents the following exposition for Sonia to account for the period shortly after her 1961 transport that eventually landed her in the Midwestern United States: "An immigrant Cuban teenager, she is married to a caring Jewish man named Daniel."[18] Becker's phrasing hints that Sonia (a perpetual "teenager") may have selected Daniel ("a man") as a different kind of parental replacement after refusing to be placed in foster homes. Pushing this idea even further, it should be noted that Daniel is a psychotherapist. His profession incorporates a mechanism from López's original inspiration for the play, the story of one adult Pedro Pan with airport anxiety she read about in Conde's book who managed to unearth her deep-seated memories only after seeking professional help.

While Daniel's occupation is clearly defined, there is no evidence that Sonia has ever worked outside of the house. Sonia's unresolved "teenage" self has continued to submit to Daniel as a way of forgetting, transforming, and recovering the parentage she has lost. In Act Two, the toasts of Act One's failed holiday dinner haunt those of Young

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[17] Lisandro Pérez and Guillermo Grenier, *The Legacy of Exile* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 117.

[18] Jules Becker, *Jewish Advocate* 195:41 (5-11 November 2004): 28.

Sonia's modest 1961 quinceañera celebration. When the fifteen-year-old is prompted to make a toast on her own, she stumbles, then conveys the opinions she has been taught as a new member of the Association of Rebel Youth: "It wasn't right how it was before, don't you agree. Some had so much and so many had nothing. But now we're equal. It feels so free, now. It feels so right. Into the future! My head is spinning!"[19]

Like many of Eduardo Machado's plays, Melinda López's *Sonia Flew* incorporates characters representative of the succeeding generation, citing a third layer of agency involving citizenship. Because they have been raised to assimilate into U.S. culture, and especially because Sonia has concealed her past, her children are not the inheritors of any real sense of *cubanía*, playing no role in the "legacy of exile" like the one Lisandro Pérez describes.[20] Sonia's declaration does, however, question the notion of citizenship. While it can be said that Pedro Pan exiles behaved as deuteragonists, or "second-actors" to their parents' active decisions to emigrate, second-generation children like Zak are deprived even further of agency, but by being born inside the exile country (because of the decisions *others* have made) he *becomes* a "citizen." Sonia admonishes "You watch that, Zak—you watch that tone—I love this country. I made this country mine—I wasn't born into it—I had to make a vow—."[21] Punctuating a series of naive comments by Zak, Sonia's statement points to the irony of what sometimes is required of someone to be guaranteed citizenship—nothing.

The passive role of having always possessed the right to claim the same national

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[19] López, 76.

[20] Lisandro Pérez, *The Legacy of Exile*.

[21] López, 25.

identity stands in contrast to the active role of becoming, of deciding and committing. Perhaps it is precisely this passivity that leaves Zak with the conviction that he must take further *action* to in order to feel that he possesses identity and a claim to nationhood. He challenges his mother, presuming she had agency in the conflicts of her former nation: "I'm not going to run. I'm going to do something. I would have done something—" to which Sonia responds "I did not run. I was sent."[22] It is in these lines that we see the parallel that López has drawn between the Cuban Revolution and the War on Iraq as a curious intergenerational conflict, as a young struggle for independence. The "new" generation, anxious to be on their own, trade parents for patria convinced that it will establish their "freedom." Zak's enlistment is equated with Sonia's joining the young rebel forces as young Sonia lashing out at her mother in Act Two:

> **Sonia:** I'm not going to end up like you, I know that much. I'm going to do something with my life. Things are changing everywhere, and I am part of it. And if I don't go this summer, I'll go next summer, or I'll just get out of the house soon, and get married and then I can do what I want.[23]

Pressure is exerted on each youth by both parents and patria. Whether they take action or remain passive, the decision does not seem entirely theirs. The idea of a young, new, pliable mind seems here constantly subject to guidance, intervention, and critique. It is clear than neither Zak nor Sonia fully understand the politics behind their commitments; military uniforms seem to swallow them whole. Ironically, as Sonia recalls the events of her own youth, her conflict with Zak is born from her ability to identify with his choices. She struggles to share her past with him, but her profound 37-year repression of memory leaves her incapable. Sparked by a new fear of losing her son to the government of her

[22] Ibid., 47.

[23] Ibid., 97-98.

exile country, Sonia is only just beginning to recall the events that sent her there. Zak begs for his mother to tell him about her immigration, but Sonia remains unable. The events flood back, but remain trapped in her head:

> **Zak:** So tell me then. Fucking tell me.
> *(SONIA isolated in light.)*
> **Sonia:** I told that priest that I wouldn't go to another home. I wouldn't go to a home with a mother and father. I told them that I had a mother and father, and I didn't need any more. They were placing us all over the country. This is such a big country, you know. I hated all the places, I said no to everything. Wisconsin was at the end of the alphabet. That was all that was left. My mother promised she would come within the year. She wrote. She talked about the weather in her letters. There is not that much to say about the weather in the tropics. Hot today. Rain this afternoon. Hot today. Rain this afternoon. Hot today. She died. Our housekeeper got out. I don't know how she found me. She told me everything. She said they both died. They never came.
> *(Scene resumes)*
> **Zak:** Mom tell me!
> **Sonia:** I can't.[24]

Sonia must risk that Zak, too, may elect to go parentless as a result of the incapacitating resentment she felt toward the parents who denied her her country and her military commitments.

Act I ends with Zak in uniform, fighting on the fields in a Jeep. Early in Act Two, the actress playing Sonia in 1998 doubles as housemaid and family friend Marta, threatening, "I'll take out my eyes the day I see Sonia on the back of a military truck." She is reading the papers in her 1961 Havana kitchen with young Sonia's mother Pilar: "The first battalion of women teachers have been mobilized to *Aguas Frías* for the launch of the Education Initiative. Women and girls as young as 13 are traveling to the provinces to assist in the education of all Cubans."[25] Young Sonia frustrates her parents, trading

[24] Ibid., 49-50.

[25] Ibid., 62-63.

their authority for Fidel's and resisting her ultimate departure, her new political commitments supported by naive comments and strategies: "Don't you think Fidel is handsome?"[26] ..."Stop treating me like a baby"…"It's not fair"[27]..."What makes you think I'm not a new woman, who wants to wear pants, and live in the jungle. What if I cut my hair and grow a beard?"[28] That impressionable youth felt romanced by Fidel's image is also noted by Carlos Eire in *Waiting for Snow in Havana* and features in Yvonne Conde's historical account of the exodus.[29] As a child, Eire recalls, "I thought his beard was cool. And also his eyeglasses…."[30] Conde elaborates on the time she caught a glimpse of the "handsome, charismatic, thirty-two-year-old rebel," describing the experience as an ecstasy that "seized me, an eight-year-old participant watching from the third-story balcony of our apartment in the El Vedado section…sheer glee, an uncontrolled nervousness that made me run around like a battery-operated toy."[31] Sonia's point of view reinforces those expressed by both of these Pedro Pan authors, bringing to the stage the young and impressionable mind of a child who might have easily been led into revolution.

Instead of holding fast to traditions associated with her upbringing on the island, an adult Sonia has distanced herself from customs and detached herself from parents and patria. She fully embraces the hybridized self that formed from experiencing mainstream

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[26] Ibid, 67.

[27] Ibid., 68.

[28] Ibid., 89.

[29] Carlos Eire, *Waiting for Snow in Havana: confessions of a Cuban boy* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 87 and Yvonne M. Conde, *Operation Pedro Pan: the untold exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.

[30] Eire, 180.

[31] Conde, 3.

U.S. Christian holiday customs and the Hanukkah rites introduced by her husband—a self almost entirely devoid of any influence from her Cuban heritage. One review of the play's original production perceives Sonia as a "thoroughly Americanized middle-age Minneapolis woman."[32] Jules Becker of the *Jewish Advocate* points out that the character pays significantly more attention to Jewish symbols and images than the Catholic ones from her childhood. What is left of her Cuban upbringing is almost celebrated as a surface, token ornament as when her father-in-law greets her with a box of pasteles all wrapped up with a bow and inquiring: "And how is my jewel of the Tropics?"[33] Sonia, characterized by suppressed memories, is an extreme representation of the counter-exile who triumphs over her separation from home.[34] The ground is laid in the opening scene, as she prepares for a holiday celebration featuring "a little yulelog, a little rugalach," and if there is a "[Christmas] tree, there's a dreidel."[35] While Miami is mentioned in the play, Sonia has settled in Minneapolis, far removed from the enclave.

Multiple references to the season's weather function as a vivid demarcation of home. The violent change in temperature is a notable marker of the Pedro Pan experience in particular and the Cuban exile experience in general. Raquel Oti Mendita, mother of Ana Mendieta, insists that she was insensitive to below-freezing Iowa temperatures because she was so happy to finally reunite with her daughters five years

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[32] Ed Siegel, "*Sonia Flew* is Something Special," *The Boston Globe*, 15 October 2004, Arts, C15.

[33] López, 15.

[34] After Claudio Guillén quoted in McClennen, 31.

[35] López, 5.

after sending them on Operation Pedro Pan.[36] The weather contrast is also noted in the paradoxical title of Eire's *Waiting for Snow in Havana*. One of the first images Eire recounts—after being sent to Montana through Pedro Pan—is the wonder he felt gazing out the window at other children gliding on the surface of a white substance. Seeing snow and ice skating for the first time was a magical surreal dream, and Montana was marked as another place and another reality. When Ana Mendieta's mother reunited with the daughters she had sent away five years earlier, the overwhelming emotion of the experience functioned as an anesthetic to Iowa's harsh temperatures. The difference in weather has been dramatized throughout the Cuban exile community, not just for Pedro Pans. For example, Iván Acosta's play *El super* contrasts a cold New York City exile existence with the dream of escaping--not back to Cuba—but to the heat and comfort of the protective enclave in Miami.

Sonia's father Orfeo tries to soften Sonia's departure by romanticizing a difference in weather: "My darling. We have to get your things together. Warm clothes, Sonia. Would you like to see snow?....Ice crystals from the sky. No two are alike."[37] The clash, the sensory shock, and the violent, sudden contrast in environments further divide the places were and are to stand in for "home." This considered, it is no wonder that in López's play Sonia's first "flashback" is through weather. The monologue precedes an Act Two declaration by her Mother Pilar in 1961 Havana: "I dream of snow. Clean and cold. Tiny crystals that make a sound like music."[38] Sonia's 1998 words echo her

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[36] Raquel Oti Mendieta in *Fuego de Tierra*.

[37] López, 101.

[38] Ibid., 83.

mother's sentiments:

> **Sonia:** I always dreamed of snow. Awake, I couldn't make it out. Imagine it. But I would dream of this unknown thing—frozen water from the sky—at home—my first home in Cuba— we only had this hot rain, miserable, hot water, these torrential downpours—so regular you could set your watch by them. But in my dreams, snow was always clean and cold and when it reached your body—it shattered—tiny broken crystals that made a sound like music.
> Of course when I finally saw snow, real snow, well that was Wisconsin, I arrived in April—and it was so ugly—so dirty. It was a terrible day that day, frigid, windy. And the snow was black. Just mounds of black, rotted ice. Well, I was. Disappointed.[39]

Confronted with the reality of the "dream" of another place, a snow-capped utopia fails to materialize. Once transported into exile, a reversal often occurs where in the home territory becomes the "dream," a land whose precipitation is pure, clean and musical. Sonia's repressed memories far from fashion Cuba into such a neverland, however. Here, she just begins to revisit the weather of her homeland and her first arrival in the U.S. The reverie treats the two territories equally, revealing the leaky, unpleasant memories she associates with each.

Food, like the weather, also becomes a signifier for culture. Holiday preparations center more around Jewish traditions as the family settles in for a traditional Shabbos dinner. Once Sonia's anger with Zak forces her to begin confronting memories of the past, Sonia challenges her husband Daniel about they are preparing: "[w]e've done it all your way for so long." Daniel responds "What is my way? You said, you told me religion was not something important to you—."[40] It becomes clear that Sonia left behind every element of her mother culture when she was forced to flee from Cuba; her origins,

[39] Ibid., 11.

[40] Ibid., 32.

including parents and country, have been erased from her adult existence. Memories begin to rush back when Sonia bites into a *pastel*: "Guava. This strange hard little fruit. Can't get it anywhere else. Tastes like home."[41] This momentary sensation, reminiscent of Marcel Proust and his madeleine cookie, can be compared with sentiments in *Tastes Like Cuba*, playwright Eduardo Machado's autobiographical food memoir that illustrates strong linkages between home, food, and exile.[42] Sociologist Lisandro Pérez points out that the food-filled home to which these memories refer, the country that "tastes like" no longer exists. There is barely enough food in Cuba, and the pre-revoloutionary Cuban cuisine that was recreated in Miami is no longer prepared by first-generation exiles.[43] This observation revises the meaning of *destiempo* beyond the definition of a person "who has been deprived of the time which now passes in his country" to time already past, irrecoverable; it is the dream of going to a "home" that no longer exists.[44]

Early in Act II of *Sonia Flew*, the pasteles gain context. A box of precious pasteles was the only item the family could procure as a present for Sonia in 1961 Havana. That Sonia's Cuban existence was frozen at age fifteen is of paramount significance. Fifteen is a Cuban girl's traditional "coming of age" year, when she is ceremoniously delivered into society and considered a young lady. Sonia remained on

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[41] Ibid., 43.

[42] Marcel Proust, "A la Recherche du temps perdu" in *Du côté de chez Swann*, originally published 1913, and Eduardo Machado, *Tastes Like Cuba: An exile's hunger for home* (New York: Gotham Books, 2007). For a discussion of Machado's book in relationship to his dramatic work, see my chapter 2.

[43] Lisandro Pérez, "Socioeconomic and Political Dimensions of Generational Change Among Cubans in Miami," presentation delivered at *A Changing Cuba in A Changing World* international symposium, Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, The Graduate Center CUNY, 15 March 2008.

[44] Józef Wittlin quoted in Sophia McClennen, *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures* (Purdue University Press, 2004), 58-59.

this threshold of adulthood—in a kind of arrested development—as she flew across the straits from Cuba to the U.S. Fearing that a box of pasteles might not be enough to commemorate young Sonia's quinceañera, or "sweet fifteen," Sonia's mother Pilar decides to present her with a family heirloom: the ring from her own finger.

In the earlier act of Lopez's play, however, the memories initiated by Sonia's bite into the pastel quickly become internalized. Sonia's flashbacks are restricted to private soliloquies, as pools of light instantly isolating her as she expresses childhood experiences without sharing what she is remembering with her family. She recollects the past this way, in episodic chunks, during the tensest moments arguments over Zak's enlistment. When things escalate further, Sonia retaliates with stubborn, childlike behavior, refusing to join the family for dinner. Her daughter Jen steps in to replace her mother with the Shabbos prayer while Sonia stands apart in a spot of light, reflecting back on her Pedro Pan departure. These are memories long suppressed; it is the first time she confronts her emigration in such detail and for such a length of time:

> **Sonia:** Children leaving. It was very loud. The soldiers were especially loud. The boots. And everywhere, there were families crying. Announcements on the speakers. Planes departing. I walked to the gate through a hallway of glass, and my family was looking in. Or they had said they would be, they said to look for them, but I was— I was only watching my shoes. I had on a new pair, my first pair of heels. But they rubbed my toes raw. The blister burned so much, it's all I could think about. I suppose I must have walked right by my parents. My father would have whistled for me, I suppose. He had a special whistle for me—but with all the noise I couldn't hear.
> The planes. Silver, so beautiful. How could something that big ever fly?
> Other things happened. I know they searched us, but I don't remember that. I lost my ring. Or did they take it? A pocketful of basil leaves. And then I was in the air. I asked to use the bathroom. A nice American girl showed where, and I took my shoes off there, and threw them away. They hurt me. And they were Cuban shoes. It made sense to me then, although it was a terrible nuisance when I arrived in Miami.[45]

[45] López, 28.

Pedro Pans often have remarkable recollections about the articles they wore or carried with them in flight, which included no more than the clothes on their backs and what was not confiscated by airport *milicianos* from their small suitcases or *gusanos*. These possessions, the kinds of things that might have been taken for granted during their daily lives in Cuba, were closely guarded in preparation for their new and uncertain life in the U.S. In some instances, the items themselves--travel bags, play things, the outfit one young traveler wore during flight, etc.--become museum pieces. Indeed, they are displayed: literally, in showcases at Cuba Nostalgia or in exhibits organized by the group Operation Pedro Pan Incorporated; or, figuratively, in the museum of the mind. In Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, one Pedro Pan protagonist keeps her suitcase through adulthood, and Mama Fefa uses her last words to urge her departing children to take care of their new shoes.[46]

These memorable possessions take on the quality of "costumes" or "costume props." The goodbye setting of José Marti International Airport remains equally significant when restaging the exodus both in the theatre of the mind and in performance. Almost without exception, the most salient feature noted by those "playing back" their final departure in the theatre of memory is the airport's *pecera*. Conde describes it as "a glass-enclosed room…bisecting [passengers'] world"[47] and Carlos Eire recalls the structure as a piece of very deliberate, even oppressive architecture, describing the airport experience as "sheer torture." Eire sums up the pecera as the Revolution's way of

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[46] Nilo Cruz, *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* (NY: Dramatists Play Service, 2004), 9.

[47] Conde, 2.

distancing "those of us who were leaving for the States" from "those we were leaving behind."[48] In Teatro Avante's production of *Matecumbe: el vuelo de un Pedro Pan* by Mario Ernesto Sánchez, the pecera was realized on stage simply by using pools of light, leaving characters separated by a black divide made palpable by actors exchanging silent signals. In *Sonia Flew* the pecera divides in a different way, as Sonia does not communicate back to her parents who direct wild tears and gestures through the glass.

> *YOUNG SONIA walks through the pecera [literally translated, "the fishbowl"]: the airport hallway of glass that separates ticketed passengers from everyone else. PILAR and ORFEO call to her from the other side as she walks across the stage, not seeing them.)*
> **Pilar:** Sonia!
> **Orfeo:** Over here!
> **Pilar:** One year—
> **Orfeo:** We love you—
> **Pilar:** She can't hear—whistle for her.
> **Orfeo:** My darling you'll be back soon.
> **Pilar:** For your sixteenth birthday—
> **Orfeo:** Look, we're here—look over here—don't forget—don't forget this!
> **Pilar:** Whistle for her—
> **Orfeo:** My mouth is dry.[49]

The 1961 action is transformed into a "flashback" as the adult Sonia from Act One steps onto the stage to deliver the rest of the memory. We learn that the new high-heeled shoes she had been dressed in on her *quince* was not the only article from her former life she discarded during her flight:

> **Sonia:** I stood in the tiny bathroom in the airplane—five miles over the sea—and out of my pocket, I pulled a handful of basil. And I threw it down the toilet. My ring. I took it off my finger, Spanish gold, from my great-grandmother's hand, passed down to me through a chain of pure love. And I flushed it away. And I said, "I do not forgive you. I will never

[48] Eire, 377.

[49] López, 109.

forgive you. You have broken my heart."[50]

Sonia is quoting from Young Sonia's lines from earlier in the act: "If I am old enough to be sent away, then I am old enough to speak my mind to you...I'm not yours anymore. I am not yours...I do not forgive you. I will never forgive you."[51] In fact, these words are also the first that Sonia speaks in the play, delivered as a cryptic prologue that serves to raise intrigue about what will never be forgiven. The words, as critic Robert Nesti points out in a review of the Huntington Theatre production, "come to haunt her."[52] Indeed, Sonia speaks this forgiveness sentence yet again during her desperate discussion with her son: "Zak, if you go. If you go, I do not forgive you. I will never forgive you."[53] The action in Act Two reveals just how deeply wounded her parents were by her proclamation, her mother Pilar pleading and vowing to her husband "Promise me...One year...Or I will swim there myself."[54] Orfeo, Sonia's father, "promised" like all Pedro Pan parents, but he had no control. *Patria potestad* was seized from him whether his daughter stayed or went.

When the government discovers that Sonia's father has been listening to remote broadcasts via Radio Swan, Orfeo stalls imprisonment in order to take his daughter to the airport for her flight to Miami: "My soul goes on that plane with Sonia."[55] An adult Sonia later reports that "None of us saw my father after that day. And my mother, true to

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[50] Ibid.

[51] López, 107.

[52] Robert Nesti, Review of *Sonia Flew*, *Edge National Arts & Entertainment*, 8 October 2004.

[53] López, 48.

[54] Ibid., 107.

[55] Ibid., 106.

her word. Walked into the sea."[56] The suicide of Sonia's mother, Pilar, constitutes the other half of the play's intriguing prologue, a soliloquy of final prayers before drowning in the ninety-mile gulf between the daughter and the husband she lost. Finally learning from the past by reliving it, Sonia is able to share it with Zak after he is wounded in battle: "I want to tell you what happened to me. In Cuba. In my mind, I've told you a million times. It was the right thing, but I—I wonder all the time. I'll never know—if I stayed."[57] While this peaceful reunion does not allow Sonia to experience her mother's profound loss, it sustains the parallel between Zak and Sonia. They are both fractured selves now, crippled from "operations," both literally and metaphorically "the walking wounded" that Pérez Firmat terms exiles, equating refugee with "amputee" as he wonders what became of the boy that stayed behind in Cuba.[58] The idea of an incomplete self left behind in the home country, forever frozen in childhood, is finally resolved in this relationship with own child. It is through adulthood, through standing on the other side of the *pecera*, that Sonia is able to see.

"This thing about losing home is a recurring theme in my work," López says. "Being removed from your home, or being transplanted somewhere else, or people who are not where they feel they belong, or people who feel they lost their paradise."[59] While packing Sonia's suitcase, Pilar reassures her daughter: "You'll be home soon. Don't forget your home. Think about that. Think about flying over the island, can you imagine?

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[56] Ibid., 109.

[57] Ibid., 112.

[58] Pérez Firmat, *Next Year in Cuba*, 7.

[59] López quoted in Catherine Foster, "Her Chance to Fly: Melinda López Gets Her Big Break with an Ambitious Play about Cuban Exodus," *The Boston Globe*, 3 October 2004, Arts/Entertainment, N1.

Seeing the *Sierra* from the air, the curving golden coast, coral —The soaring towers of Havana—."[60] Attempting to follow the adventuresome spirit begun by Orfeo and his promise of one-of-a-kind snowflakes, Sonia's mother points out that Sonia's departure (ironically) will be her first opportunity to catch a complete view of the country she inhabits. A similar sentiment is expressed by Pedro Pan novelist Carlos Eire in *Waiting for Snow in Havana*: "We were up in the air, no longer on Cuban soil. Aloft, like Peter Pan...And I saw the Cuban countryside below me for the first time and the last time."[61] This image inspired López as well as dramaturg Howard Kerner, who borrowed Eire's quote for the program note *Sanos y Salvos - Saved!*, published in the Playbill for the Coconut Grove Playhouse production.

The new Revolutionary government exercised such firm control of families and youth that Sonia's parents realized they really had no option to keep their daughter. Even if she stayed in Cuba, she was already engaged to spend the summer working in the provinces. Pilar appeals desperately to a powerless Orfeo: "And if they say three more months, and another six cutting cane. And another year in the provinces, and another? How long will we stay quiet? Until the air isn't ours to breathe anymore?"[62] They realize that they are trapped, and whether they send Sonia to the U.S. or allow her to be indoctrinated by the local government, they lose her. This was a popular sentiment among parents, best expressed in *El otro lado del cristal*. Even if a child is sent away

[60] López, 106.

[61] *Waiting for Snow in Havana*, 381.

[62] López, 94.

from Cuba, the parents lose *patria potestad* in a different way.[63]

Because Sonia was never reunited with her parents, the latent sensation of guilt for disrespecting them, for angrily declaring her separation from the family and the past, remains forever unforgiven. Her own words echo in her head: "No! No more. If I am old enough to be sent away, then I am old enough to speak my mind to you. You can make me go and you can call it whatever you like. But I'm not yours anymore. I am not yours."[64] Significantly, Sonia's panic attacks are initiated again when she states that Zak lacks "respect" for her.

Plays about Operation Pedro Pan run the gamut of possibilities for parent-child reunification. In *Sonia Flew* Sonia never sees her parents again, eventually learning of their deaths from a third-hand report. In Mario Ernesto Sánchez's *Matecumbe*, a son very tenderly reunites with his mother after spending time in the children's camp, closing the play with an idyllic Madonna-and-child like tableau. In Eduardo Machado's *Kissing Fidel*, Oscar and his aunt Miriam recount how he was sent directly into her custody after the flight, without spending any time in an orphanage or having to become his own parent. In *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, children become adults before awkwardly reuniting with their mother after a ten year separation. Like Sonia in *Sonia Flew*, *Hortensia*'s Luca and Luciana suppress memories and continue to resent their parents. However, the memories they block are those from their early exile, when, unlike Sonia, they reestablished the boundaries of their sibling partnership as they were left to parent and comfort each other in the absence of parents or patria.

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[63] Llapur, Santiago, Guillermo Centeno Sabi, and Laritza Ulloa. *Del otro lado del cristal On the other side of the glass.* Coleccion de documental cubanos. [Havana]: Video ICAIC, 2000.

[64] López, 107.

Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams

Playwright Nilo Cruz was not an unaccompanied exile. He was only two years old when the Cuban Missile Crisis brought Operation Pedro Pan to an end, and came to the U.S. with his parents on a freedom flight in 1970. Nevertheless, his play *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* focuses on two Pedro Pans returning for the first time to Cuba. In a process similar to López's, Nilo Cruz composed *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* after learning about the underground flights his older cousins took years before him. Cruz also conducted numerous interviews with other Pedro Pan exiles before writing the script. He chose to set the play in 1998, only three years before the Act One action of López's *Sonia Flew*. Unlike López's structure, which juxtaposes scenes with parallel domestic action in the U.S., all of the events in *Hortensia* unfold in Cuba. Cruz's play focuses on returning home to the island where the characters' childhood had been so dramatically interrupted.

Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* is the only known play in which grown Pedro Pan exiles return to Cuba. Estranged siblings Luca and Luciana visit the island for the first time since their Operation Pedro Pan departure, arriving during the Pope's visit in 1998. During their visit, they must confront not only memories from their Cuban past but also from their exiled life just after flight, when their instantaneous child-to-adult transformation blurred youthful fright with sexual instincts and transplant coping mechanisms. With only each other, Luca and Luciana desperately sought to recover the island by experiencing the only things that they retained from it: each other's bodies. Transported as a family unit, the duo of orphaned children remained parentless for ten

years. In the struggle to adapt, roles were blurred as the children were left to fend for themselves, and to create a new life much like new adult couples do—like a little husband and wife. Childhood confusion and curiosity collided with adult survival instincts and the societal roles associated with them.

In a casting note, Cruz calls for actors much younger than the characters they are portraying, a visual metaphor for the exiles' lost years. In an effort to concretize the feeling of having had their youth subtracted from them, Cruz instructs future directors that "Luciana and Luca should look younger than their actual age, as if their lost childhood has stopped them from aging."[65] To be sure, the individual character descriptions read "LUCIANA, a woman in her 30s. She's older in real life." and "LUCA, a man in his 30s. Luciana's brother. He's older in real life."[66] The technique is not left as a wordless visual for the audience to decipher; their peculiar ailment is an issue also addressed inside the fantastic world of the play: Luca explains his ailment to Delita, articulating a life frozen in a state of departure:

> **Delita:** …you never told me how old you are. Let me guess, twenty-eight.
> *(He shakes his head.)* Thirty.
> **Luca:** No.
> **Delita:** Thirty-three.
> **Luca:** Sometimes I don't know how old I am.
> **Delita:** What do you mean?
> **Luca:** I don't know. I mean, my body has stopped recognizing my age.
> **Delita:** God, don't tell me I've slept with a vampire!
> **Luca:** *(Laughs.)* No. A doctor told me that I suffer from an aging disorder. My sister, too.[67]

Luciana, who has been avoiding Luca along with the memory of their adolescent past,

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[65] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 4.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 15.

stumbles into an area where an underground "Museum of Dreams" is curated by Hortensia, a woman who retains faith in miracles despite the harsh living conditions in modern day Cuba. Luciana is astonished when Hortensia divines that "a man" is troubling her, "a man sitting on top of your eyebrows." Hortensia is equally surprised to examine Luciana's face…"it's interesting, you don't have any lines. Let me see the palm of your hand. *(Pause.)* Your hand looks like the hand of a young girl."[68] When Luca and Luciana finally reunite, they acknowledge the phenomenon they share in common as a "malady" while noting that their bodies have not changed.

As the narratives unfold for these Peter Pan characters, *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams,* like *Sonia Flew*, makes significant references to J.M. Barrie's story *Peter Pan*. The children's mysterious "aging disorder" brings them onto a strange Neverland level with the boy who never grew up. The Pedro Pan exodus is still infamous in Cuba, and we see Barrie's Peter Pan de-romanticized by a stern militiaman:

> **General Viamonte:** …So, the Pedro Pan project, they called it, like the children's book about the boy who runs away to never-never land and never grows up… That's a young age to have a child fly alone on an airplane…
> **Luciana:** I wasn't alone. I was with my brother.
> **General Viamonte:** Even worse – two children.[69]

The relationship Luciana (re)arranges with her brother Luca shares even more in common with the tale of Peter Pan. After leaving their home and their parents, Luca and Luciana become their own surrogate parent team, a new mother and father, almost like an adult couple out on their own. They develop a relationship that seems to suit their new roles (orphaned into adulthood, and all each other has from their old country), but the sexual

[68] Ibid., 26.

[69] Ibid., 38.

nature of that relationship of course transgresses the formal boundaries of their old roles (brother and sister). Similarly, without any parents in Neverland, Wendy takes on the role of "mother" for Peter and the Lost Boys while Peter remains the boys' leader and therefore a kind of "father." Roles become crossed and confused when Peter's relationship with the Darling children becomes increasingly fraternal (to the point of entertaining the idea of being adopted into the Darling family), and as Wendy develops feelings for her son/brother/husband.

> **Peter:** *(scared)* It is only pretend, isn't it, that I am their father?
> **Wendy:** *(drooling)* Oh yes. *(His sigh of relief is without consideration for her feelings.)* But they are ours, Peter, yours and mine.
> **Peter:** *(determined to get at facts, the only things that puzzle him)* But not really?
> **Wendy:** Not if you don't wish it.
> **Peter:** I don't.
> **Wendy:** *(knowing she ought not to probe but driven to it by something within.)* What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?
> **Peter:** Those of a devoted son,Wendy.
> **Wendy:** *(turning away)* I thought so.
> **Peter:** You are so puzzling. Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.[70]

The innocence of the children here is important in considering the childhood relationship that is never dramatized but nevertheless still exists as the most vital part the backstory of *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*. Shuffling between their lives in the real world and those reestablished in a Neverland fantasy, the children in Barrie's play must respect and remember multiple sets of boundaries. In *Now or Neverland: Peter Pan and the Myth of Eternal Youth*, Ann Yeoman points out, "It is not an easy place to stand, betwixt and between."[71] Barrie intentionally establishes a provocative interplay between his two

[70] James Matthew Barrie, *Peter Pan and Other Plays* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 130.

[71] Ann Yeoman, *Now or Neverland: Peter Pan and the Myth of Eternal Youth* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1999), 178.

words early on in the story, when he writes that leaves from Peter Pan's costume are discovered in the morning on the nursery room floor. Yeoman affirms that in the Peter Pan story" [t]he boundary between the real and the imaginal is questioned."[72] Luca and Luciana are also situated "betwixt and between"; in the orphanage they straddle two countries, two identities, and two states of maturity. It is in the liminal stage, in the period of becoming, that the siblings are stalled as they continue to transfer between two worlds. Though Luca and Luciana may only be "in their 30s" in 1998—an age that would render them nearly unborn at the time of the Cuban Revolution and Operation Pedro Pan—they are "older in real life." Their bodies refuse to grow up. Their otherworld malady is detectable in the real world, where it is as plain to see as Peter Pan's leaves were on the floor of the nursery.

In *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams,* the grown Pedro Pan children deliver presentational-style narrations to relive how they, once transported alone to the U.S., became more to each other than simply brother and sister. Placed in an Ohio foster home with "hundreds of children," they felt altered after the normal rules of their Cuban childhood had been broken by their migration, their burgeoning adolescence, and the extended absence of parents. "Every day this fury that our mother had abandoned us," Luca recalls, followed by Luciana's indignant memory that "[o]ur mother was supposed to meet up with us." The children find themselves stalled in a netherworld: "Our mother couldn't leave, and we couldn't come back."[73] This portrayal is consistent with Cruz's description of the exodus's children as living "in a state of limbo and uncertainty while

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[72] Ibid., 86.

[73] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 45.

waiting for their parents."[74] Further, Cruz believes that "there is a difference between an immigrant and an exile." Explaining this distinction in the context of the Pedro Pan children, he insists:

> An immigrant can always go back to their country but an exile doesn't have that option. So these kids, even though at one point they thought they would unite with their parents, they would realize later on that they were not able to go back to their country.[75]

In *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* it is revealed that Mamá Fefa remained separated from her children until they were adults. A grown Luciana recalls the Pedro Pan flight:

> **Luciana:** I can remember Mamá's voice the day we left…
> *(Lights up on Mamá Fefa wearing a 1950s dress and a scarf. She holds a red suitcase.)*
> **Mamá Fefa:** Never let go of your brother's hand. Hold on to your ticket. When you go up the stairs to the airplane, look for my polka-dotted scarf in the crowd and wave goodbye so I know you're safe. Over there you'll be in different surroundings.... Never forget me and your father, and take care of your new shoes.[76]

When they reunite ten years later, Mamá Fefa attempts to make up for lost nurturing time: "Mamá makes us stand in front of her. She cooks. She can't stop cooking for us. With each meal she wants to fill the hunger, the absence. We eat and swallow ten years of distance."[77] The children, of course, had long been afflicted with their "aging disorder."

Neither here nor there, Luca and Luciana suspend established familial relations

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[74] Hedy Weiss, "Growing Up with Pedro Pan: an interview with Nilo Cruz," *Chicago Sun*-Times, 17 November 2005.

[75] Nilo Cruz qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan* Transcript, Dos Alas Theatre and Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, New York City, 14 April 2008, 27.

[76] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 9.

[77] Ibid., 46.

and alter themselves to cope with their new roles, their changing bodies, and their foreign environment. The orphanage's signature "stench of urine" becomes masked for Luca when Luciana begins to wear a "pure," "clean" perfume; she reports "I remember my brother smelling me, telling me that I stopped smelling like his sister…I used to spray a cloud of fragrance all around us, to erase every trace of who we were."[78] Once their incestual trysts were discovered, the children were separated. They remained apart until their awkward 1998 reunion as adults in Cuba, the unresolved conflict that provides the impetus for the action in *Hortensia*. As Cruz put it during the 2008 forum on the *Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan*, "The wound is still there, it's still open, and they're still trying to figure it out. And of course when they go back to Cuba during the Pope's visit, that wound opens up again. And then they sort of go back to the memory of leaving and the unfinished business."[79] Their childhood streets, houses, rooms, clothes, and suitcases all remind them of each other, of the past, and of their dramatic departure from their youth and home country.

Luciana explains the multiform identity that Luca was forced to cultivate as a result of their exile: "He was my mother, my father, my brother and sister, and also nothing. Nothing. So he could be everything. Everything."[80] The pair exchanges similar sentiments in the letters they write to each other:

> **Luca:** Dearest Sister… My summer moth… Because once we were brother and sister…
> **Luciana:** Because we are brother and sister!
> **Luca:** Because once we were mother and father to each other…
> **Luciana:** Dear Brother, Dear dark bird of my heart…

[78] Ibid., 45.

[79] Nilo Cruz qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays*, 27.

[80] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 46.

> **Luca:** Dear Sister.
> **Luciana:** Because I can only love you best when you're far away, I've chosen to love you in the distance.
> **Luca:** Dear Sister, my blue parakeet, because we've never spoken of the past…[81]

Nilo Cruz discussed how roles became blurred during his characters' plight as unaccompanied Pedro Pan children after a performance of a segment of *Hortensia*: "In my play it's a brother and sister, of course, and they're really holding on to each other to the point that even at one point they cross boundaries, they even, they not only want to be a brother and sister to each other, they almost want to be lovers."[82] When the siblings finally meet again during their independent 1998 visits to Cuba, Luca vows to affirm their proper, original roles re-"learning" how to be Luciana's brother. Luciana discloses that she had to convert their tale into a children's story she could tell herself in order to cope. She tells Luca how the story would go: "Two children dressed up in airport dreams. Two children who thought the world was going to end. Two children who only had each other."[83] This period of "self-storytelling" suggests that after the siblings separated, they were left to parent themselves. It also cooperates with the play's presentational style; Luca and Luciana gradually expose the backstory and the adventures of their travels by soliloquizing in the form of confessional journal entries. Though they remain apart, their journal entries seem to dialogue with each other. For instance, Luca muses in his space "Same old streets…," while Luciana remarks, "Same old blue…." Through the experience of familiar terrain Luciana records: "January third: All of a

[81] Ibid., 33.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 52.

sudden I've gone back to my childhood with Luca."[84] It is not until Luca and Luciana confess to strangers with whom they quickly become intimate, however, that the reason for their estrangement from one another is revealed. The audience learns that during their early years in the U.S. their confused desperation in becoming exiles and adults all at once left them to cling to the only thing left of home: one another.

The play's first image is not of live action but a projection: "a slide of a boy and a girl holding suitcases." The image immediately paints an emblematic portrait of Operation Pedro Pan; in fact, the silhouettes of a boy and girl with suitcases serves as the official logo for Operation Pedro Pan, Incorporated.[85] Almost immediately, the opening projection is juxtaposed with adult representations of those child characters—who still carry suitcases—as they embark on an exploration of a past. Like Machado's characters, possessions and locations are personified by exiles trying to reclaim a lost youth. The red suitcase appears not only in the play's opening projection, but also in Mamá Fefa's hand as she waves goodbye in the airport, and is later retained by an adult Luciana who also has the clothes she wore on the trip.[86] She insists that her ex-husband didn't understand her attachment to the objects, how he diagnosed her as "sick…stuck in the past" when she would open the red case to spread her old little clothes out on the floor. Her remarks explain her former attachment to her brother who of course always understood and still understands her experience for sharing the same plight.

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[84] Ibid., 30.

[85] www.pedropan.org, accessed 25 July 2005.

[86] Objects from the OPP flights are sometimes fetished or musemified both personally, by travelers, or more publicly, by established organizations. At events like Miami's annual CubaNostalgia, Operation Pedro Pan Inc. has endeavored to collect any extant travel paraphernalia from grown unaccompanied children or their parents. http://www.babalublog.com/archives/002693.html. Last accessed 27 October 2008.

The official logo for Operation Pedro Pan Incorporated (www.pedropan.org).

Their practice of recollecting the past maps a new, imagined reality over the Havana they must confront. Luca and Luciana muse: "If I close my eyes I can see it like before…same old streets…same cars…just like yesterday…this is the place we went to school!…this is the park we used to go to every afternoon."[87] The siblings recall the details of the territories long left behind, personifying the roads and rooms of the past: "I'm remembering the streets," Luca muses to himself in one location. "The streets are remembering me," Luciana assures herself, while noting that "[t]he world is not forgetful…A sidewalk never forgets to be a sidewalk…A tree never forgets to be a tree."[88] The animated objects of the past know their place and seem stable and unchanging. Such declarations suggest the idea of a secure home, making "homecoming" possible. Luciana's comments also suggest that her identity has been destabilized by her displacement. Her national identity is brought into question when she stands—as a U.S. journalist and hotel guest—in distinct contrast to "locals" in Havana and in Santiago de las Vegas. With multiple territorial boundaries crossed and confused, she has "forgotten"

[87] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 10.

[88] Ibid.

to be Cuban also as much as she had once forgotten to be a child, a sister, and a daughter.

Roads and rooms, however, do not seem to forget, and we have seen the house fetishized by many Pedro Pan exiles—María Brito's domestic installation pieces, for example, or Eduardo Machado's character Miriam in *Kissing Fidel* who requests that her nephew say hello to the former house when he visits Cuba. As soon as he arrives, Luca scripts a letter to his sister about the house in which they were children: "I could see the two of us traveling together and visiting our old house. In some ways I was arranging all the furniture in my mind and telling them: Shsh! Soon she'll be coming back."[89] The children have been "away," in exile; however prolonged the time away, it was temporary. Luca insists that they could never removed themselves from their old house. He writes to Luciana: "I went back to our old house, I found you in every room. Even if you have chosen to remove yourself, you were there in the patio, in the living room, standing by the window…."[90] Lourdes Casal insists that exile is living where "there is no house whatsoever in which we were ever children."[91] Both Luca and Luciana seek an exit from the painful exile that left them wandering homeless into each other's bodies.

However, if Luca and Luciana declare a true homecoming impossible, the secure space of origin is sacrificed. Una Chadhuri emphasizes the exile's "fantasy of home as an originary space" in discussing the impossibility of returning to that "home."[92] Cruz maximizes these conflicts; when the pair finally unites in Cuba, it is in the house of their

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 20.

[91] Lourdes Casal, "Definition," trans. Elizabeth Macklin, *New Yorker*, 26 January 1998, 79.

[92] Una Chaudhuri , *Staging Place: the geography of modern drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 116.

old childhood. Luciana declare, "The house seems smaller. In my mind it had higher ceilings and I always thought there was another room." Luca answers, "That's because you dreamed about it for so long,"[93] suggesting that the mind magnifies memories, expanding special spaces into infinite realms. The children are traveling to what Bachelard describes as "the land of Motionless Childhood."[94] Because of the incestual relationship the siblings developed after arriving on their own in the U.S., Luciana finds it difficult to enter the house with Luca. Related to Bachelard's statement that our first home remains "physically inscribed in us," Luciana reveals in an earlier scene that she had found a house in her body and in Luca's. Not only does she link him with the rooms of their past, but she relates him to all of the spaces associated with their childhood in Havana. She located her absent past in his present body: "On his mouth the seaside. On his eyebrows my old school."[95] His body became seductive to her, a way of returning home.

Because home became associated with their sexual relationship in exile as much as with their sibling relationship in Cuba, their nest seems unsafe. Though their sexual relationship developed for the first time in the Pedro Pan camps and not ever before, never in Cuba, Luciana, especially, avoids going home as much as she has avoided her brother. One night during her adult return trip, when she is unable to sleep for thinking of Luca, Luciana shares one desperate wish with the audience: "I just want to turn off the light in my mind in that room I can't get to."[96] Once they occupy their house again, that

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[93] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 51.

[94] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1964; Reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 5

[95] Cruz, *Hortensia*, 46.

[96] Ibid., 34.

"room" becomes accessible and they regress through reveries: "Remember the lizard cemetery we made, and the hearts we carved on the tree trunk? The hearts are still there."[97] This proclamation recalls Ana Mendieta's cave and tree-based earthworks in both image and intention. Like Mendieta, these grown Pedro Pan characters attempt to authenticate their homecoming by evidencing a "permanent mark" etched on their natural homeland. In reclaiming their old terrain through such records left behind, the siblings struggle to restore their safe space to the pure condition of the past, before the tarnish of exile.

Their attachment to lost objects and places is challenged at once. Luca returns home to Tío Lalo to discover Havana's hunger, houses without hot water or electricity. "The streets are still dark," Luciana observes after arriving in Havana, "with the power outages, most of the city resorts to the light of the moon, and Havana looks like a sleeping madam who lost her pearl necklace."[98] Luciana's comfortable tourist hotel lies in stark contrast to the family's old house, where Luca's scenes with Tío Lalo are played. While Luciana has used her journalist status as a way of returning home to cover the Pope's visit, Luca travels to Cuba in hopes of finding and reuniting with his sister. "It's curious how the church took you away and now it has brought you back," Tío Lalo remarks to Luca as they stand in front of the church where Luca and Luciana were baptized. Luca inquires, "Is this the same place where the parents would come and sign off the children?... all the kids that were sent to America. The Pedro Pan kids, like me and my sister." Lalo responds with a quick account of why their parents sent their children away on Peter Pan:

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[97] Ibid., 51.

[98] Ibid., 11.

> Your mother was afraid for you and your sister, with your father being in prison and all. Everybody thought there was going to be a war, you see. And there were rumors that the government planned to send children to work on Soviet farms, so she wanted to protect you. And when she found out there was a way of sending the two of you to America through the Catholic Church, your mother was one of the first ones to put your names on the list.[99]

His monologue is like so many of the accounts recorded in Conde's history, *Operation Pedro Pan: the untold exodus of 14,048 Cuban Children*, and is quite like the story Ana Mendieta's mother and aunt narrate in *Fuego de Tierra*. In fact, with its mention of parents losing custody or *patria potestad* (the children sent to work in Soviet Camps), the prediction of the Bay of Pigs uprising (the assumption that there will be war), and the information that the Catholic Welfare Bureau served as primary host responsible for the Operation (sending "through" the Catholic Church), Lalo's speech could serve as the common explanation from many parents who sent an unaccompanied child as part of this exodus.

Cruz creates his own "Lost Apple" metaphor with the poetic entrance of a young Cuban prostitute having recently lost her beloved cat. She tells Luca:

> My cat Orlando just died. I am miserable and alone in my apartment. Can you believe somebody gave me a canary? Quite frankly, I thought it was bad taste, because how can you replace a cat with a canary. So I opened the window and let the thing fly free. Now I'm resisting going back to my place, cause I know I'll feel lonely without Orlando.[100]

Her mourning offers Luca an allegory of his own exiled condition. Like a second or third apple, no replacement for the beloved original—no cat for a canary—will do. Delita's decision to keep wandering forges and freezes a space between her lost home and the

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[99] Ibid., 24.

[100] Ibid., 12.

changed home she avoids.

Like the recurrent "apple" or "suitcase" images, shoes also sometimes serve as a kind of emblem for the child's steps in the journey. Mamá Fefa's very last words to her children as they board their flight, advising them to mind their new shoes, recall the shoes that Young Sonia discarded during her flight in *Sonia Flew*. At the 2008 International Hispanic Theatre Festival in Miami, Cruz related that he had no shoes for his own exile on a 1970 Freedom Flight with his family because the very pair his parents had bought him in preparation for exile had grown too small by the time they obtained their exit visas. They pinched his feet, causing unbearable blisters. Nilo's "barefoot" arrival to the U.S. gained an extra layer of irony when his father came to own a shoe store in Little Havana, and again when Daryl Roth cited this circumstance of Cruz's migration by purchasing an extravagant pair of Prada shoes as an opening-night gift for the playwright when the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anna in the Tropics* hit Broadway.[101]

The first production of *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* was directed by Rafael de Acha at the New Theatre in Coral Gables, FL—the same theatre that commissioned Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anna in the Tropics*. De Acha's own background as a child exile from Cuba fueled his direction of the piece. He explains:

> My insights into the play came from my own personal experience. I was born in Cuba and came to this country in 1960 on a student visa, which then changed to a refugee visa. Although not "officially" a Pedro Pan kid (I was a few months ahead of that) I was separated from my parents for almost one year, living in Minneapolis in 1961.[102]

[101] Recounted by Cruz's long-time mentor Teresa María Rojas during my discussion with Nilo Cruz, Teresa María Rojas, and Rafael de Acha on the panel "Escenificando Nilo Cruz," 2008 International Hispanic Theatre Festival. Hosted by Teatro Avante, Miami, FL.

[102] Email exchange, Rafael de Acha and Kimberly del Busto, 3 August 2008, after their co-presentation on the panel Escenificando Nilo Cruz [Staging Nilo Cruz] at the 2008 International Hispanic Theatre Festival, Miami, 26 July 2008.

The Miami Herald's review of *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* credits de Acha with being "himself a Pedro Pan kid."[103] Because it is really only a technicality that de Acha is not "Pedro Pan," emigrating before Monsignor Walsh and James Baker began the exodus, the general circumstances of his migration are of course identical to those shared by the children of the exodus. Similarly, Nilo Cruz's "neighboring" exile status to the Pedro Pan children also gave him an insider's vantage point when writing. Not only is he the cousin of Pedro Pans from whose accounts he could draw, but he also experienced the sensation of having to grow up "very fast" after moving to the U.S. at the age of ten. "I had to speak for my parents, answer letters for my parents…my child self was dormant."[104] Though his parents accompanied him, a curious role reversal took place which forced him to childhood behind.

De Acha assembled an all-Latino cast for the production, choosing Carlos Orizando for the role of Luca for his "boyish" quality that substantiated the character's perpetual childhood. Tanya Bravo was cast for the same reason, a "girlishness" that de Acha insisted made one "believe she was a girl in her early teens." Responding to the New Theatre premiere, the *Miami New Times* noted that

> *Hortensia* is the sort of theater that speaks to a specific audience. During the play's opening weekend, the crowd responded audibly to many specific references in it. The memories, the grief, the connection with this material was tangible, an example of what theater ought to be: an exchange, a transformation between actors and audience.[105]

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[103] Christine Dolen, "Freedom Flight," *The Miami Herald*, 12 September 2001, 12E.

[104] Dolen.

[105] Ronald Mangravite, "Theatre Dream On: Nilo Cruz's latest story of love, loss, family, and dislocation is more than just another take of Cuban-American Woe," Miami New Times, 27 September 2001, http:///www.miaminewtimes.com/issues/2001-09-27/theater.html, accessed 21 October 2005.

The New Theatre's premiere of *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* also happened to open the week of 11 September 2001, which charged the Miami crowd's reception with multiple emotions. One of the greatest contrasts to this mood was the 2005 British Premiere, a Cherub Company production at the Finborough Theatre in London. None of this cast was Latino, nor had any of the crew or company been to Cuba. Alex Marker, the set designer, nevertheless took on the task of "produc[ing] an environment that felt like Cuba" and audiences felt transported; "we are in Cuba," raved one reviewer.[106] Reviews of the play's Chicago debut, also in 2005, focused on the "atmosphere conjured" by that production, insisting that the audience left "wanting to book the next flight to Havana" [107]—an odd sentiment considering that Cruz's play exposes an impoverished Havana often without food, hot water, or electricity.

Though the Miami reception might have featured more audible and visible reactions from an audience strongly identified with Cuban exile and the Pedro Pan exodus, not everyone in the city was prepared to greet the new drama. The New Theatre extended a generous offer to partner with Operation Pedro Pan Inc. in making the closing performance a fundraiser for the group. Jorge Viera, a banker who sits on the Board of Trustees, is quoted having said, "It's a good play, but there were topics, including an incestuous relationship, that I felt wouldn't be appropriate for a not-for-profit group to be

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[106] Alex Marker, "Cherub Company London presents *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*," http://www.alexmarker.com/Hortensia/MuseumDreams.htm. Accessed 26 August 2007.

[107] Mary Shen Barnidge, Review of *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*, *Windy City Times*, Windy City Media Group, 23 November 2005, http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=10124, accessed 20 November 2007.

associated with."[108] It is significant to note that López's less controversial dramaturgical strategies earned the playwright a place of distinction in a select group of artists who have created work about the exodus on the official website for OPP, Inc., appearing beneath the heading "Films & Plays Relating to Pedro Pan."[109] The site also features photographs of Elly Chovel, Lucie Arnaz, and Vice President Hector Fernandez celebrating the play's success.

The opening of the Laguna Playhouse production of *Sonia Flew* incorporated former Pedro Pan children into a question-and-answer style talkback forum. OPP Inc. President Elly Chovel addressed the audience from onstage and was joined by Judge Francisco Firmat, attorney Sam Sanabria, screenwriter and Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences archivist Julio Vera, retired social worker Alejandra Tiffer Goya, and healthcare management consultant Lourdes Birba. During what proved to be an informative as well as therapeutic presentation, Judge Firmat shared that *Sonia Flew* had helped him to finally "unpack."[110]

Sonia Flew remains the last show to be staged at Miami's famed Coconut Grove Playhouse. The play's 2006 run was abbreviated when the historical theatre announced that it must close its doors indefinitely due to financial strains. Lucie Arnaz, who with her daughter Katharine Luckinbill shared the title role(s), launched a fundraising campaign and appealed to members of South Florida's Cuban community. Arnaz's efforts

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[108] Dolen.

[109] There is no mention of Cruz, Machado, nor even of Mario Ernesto Sánchez, despite the fact that Bryan Walsh and OPP Inc. Founder and President Elly Chovel attended and participated in ceremonial honors at the 1995 Teatro Avante production. Carlos Eire, author of the award-winning memoir *Waiting for Snow in Havana* makes the cut under "Books," and a group of nostalgic singers—Willy Chirno, Lissette Alvarez, Carlos Oliva, and Marisela Verena—provide the official site soundtrack. See my introduction.

[110] Rick Stein, "The Jews of the Caribbean," reproduced on www.pedro pan.org. Accessed 25 June 2008.

became widely publicized; St. Petersburg Times reported that she wrote letters emphasizing "our shared Cuban heritage" and urging that "[w]e desperately need your help and we need it fast."[111] Arnaz donated $50,000 of her own money (matching a contribution made by Bacardí) to attempt to save the Playhouse while starring in its production of *Sonia Flew*.[112]

While preparing to play the role of Sonia, Arnaz invited many Pedro Pan adults to her Miami apartment and served food catered by the legendary Cuban American restaurant Café Versailles. Lucie Arnaz also met with Elly Chovel to discuss the plight of the Pedro Pan children. *El Nuevo Herald* relates how Chovel and Arnaz communicated over role research: "Lloré, reí, compartimos historias, y pude simpatizar con lo que ellos sintieron. Para ser Pedro Pan hay que convertirse en padre o madre de uno mismo." [We cried, laughed, shared histories, and were able to sympathize with how they felt. To be Pedro Pan was to become your own mother or father.][113] While certain "shared histories" have been censored or omitted, this quote encapsulates the attitude these plays work to achieve and what unites them despite their vast differences in politics and personal histories.

At *The Lost Apple Plays*, held during New York City's Immigrant Heritage Week 2008, Nilo Cruz and Melinda López discussed both *Hortensia* and *Sonia Flew* with an audience who witnessed the broad differences in their interpretations of the exodus. The

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[111] John Fleming, "Playhouse on Brink of Financial Disaster," *St. Petersburg Times*, City & State Section, 14 April 2006, 2B.

[112] Fabiola Santiago, "Lucie's Love," *The Miami Herald*, Tropical Life, 17 April 2006, 4.

[113] Lucie Arnaz quoted in Olga Connor, "Lucie Arnaz: Su Herencia Cubana en 'Sonia Flew,'" *El Nuevo Herald*, 20 Abril 2006, 6D. Translation mine.

event was curated with this in mind, and NYC Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Guillermo Linares continued to guide this idea in his response to their plays:

> It is the powerful message that your story brings that needs to continue to be shared…one of the children of Peter Pan who is a great friend, Mel Martínez—I mention him because I learned a lot from him and what the story was like for him and I'm sure that for every child that left Cuba under those circumstances there is a story to be told. And it is an unfolding story still.[114]

Despite the different attitudes in the production and the reception of these two plays, many common characteristics remain, from the emblematic suitcases and shoes to a dramatic layering of past and present in order to resolve the displaced child self. The plays also exploit the resentful feelings that some Pedro Pan children felt toward their parents who sent them away—a quality, which René Buch noted at *The Lost Apple Plays*, becomes the most crucial element in dramatizing conflicts in *Sonia Flew* and *Hortensia*.[115] Sonia, Luca, and Luciana repress memories of their past which they must recover and face during the action of these plays. While Luca and Luciana endure the Pedro Pan camps with the desire to enter another's body in order to return home, Sonia refuses any comfort or consolation outside a newly defensive self. These representations suggest that Pedro Pan children remain profoundly isolated—estranged from their family, their countries, and themselves—until they revisit childhood and the delayed emotional flights they took after their airplane flights from the past.

[114] Guillermo Linares qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays*, 30.

[115] René Buch qtd. in the *Lost Apple Plays*, 27.

CONCLUSION

Preserving Pedro Pan: Inherited and Interior Exile

Many Pedro Pan performances have long eroded, closed, or been de-installed. With the ephemeral nature of the performance art by Ana Mendieta, now only traces of fetishes or photographic documents survive to narrate the displacement of a Pedro Pan whose figure seemed absent even before her own death. Installation art by María Brito often cannot be preserved even in photographs, due to its enormous proportions and high degree of spectatorial interactivity. No visual documentation survives of *Merely a Player*, Brito's most emblematic Pedro Pan performance piece. Ernesto Pujol's *The Children of Pedro Pan* was disassembled after its 1995 exhibition at La Casa de las Américas galleries. This brief show served as its only possible presentation, since the objects and rations it used as materials had to be carefully distributed back to the local Cuban families from which they were borrowed. Mario Petrirena concentrated on the themes of Pedro Pan in his early sculpture, but recent exhibitions exploit other subject matter. The Pedro Pan pieces in the Petrirena archive have yet to be digitized, and have only most recently been done so for the purposes of this dissertation.

After writing two plays about Pedro Pan and over forty about Cuban exiles, Eduardo Machado has also moved on to other themes, declaring that he has finally cured himself of that urgent "need" to dramatize his past. Machado's most recent plays—*Paula: a concert*, about a U.S. artist with Alzheimer's, and *In Paradise*, inspired by Tennessee Williams's work—draw from subject matter altogether unrelated to Cuban-Americans or the exodus. Both *Havana is Waiting* and *Kissing Fidel* were self-produced through INTAR; subsequent productions may prove difficult due to the radical degree of

playwright autobiography, necessitating his involvement in the production of both scripts. Reproducing Mario Ernesto Sánchez's *Matecumbe* poses a similar problem. Sánchez's distinctive staging, featuring predominantly wordless action, makes it impossible to produce again and there is no surviving script. *Matecumbe* remains his only play; the producer/director only momentarily took up the position of playwright in order to come to terms with his past as an unaccompanied exile. A digital video of the play's one production survives, but much of the action remains obscured by poor audiovisual quality, and it is nearly impossible to comprehend without prior knowledge of the exodus, Camp Matecumbe, and Sánchez's particular plight.

Plays by Melinda López and Nilo Cruz, relatives of Pedro Pan exiles from a slightly younger generation, have proved to be the most enduring. *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* and *Sonia Flew* are the most widely produced of Pedro Pan plays. As national and international commercial successes, these two pieces may shoulder the Pedro Pan legacy more than any other dramatic work. The challenge of reproducing other Pedro Pan performances, however, has inspired a succeeding generation of artists. U.S.-born children who feel they have "inherited" exile from Pedro Pan parents, and new Cuban artists responding to Pedro Pan performances that produce responses of "interior" exile on the island, are discovering ways to continue communicating the dramatic chronicle of Pedro Pan. This closing chapter will demonstrate how the exodus continues to be staged by future generations of Cuban exiles, thereby revealing the strong imprint that Operation Pedro Pan has left on performance both on and off the island.

In her autobiographical essay *From This Side of the Fish Tank*,[1] Teresa de Jesús

Fernández states: "Exile is usually understood as being uprooted; viewed this way, only those who leave suffer…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."[2] Denis Jorge Berenschot uses this observation by de Jesús Fernández to compare these notions of exile and inner exile: "Exile implie[s] a physical and emotional separation from one's country or an emotional and social exile that we call *exilic-locus*, or inner exile. In both cases, the ramifications are significant, as much for the exiled as for those who remain within the system and have to cope with the vacuum left by the departed."[3] Rafael Rojas notes that both "el exilio y el insilio," or exile and inner exile, "constitute two forms of intellectual marginalization,[4] thus causing as much suffocation as production of creativity. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera remarks that residents on the Island who passively oppose Castro's dictatorship experience el insilio, which she translates as "internal exile,"[5] creating a kind of "mental exodus" of Cuban citizens. She elaborates on exile and internal exile to introduce a third quality, "inherited exile," distinguishing second-generation Cuban-Americans who:

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[1] de Jesús Fernández's title refers to *la pecera*, "the fishbowl" glass partition in Havana's José Marti Airport. For a full discussion of la pecera see my introduction.

[2] Teresa de Jesús Fernández, "From This Side of the Fish Tank," in María de los Angeles Torres, *By Heart/de Memoria: Cuban Women's Journeys In and Out of Exile* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 77.

[3] Denis Jorge Berenschot, *Performing Cuba: (Re)writing gender identity and exile across genres* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), 5.

[4] Rafael Rojas, *Isla sin fin. Contribución a la crítica del nacionalismo cubano* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1998), 183, translated by Andrea O'Reilly Herrera in *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 157.

[5] The term "internal exile" was popularized in English by Paul Illie's *Literature and Internal Exile: Authoritarian Spain 1939-1975* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), which discusses internal exile in the context of Spain under Franco.

> characterize themselves as being in a state of exile despite the fact that they have little or no first-hand experience of Cuba. Many, for example, left Cuba as toddlers and therefore have only fleeting, dream-like impressions of their lives on the Island. Others…have inherit[ed] exile, number[ing] among the second generation, born to Cuban exiles in the United States, and, for the most part, have never set foot on Cuban soil.[6]

O'Reilly Herrera expresses that some second-generation Cuban-Americans have inherited an exile that forms a strong "bond to the Island." She terms this phenomenon the "vicarious imagination."[7] It is this phenomenon that will permit future stagings of Pedro Pan performances, thus preserving the exodus in the Cuban-American imaginary.

Second-generation Cuban-Americans often grow to discover that they suffer from congenital "maladies" like el gorrión, or la morriña, because they are part of the schizophrenic, dyspepsic walking-wounded group initiated by their parents' exile.[8] Cuban sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut, who originally coined the "1.5" generation distinction, discusses the oxymoronic notion of "second generation exile" in his 2006 article "Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States." Rumbaut acknowledges that "questions have been raised as well about whether and to what extent the 'transnational' attachments of their parents are sustained in the generation of their children, particularly those born in receiving countries such as the United States, who lack the memories and the symbolic 'birth connection' of their emigrant parents."[9] He dismisses the label "second generation"

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[6] Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba:Legacy of a Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) , xxxiii.

[7] Ibid., xxii.

[8] For more on these "exile illnesses," see my discussion of Mason, Said, Watson, Vidal, and Pérez Firmat in the introduction.

[9] Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States." *International Migration Review* 38:3 (2004): 1161.

in terming the offspring of exiles ("persons born in the United States cannot also be immigrants to the United States")[10] and establishes an elaborate decimal system to account for subtler generational divides. Rumbaut further classifies groups of child immigrants based on age and degree of assimilation.—1.25ers (those whose experiences have proved closer to their parents than the typical 1.5er) and 1.75ers (whose experiences are closer to the U.S.-born second generation). The classic, oxymoronic, second generation is followed by 2.5ers, or those with only one foreign-born parent.[11]

Rumbaut's landmark *International Migration Review* article is not the only creative attempt to classify the U.S.-born offspring of immigrants. Gustavo Pérez Firmat aims to resolve the dilemma by taking license with conventional perceptions of national and ethnic identities:

> I convinced myself that it was possible and desirable to transcend exile by construing Cubanness as an ethnicity rather than a nationality. I still believe that *lo cubano* can be an ethnicity, and I think this is being amply demonstrated by the younger generation of Cuban Americans, the self-described "Generation Ñ," a lively group of twenty- and thirty-somethings who, as their magazine's blurb phrases it, grew up with Santa Bárbara and Captain Kirk, with Álvarez Guedes and K.C. and the Sunshine Band.[12]

Pérez Firmat's reference to the widely popular *Generation Ñ* magazine reveals that its title has come to serve as an epithet for its target audience. The group, the Cuban equivalent to the unicultural and monolingual "Generation X," also been termed the "ABC" [American Born Cubans] Generation. Pérez Firmat has recommended a reversal of that acronym for a more accurate representation of the generation's cultural upbringing: Cuban Bred Americans [CBA]. "For my children," he reveals, "Cuba is an

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[10] Ibid., 1165.

[11] Ibid., 1184.

[12] Ibid.

enduring, perhaps an endearing, fiction."[13] His words describe the experience of some 1.5ers as well, and echo Oscar Marqués's sentiments in *Kissing Fidel*.[14] Generación Ñ is succeeded by Generación Y, with self-proclaimed members both on and off the island (interior and inherited exiles). In the U.S., additional terms, like YUCA (Young Upward Cuban American, read "yuppie"),[15] have taken root to describe the nature of the succeeding generations' assimilation. Gabe Rodríguez evaluates how the sensation of exile may pass from first second generation Cuban-Americans:

> It is not merely a matter of living outside of Cuba, but living after Cuba. Cuba is like a womb in the ocean; a distant but nurturing visceral memory. And to the new generation that has "inherited exile," it is not even a memory but a theory, a pre-established religion. The Old Cuba is dead and lost forever. The island may change and the environment may thrive once more, but it can never be exactly the same, just as children can never regress to the womb. So now Cuba has been turned into a martyr and the children have grown up.[16]

This womblike origin provided by the mythical motherland suggests sentiments similar to those Mendieta produced with her exile-related earthworks. The idea that this remote space can be—in theory and through rituals and oral histories—absorbed by future generations may be true of not only those who inherit exile, but those who experience interior exile as well.

Cuban Performance artist Tania Bruguera and Cuban-American writer/performer Carmen Peláez are two of the most representative voices who perform interior and

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[13] *Life on the Hyphen*, 5.

[14] "[Cuba] is the only happiness I have ever known…fiction." Eduardo Machado, *Kissing Fidel* (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 2006), 41-42.

[15] The acronym also forms the common Cuban tuberous vegetable, yuca.

[16] Gabe Rodriguez, "From Lucy to Reba: A Look at Cuban and Hollywood Relations, Hispanic Business Monthly, 28 December 2006, http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/news/news_print.asp?id=52014, accessed 2 April 2009.

inherited exile in relationship to Pedro Pans. Their work is produced through the kind of "vicarious imagination" that accompanies the transference of exile as explained by O'Reilly Herrera. It is also this "vicarious imagination" that has made it possible for me to conduct the analyses delivered here in this dissertation.

From 1987 to 1991, Bruguera dedicated herself to recreating the work of Ana Mendieta, reconstructing it in painstaking detail from photographs she had acquired as a student in Cuba.[17] She had come to know Mendieta's work the year after the artist's death, and felt doubled over with internal exile. Bruguera experienced not only el insilio, but the profound loss of a mysterious compatriot that she perceived to be her counterpart. She saw Mendieta as "a symbol of returning to the homeland,"[18] which, for Bruguera, validated her desire to forge a community between Cubans and Cuban exiles living abroad. Bruguera observed that "[w]ithin Cuba, her [Mendieta's] return became the proof that there really was another part of us that existed."[19] Recreating her work would pay homage to Mendieta in a way that would recover the artist's strong presence in the history of Cuban art, despite the fact that the island has now experienced a double loss of Mendieta as its citizen (through her exile and her death). Critic Gerardo Mosquera explains that "Bruguera identifie[s] with Mendieta in order to bring her back to the island and to the present day, to rework her in order to show her art to the new generations and to recover her presence in the collective imagination."[20] Bruguera's efforts led to the

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[17] Luis Camnitzer, *New Art of Cuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 326.

[18] Tania Bruguera, "Postwar Memories," in de los Angeles Torres, *By Heart/de Memoria*, 169.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Gerardo Mosquera, "Tania Bruguera, Reanimating Ana Mendieta," *Poliester: Pintura y No Pintura* 4 (Winter 1995): 52.

formation of the Havana-based organization "Desde una pragmatica pedagogía" (from a pragmatic pedagogy, DUPP), who with the support of the National Union of Cuban Artists and Writers (UNEAC), curated the first annual "Ana Mendieta Performance Festival" in 1998. The group followed Bruguera's lead in recreating Mendieta's performances in celebration of the artist's desire to travel freely between the U.S. and Cuba.[21] DUPP hoped to revive Mendieta's efforts to use her performances as a way of initiating an open dialogue between the two countries.

Pieces by Bruguera and Mendieta are still often exhibited together, as they were in 2008 at P.S.1/MoMa's exhibit *NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith*. One gallery in this exhibit was dedicated to a video of Bruguera's 2007 performance, *Delayed Patriotism*, which looped on an wall adjacent to a transferred Super-8 film of Mendieta's 1980 untitled (Gunpowder Work #1) performance of a burning *silueta*.[22] Mendieta's terrestrial homecoming was met with a response by Bruguera's notion of "delayed patriotism," in which she questions how archaic cultural images linger as protective national symbols. Bruguera's performance cycles through people who pose for portraits with a live (hooded) eagle in front of black and white photographs of old world leaders, including former Cuban president Fulgencio Batista. Bruguera's piece critiques the tendency of many international citizens to focus on (meaningless) majestic symbols while remaining "oblivious to what's happening in the background" of any nation.[23] The

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[21]Olga Viso, *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body: Sculpture and Performance 1972-1985* (Miami: Miami Art Museum, 2005), 130-31. "Galeria DUPP: Statement and Details," *Universes in Universe: 7th Havana Biennial*, http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/habana/bien7/morro3/e-dupp-2.htm, accessed 4 April 2009.

[22] For a discussion of Mendieta's siluetas, see my chapter 1.

[23] Nancy Princenthal, "Everywhere and All at Once," *Art in America* 96:3 (March 2008), 54.

juxtaposition of Bruguera's performance with Mendieta's allows for a continued comparison of el exilio and el insilio across generations during a protracted period of Cuban exile.

The frequent pairing of these artists also suggests that Bruguera has carried on Mendieta's legacy, and some spectators believe (considering Mendieta's untimely death) that Bruguera is completing certain artistic missions posthumously. Bruguera continues to live in Havana, though her opportunities for exhibition have been greater in the U.S. than in Cuba. The binational presence of her work has performed a productive dialogue between two countries during the last two decades, beginning with her performances in Havana in response to Mendieta's death. In 1992, she exhibited a solo show titled *Ana Mendieta* at the Sala Polivalente del Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales [Multipurpose Room at the Center for the Development of the Visual Arts] in Havana.[24]

On 29 March 2009, at the Wilfredo Lam Center, Bruguera organized a landmark performance for the 10th Havana Biennial. The performance parodied Fidel Castro's famous 8 January 1959 "dove speech," in which a (trained) white dove landed on the future-dictator's arm to convince the masses that he had been divinely accepted. Though an "American" eagle had paired with Bruguera's co-performers in *Delayed Patriotism*, a "Cuban" dove flapped its wings at Bruguera's Biennial performance, and it was placed on the shoulder of every person who spoke. Both birds, held in captivity, are intentionally exploited here as ironic symbols of "freedom." If the dove attempted to fly from the shoulders of any given speaker at the Biennial, "the fatigue-clad actors would force it

[24] Tania Bruguera, Curriculum Vitae, http://www.taniabruguera.com/info_cv.html., accessed 1 April 2009.

back."[25] The bird came to rest on the shoulder of one young pioneer, Yoani Sánchez, the author of the controversial counterrevolutionary blog "Generación Y." Sánchez delivered an address arguing that the government should sanction the freedom of expression that is already ruling the Island's electronic exchanges: "The real island is starting to be a virtual island. That is more democratic and more pluralistic."[26] She describes how Bruguera's performance empowered several silenced citizens:

> Tania gave us the microphones, we who have never been able to deliver our own speeches, instead we have had to suffer under the hot sun the speechifying of others. It was an artistic action, but there was no game-playing in the declarations we made. Everyone was very serious. A dove rested on our shoulders, probably equally well-trained as that other one fifty years ago. However, none of us who spoke considered ourselves chosen, none wanted to stay—for fifty years—shouting into the microphones.[27]

This potent combination of performance and politics incited rousing chants of *¡Libertad!* [freedom] from both Cuban citizens and foreign audiences. A spirit of spontaneous communitas filled the room, uniting an audience of visitors and inner-exiles, perhaps the Island's counterpart to singer Willy Chirino's cheering audiences. In fact, one artist and audience member remarked that the transporting, communal atmosphere seemed more like Miami than Havana, and another declared that he had "never felt freer."[28] The online blog for the Spanish-based magazine *Cuba Encuentro* reports that free speakers were ultimately censored when a technician cut off the power to the

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[25] Fabiola Santiago, "Artist's Work lets Cubans Speak Out in Havana for Freedom," *The Miami Herald*, 31 March 2009, http://www.miamiherald.com/entertainment/arts/visual-arts/story/976152.html, accessed 1 April 2009.

[26] Yoani Sánchez , *Generation Y* blog, http://desdecuba.com/generationy/?p=472, accessed 1 April 2009.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

microphone.[29]

Carmen Peláez, whose mother Alicia emigrated on Operation Pedro Pan in 1961, is the grand-niece of renowned Cuban painter Amelia Peláez. It was by observing her great-aunt's landscapes, depicting remote Cuban scenes that Peláez had never seen, that she began to "inherit exile." While examining some of these pieces in MoMA's permanent collection, Peláez travels as far into Cuba as the paintings can take her: "I want to climb into the canvas and finally, finally exist where I belong. And when I step in to take a closer look, the security guard tells me to keep my distance."[30] These lines are from *Rum & Coke*, the one-person play Peláez has created in order to communicate her family's experiences, performing on stages in New York (Abingdon Theatre; International Fringe Festival), Chicago (Fox Theatricals), and Miami (Area Stage; Coconut Grove Theatre).[31] *Rum & Coke* echoes statements made by her grandmother, sentiments that were partially responsible for determining her inherited exile: "You are not free, because you're Cuban and you're not home."[32] During one scene, Peláez portrays her grandmother in order to convey and understand how national threats of *patria potestad* prompted the unaccompanied migration of her father with her uncles and aunts. She transforms her posture after performing Camila, her alter ego, who is afraid to tell her family that she plans to visit the family's Cuban homeland. When performing the scene for *The Lost Apple Plays* at the Martin E. Segal Theatre in New York, Peláez's

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[29] "Blogueros y artistas aprovechan un performance para pedir libertad," *Cuba Encuentro*, http://www.cubaencuentro.com/es/cultura/noticias/blogueros-y-artistas-aprovechan-un-performance-para-pedir-libertad-166628. Accessed 11 April 2009.

[30] Carmen Peláez, *Rum & Coke*, author's own unpublished manuscript, 2.

[31] Peláez, her work, and her family were also featured on Ted Koppel's *Nightline* in 1998.

[32] *Rum & Coke*, 29.

body shifted as she sank slowly into an armchair, her voice dropping a register as it assumed the thickened accent characteristic of the older generations. Once she has become her abuela, she answers her own [Camila's] inquires:

> Get your head out of that cloud, mi vida! How you could ever consider going [to Cuba] is beyond me! Why? Because it's dangerous, gorda! Don't you think they have records of how people left and why? …you know why we left. They tried to take away your father? Oh, sí. But I recognized the *miliciano* that came to get him. I was his second grade teacher. I jumped in front of your father and I said, "You're not taking my son anywhere, *descarado*. I taught you how to read! Get out of my house!" Within hours, your grandfather put your father and the other four kids on a plane to New Orleans. … The months after we sent the kids away were endless. Half of everybody we knew had left. You couldn't talk to your friends anymore because you didn't know who was on whose side. Your Abuelo and I were afraid to talk to each other. La Habana got so cold. In my backyard, I used to have five trees. One for each child. When they bloomed, you would swear the sun was sitting on top of our house. I would spend hours looking at each tree. Wondering what was happening to each one of my children.[33]

While visiting family on the Island, Peláez was tracked by the Ministry of Culture and asked to perform *Rum & Coke* in Cuba…with "a few edits."[34] She refused, feeling fortunate for Operation Pedro Pan: "My grandparents had the foresight to put me in a country where I can say whatever I want, and this play really belongs to them. I don't really need to edit in the United States, I'm not going to edit it [in Cuba]."[35] Unlike Bruguera, Peláez was not able to complete the Cuban/Cuban-American performance dialogue between countries.

Peláez had already experienced resistance, however, when she first initiated a premiere of the play in New York. "Everybody said it was too right wing," Peláez

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[33] Peláez, monologue from *Rum & Coke*, in *The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan* Transcript, Dos Alas Theatre and Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, New York City, 14 April 2008, 3.

[34] Peláez qtd. in *The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan* Transcript, 25.

[35] Ibid.

reported of New York producers. "They basically said if we put a communist character in it, they would take it. In the end, 'Viva Fidel' was all they wanted to hear."[36] When *Rum & Coke* eventually opened in New York, the Abingdon Theatre production prompted not only a routine performance review in the *Times*'s Arts segment, but also a feature in the paper's NY/Region section, marking its local reception. The writer/performer had the opportunity to respond to the romanticized notions of Cuba as a vacation destination, a mysterious island that gave us the pop-icon Che and Buena Vista Social Club. "I had somebody come to me after a show and say, 'Don't ruin Cuba for me!' Well, why not? They're holding onto a fantasy." [37] Peláez's observation inverts the widespread supposition that exiles are the only ones caught in an illusion.

Images from the 2008 Abingdon Theatre production of *Rum & Coke*. Photos by Kim Sharp. Left: Pélaez marks a journey of Cuban life on and off the island. Right: Pélaez performs in front of a digital version of one of her great aunt Amelia Peláez's paintings.

While performances of Pedro Pan are in the process of being restaged by succeeding generations, many former Pedro Pan children are still sharing their experiences. Operation Pedro Pan, Inc. hosts monthly breakfasts for its grown exiles (at

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[36] "Kisses and Hisses: Actress's anti-Castro Message Rings Strong in South Florida," *The Miami Herald*, 15 December 2003.

[37] Peláez qtd. in David González, "For Those Who Fled, A Retort to Cuba," *The New York Times*, NY/Region, 10 March 2008.

Cuban-American restaurants) and yearly holiday dances (at Cuban-American reception halls). Aleida Durán proclaims, "That exodus of Cubans, who today are age 50 or older, establish a special species, a subculture, that is difficult to penetrate. They shared a painful, vital experience that is different than other Cuban exiles."[38] Forty years after the first spontaneous talent recitals were performed in the children's camps, Operation Pedro Pan still "performs" all over Miami (and sometimes also in Los Angeles, where OPP, Inc. has established a second chapter with a corresponding website, www.pedropanocalifornia.org). In 2002 grown Pedro Pans began raising and donating millions of dollars in funds to buy and preserve Camp Matecumbe's structure and pine-filled acres as a memorial to the exodus. "It was too important to be turned into warehouses," said Elly Chovel, then president of Operation Pedro Pan, Inc.[39] The death of Monsignor Walsh in 2001 was mourned by many Pedro Pans throughout the country, and Miami's N.E. 21st Street, at the old site of St. Raphael's camp he shared with many of the Operation's boys, has been renamed "Bryan O. Walsh Way."

Singer Willy Chirino, a former resident at St. Raphael's, has also been given his own street, "Willy Chirino Way," marking N.W. 17th Avenue from West Flagler to NW 7th Street in Little Havana. Still the "voice of Cuban Miami,"[40] Chirino staves off the progression of exile not only in his lyrics and songs, but with his mysteriously youthful appearance; the singer appears to have the same mysterious "aging disorder" that beset

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[38] Aleida Duran, "Operación Pedro Pan, 14 mil niños Cubanos a EE.UU," *Contacto*, http://www.contacto magazine.com/pedropan.htm. Accessed 6 June 2008.

[39] Tere Figueras, "Pedro Pan Group Eyes Kids' Camp as Memorial, *The Miami Herald*, 26 October 2002, A1.

[40] Jordan Levin, "Chirino's Day Did Come," *The Miami Herald*, 19 February 2006, A4.

Luca after flying on Operation Pedro Pan in *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*.[41] At sixty, Chirino is truly at his prime; he won his first Grammy in 2006 and has started Latinum, his own music label. Inspired by his own experiences through Operation Pedro Pan, he has established the Willy Chirino Foundation, whose mission is to respond to the "growing needs of the displaced children throughout Latin America."[42] The Chirino phenomenon is already immortalized in the contexts of both inherited and interior exile. Jordan Levin observes the impact the singer has sustained during many waves of Cuban migration: "The balseros when they come here, they all know him already. That's how he keeps going, because everybody, from the old exilio to the new people, everybody knows his music."[43] Chirino's daughters also carry on the musical exile legacy with their own "second generation" band, appropriately named "Los Hijos de los Hijos" (The Children of the Children).

In 2006, Operation Pedro Pan, Inc. joined forces with Barry University, where the official Pedro Pan archives are housed, to erect a spectacular booth at Miami's Cuba Nostalgia exposition (an annual affair that promises all things Cuban). The "Operation Pedro Pan" exhibit displayed old photographs from the archive festooned with balloons featuring the OPP, Inc. logo. The group also distributed informative cards to festival passers-by, hoping to locate more former children from the exodus. As Chovel explained, "We are making an all-out effort to find ALL of the Cuban children who came through the 'Unaccompanied Cuban Children's Program'...many of whom don't realize

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[41] Nilo Cruz, *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* (NY: Dramatists Play Service, 2004), 15. For more on the "aging disorder," see my chapter 3.

[42] Willy Chirino Foundation, http://www.acgweb.com/willy-chirino.org/demo/willy.html, accessed 2 April 2009.

[43] Levin.

that the name 'Pedro Pan' applies to them."[44] It is sometimes the case that a Pedro Pan child has neglected to notice that the name *Miami Herald* reporter Gene Miller gave the exodus in 1962 endorsed their emigration with a permanent title. Operation Pedro Pan, Inc. has partnered with the Historical Museum of South Florida to curate an exhibit to celebrate the exodus's fiftieth anniversary in 2010. The organization seeks contributions from Pedro Pans, including "items of historical importance, such as photographs, letters, books, bags, even the clothes they came with...."[45] Operation Pedro Pan is in the process of cataloguing such artifacts and documents to preserve the exodus's history at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., where they gave their first national public address in 2005. Through these regular presentations and exhibits, Operation Pedro Pan continues to perform.

OPP, Inc. is in the process of erecting a permanent exhibit at Camp Matecumbe so that future children may learn the history of the site and of Operation Pedro Pan. The goal of educating future generations has also been pursued in two recently published volumes of juvenile literature about the exodus, María Armengol Acierno's *Children of Flight Pedro Pan* and Hilda Perera's and Mathieu Nuygen's *Kiki: A Cuban Boy's Adventures in America*.[46] At Barry University's official Pedro Pan Archives, both of these books are filed alongside original newspaper articles and primary materials chronicling the exodus (like Monsignor Walsh's diaries and the airport log). These

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[44] Elly Chovel qtd. in Val Prieto, "Pedro Pan Group at CubaNostalgia," *Babalú Blog*, http://babalu blog.com/2006/05/pedro-pan-group-at-cubanostalgia-2006/, accesssed 16 April 2009.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Maria Armengol Acierno, *Children of flight Pedro Pan* (New York: Silver Moon Press, 1994); Hilda Perera and Mathieu Nuygen, *Kiki: a Cuban boy's adventures in America* (Coconut Grove, FL: Pickering Press, 1992).

fictionalized accounts are largely success stories with happy endings for Pedro Pans and the present-day children who read about them. While this addition marks the archive's new commitment to including creative interpretations about the exodus, the process of determining such inclusions remains highly selective. The official Operation Pedro Pan website has also demonstrated a restricted system of chronicling the creative work in response to the exodus. While OPP, Inc. and the Barry University archives have joined forces in a passionate project to locate all 14,048 former unaccompanied children, they continue to discount key performances, including artwork by Ana Mendieta, María Brito, Mario Petrirena, Ernesto Pujol, and the Pedro Pan plays by Eduardo Machado, Pedro Monge Rafúls, Mario Ernesto Sánchez, and Nilo Cruz.[47] Melinda López's *Sonia Flew* remains the only performance recognized, celebrated, and supported by OPP, Inc. and all associated archives. It is crucial that the greater body of work be recognized and preserved so that assorted accounts might represent more of the 14,048 testimonies, and avoid the oversimplification that will result by constraining this diverse exile group under an expurgated set of titles.

While OPP, Inc. persists in its active search for lost Pedro Pans, only a limited sample size of the Operation's 14,048 unaccompanied children—approximately a sixth of these exiles—has been located for present-day evaluations.[48] Sociologist José Goyos, one of the children of the exodus, has conducted an analysis of these adult Pedro Pans to determine how the exile group has fared professionally in the U.S. Though the children

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[47] OPP, Inc.'s critical reception of *Matecumbe* and to *Hortensia* is discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

[48] Lynn Guarch, Operation Pedro Pan Archives, Barry University, Miami Shores, FL; John Dorschner, "The Pedro Pan Generation," *CubaNet*, http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y03/sep03/22e6.htm , 22 September 2003, Accessed 8 January 2009.

began life in exile with no material advantage, Goyos argues that the education and class standing the unaccompanied children enjoyed in Cuba played a significant role. The privileged socioeconomic status of families who were able to forge strategic connections is what originally allowed young sons and daughters to emigrate quickly and easily. This point is stressed in Goyos's 1996 dissertation, *Identifying Resiliency Factors in the Adult "Pedro Pan" Children*, completed at Barry University.[49] His evaluation of the successes of the young immigrant group also emphasizes other principal factors, including the children's accelerated maturity due to the circumstances of their solo migration—something that led them to become extraordinarily resourceful and self-sufficient.

Some of the most visibly successful Pedro Pans include Eduardo Aguirre, the U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra under the George W. Bush administration; Florida Senator Mel Martínez; Leo Guzmán, the first Hispanic member of the New York Stock Exchange; Carlos Saladrigas, founder of the Professional Employer Organization Vincam Group Incorporated, which, before its sale in 1998, was the largest Hispanic-owned business in the U.S.; and brothers Carlos and Jorge de Céspedes, founders of Pharmed, another leading Hispanic-owned business in the country.[50] Many other Pedro Pan exiles have been able to duplicate a lifestyle that approaches the socioeconomic comfort representative of their Cuban lives. Ricardo Ortiz argues that this phenomenon may further complicate homecoming:

> [Political] "change in Cuba" is far less likely to trigger an exodus of homesick exiles back to the island and instead will trigger a flood of

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[49] José Goyos, "Identifying Resiliency Factors in the Adult Pedro Pan Children: A Retrospective Study" (PhD diss., Barry University, Miami Shores, FL, 1996).

[50] After decades of financial success, the de Céspedes brothers were sentenced to prison for fraud in March 2009. Jay Weaver, *The Miami Herald*, 9 March 2009, http://www.miamiherald.com/news/miami-dade/story/939690.html. Accessed 9 March 2009.

> immigrants from the island to the mainland, to join their relatively well-heeled relatives in South Florida and parts north and west. What we'll witness as a result of that eventually isn't, therefore, some re-Cubanization of exiles, but an even more profound and complex Americanization, Latinoization, and diasporization of the culturally still-Cuban populace.[51]

Indeed, the 1959 Revolution was launched as a rebellion against the imposing U.S. economic presence in Cuba during Batista's reign. The range of U.S. city settings that have provided backdrops for the performances discussed here in this dissertation—including Iowa City, Union City, Miami, California, and Minneapolis—begins to represent the wide dispersal of unaccompanied children who came of age in their exile country. Today there are more than one million Cuban Americans whose established residence in the U.S. accounts for 4% of the nation's Latino population. Should the current thawing of US.-Cuban relations lead to an end of the U.S. embargo on Cuba, permitting free travel and commerce between the two nations, the island's near-depletion of resources will likely be revived with strong influence from U.S. businesses. 1.5 generation exiles who have reestablished their family's successful socioeconomic status in the U.S. may exert a unique force in determining the culture and economy of the post-communist nation. Many of these exiles—represented by the privileged Pedro Pan characters in the plays discussed in the preceding chapters—still feel strong ties to lost properties on the island.

Ortiz analyzes the Cuban exile condition in relationship to Eduardo Machado's plays, noting that Machado's characters, like many U.S.-Cuban exiles, are addicted to three C's: "café, culpa [guilt], and capital."[52] He argues that materialistic exiles' often

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[51] Ricardo L. Ortiz, *Cultural Erotics in Cuban America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 275.

[52] Ortiz, 134-55.

"stubborn, compulsive refusal to surrender their claim to lost property and lost capital may persist in delaying, if not preventing…their own still-possible return home."[53] Cuba's new economy will not likely permit homecomings in which *gusanos* can crawl back through the keyholes of their former houses. Furthermore, while memories remain intact in the minds of the exiles who are still dwelling on former dwelling places, most homes on the island are crumbling in states of disrepair. "Latinoized" citizens may be more reluctant to trade their comfortable exile accommodations for these dilapidated dwellings, finding themselves equipped to participate in a rebuilding of their former, now-devastated, nation only from a safe economic distance. Uva Clavijo's 1986 play *Con todos y para el bien de todos* (With All and for the Good of All) depicts a diverse group of Cuban exiles stranded on a mythical island whose citizens are desperate for aid in establishing a new democracy. The Cuban-Americans dole out advice, but prove unwilling to remain once they are rescued. Each possessing an allegorical name to represent their political or class standings, characters chime in with excuses in response to the natives' appeals: "doctors…and children and grandchildren are there…it's very difficult to leave one's things behind…[when] one has struggled much to save a few pennies to now begin again…if we were younger…."[54] Historian María Cristina García contextualizes the playwright's palpable analogy:

> Clavijo implies that for all their talk of returning to Cuba when Castro falls, the majority of exiles will more than likely stay in the United States. Building the new Cuban society will require commitment and sacrifice, and most émigrés will not want to uproot themselves from their comfortable lives in the U.S. to deal with uncertainty and instability.[55]

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[53] Ortiz, 155.

[54] Uva Clavijo, *With All and For the Good of All*, in Rodolfo J. Cortiña, ed., *Cuban American Theatre* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1991), 190-91.

[55] María Cristina García, *Havana USA* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 181.

García's image of these Cuban-Americans "uproot[ing] themselves" inverts the exile terminology employed by many nostalgic artists (especially Mendieta and Brito, who employ the term most explicitly) and characters examined in this dissertation. Roots have grown in another direction, despite the exile's resistant transplantation.

"The children of Pedro Pan," Mirta Ojito announced in the *New York Times*, "now live quiet lives all over the United States. Most are successful men and women who managed to put painful memories behind [them]."[56] Mel Martínez declares that "[b]eing sent around the country allowed us to really become the most Americanized of all Cubans…we spread our wings and were able to assimilate."[57] Financial success seemed to be associated with assimilation, no matter how hard exiles strove to maintain their *cubanía*. Many who remained on the island felt the vacancy left by migrant counterparts, and (as evidenced by Tania Bruguera's work and the Elián González struggle) future generations are absorbing the impact of the island's 14,048 absent children. On the island, they are in exile longing to go "home" to the U.S., where an ideal "Cuba"—signified by creative, free, and thriving citizens—has been displaced. Artists abroad have been able to do something that they could not do at "home" on the island—their work.

By staging representations of and reflections on the past, Pedro Pan exiles have journeyed through time and space as desterrados and destempados, assuaging past selves and resolving interrupted childhoods. Some of these performances, however, never achieved the closure they seek, producing instead a perpetual "anti-catharsis," as Kuspit

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[56] Mirta Ojito, "Cubans Face Past as Stranded Youths in U.S.," *The New York Times*, 12 January 1998, A1.

[57] "Business Monday," *The Miami Herald*, 22 September 2003, 27.

observes in Mendieta's work.[58] Still, these performers and dramatists have realized, through performance, the only homecomings possible. Succeeding generations, those who have inherited exile, are finding themselves able to visit their parents' homelands through stagings as well—especially after visits to the Island prove that the pre-revolutionary Cuba expressed in paintings and oral histories no longer exists.

Pedro Pan exiles may travel back through performance, whether they dramatize a physical return to Cuba (as in *Hortensia* or *Havana is Waiting*), a psychic return (as in characters' reveries, hallucinations, and flashbacks in *Matecumbe* or *Sonia Flew*), or a symbolic return produced through surrogate spaces (as in Mendieta's *siluetas* in Mexico and Brito's gallery replications of her house in Cuba). A physical return—where characters actually "go" to Cuba— is attempted more through "plays"; in performance art, rather than posing a scene in an imagined reality to <u>be</u> Cuba, "Cuba" is represented by environments unframed by a formal stage, potently retaining their ersatz status, displaying their inferiority to a lost "original." Machado and Mendieta both created and presented work in their former homeland only to discover that attempted reversions through actual travel accomplished far less than was possible through dramatizations. Mendieta vowed never to return to Cuba after airport *milicianos* confiscated items she wished to bring back "home" with her from her former "home," and Machado insists that the new memories he has constructed as a visitor to the island have effaced the ones that had remembered it as "home." Critic Cris Hassold calculates the sentiments expressed in Pedro Pan sculptor Mario Petrirena's work, noting "the impossibility of separating what is remembered from what is invented in a past which, as the artist says, seems more a

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[58] Donald B. Kuspit and Gloria Moure, eds., *Ana Mendieta* (Galicia, Spain: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 1996), 48.

dream than a memory."[59] José Quiroga declares that Mendieta and others did not "really [go] 'home' to Cuba in 1980; too many events had already happened in the preceding twenty years, and home was in many ways a constructed fiction, an imaginary landscape, an alternate past in the present that lived on memories repeated almost mechanically."[60] This assessment recalls Oscar's most memorable declaration in Machado's *Kissing Fidel*, when he insists that though he was only eight years old when he last saw it, he can remember his Cuban homeland so well because it is "fiction."[61]

The performances prove that Cuba can be neither lost nor recovered for Pedro Pans and successive generations of inherited and interior exiles. A Cuba has been "composed" in the memories of unaccompanied children, and it is re-composed by artists and dramatists, without existing; it is a simulacrum, an idea of Cuba, and often an idealized Cuba. Because of the island's radical metamorphosis since Operation Pedro Pan's final flight in 1962, even an "accurate" recollection of pre-revolutionary Cuba, including the times and places of childhoods lost, renders as a fantasy realizable only through performance. A multitude of perspectives on Pedro Pan continues to be expressed through dramatic and visual art as well as through concerts, corporations, industries, street signs, national archives, and historic parks. These compositions of Cuba remain imperishable illusions, like the liminal condition of lifelong exile.

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[59] Cris Hassold, *Remnants: Installations by Five Cuban American Artists* exhibition catalogue (Clearwater, FL: Shillard Smith Gallery, Florida Gulf Coast Arts Center, 1993), n.p.

[60] José Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 186.

[61] Machado, *Kissing Fidel*, 41-42.

NEW YORK CITY CELEBRATES THE FIFTH ANNUAL IMMIGRANT HERITAGE WEEK APRIL 14-20 2008

TRANSCRIPT of
THE LOST APPLE PLAYS - PERFORMANCES FROM OPERATION PEDRO PAN

Dos Alas Theatre and MARTIN E. SEGAL THEATRE CENTER

365 Fifth Avenue New York, NY - 14 April 2008, 6:30-8:08 p.m.

Supported by CUNY Caribbean Exchange Program at Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Figure 1: *The Lost Apple Plays*. Back row L to R: Guillermo Linares, Nilo Cruz, Frank Robles, Alina Troyano, Melinda López, Carmen Peláez, Felipe Gorostiza, Gilberto Arribas, Jason Ramirez. Front Row L to R: Kimberly del Busto, Miriam Cruz, Glenda Pezuela.

Dan Gerould: Welcome to the Segal Theatre, I am Daniel Gerould the Executive Director. We are very pleased this evening to present as part of our Series of International and World Theatre The Lost Apple Plays: Performances from Operation Pedro Pan. Curated by Dos Alas Theatre with the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center. The co-Artistic Founders of Dos Alas Theatre are Kimberly del Busto and Jason Ramírez who are Ph.D. candidates in our Ph.D. program in theatre. We are very proud to have them here this evening presenting The Lost Apple Plays. I will turn things over to Dr. Frank Hentschker, Director of Programs, who will say a little bit more about the program.

Frank Hentschker: Thank you all for coming to the Martin E. Segal Theatre at the

Graduate Center, CUNY. The Segal Center bridges academia and professional theatre, international and American theatre. This is as true an example of the kind of work we do, being as close to our mission as it can be. On top of it as Daniel mentioned Kimberly and Jason are very close to us, in the Ph.D. program in Theatre. I would like to welcome now **Carmen Peláez who is going to give us a special introduction from *Rum & Coke*.**

[Carmen Peláez performs Alicia's monologue from* Rum & Coke*:]

Alicia: *(Alicia's voice is old but strong. Like a raspy horn. She stands erect but her body naturally tilts to the side. She is hard but her vulnerability is as obvious as her General-like quality. Sounds of protest are in the background as she walks onstage with her chair.)* Camila! So nice of you to finally show up! *(She sees a reporter.)* Hey that's Jorge Martinez! Jorge! *(To Camila)* I haven't seen him since he left Univision! Jorge ven, ven, interview me. What do you mean who am I? I just finished my hunger strike shift and I'm starting on my prayer shift now. What do you mean you don't do hunger strikes in shifts? Oye, we are here to protest the starvation of the Cuban people, not show them how it's done. There are eleven million people starving in Cuba because of that demon and you expect us to starve ourselves voluntarily! Comunista! *(Alicia crosses to chair.)* Así mismo te lo digo! No, no, no! Now you can go interview your grandmother. Camila, sit down. I saved you a seat. Do you expect me to believe you missed the hunger strike shift by mistake? Please! When have you ever missed a meal? Don't get mad? Don't get mad. *(She sticks out her tongue. Realizing Camila came alone.)* Where's Juana? She forgot! How nice it must be to forget? I wish I could forget. Today is 44 years since your Abuelo & I left la Habana. We thought two or three months, maximum. We'll bring back the kids, step back into our lives again and 44 years later I'm missing my soap opera because of that demon. No, I don't want to talk about it. No, no, no, talking about it doesn't make me feel better. I'm not that modern. *(Notices her husband.)* Ramón! Para de comer mierda chico! *(To Camila)* Look at your grandfather. He gets so excited when he sees your little cousins! Put him down. Te va dar un patatus! Niki, come here. You left your Barbie doll at the house. *(Holds up the Barbie Doll.)* Look at this, this isn't a children's doll, it's a prostitute! Sorry Niki, ballerina Barbie. *(Looks at Camila like Niki is crazy.)* Sometimes I wonder what the people in Cuba that got our house after we left did with everything. Nada. With the toys, our clothes, the pictures. What could those things have meant to anybody? Look at Elenita! *(Yells to her.)* Since when are you using a walker! It's the climate! I don't care if we're only 90 miles away from Cuba ? I'm telling you, the climate here kills you. Caballero, in Cuba it only rained when we wanted it to! Eh? Ay Elenita, you and me both. I'm like the Queen of England destroyed and just for show. *(To Camila.)* I have to yell because she can't hear anymore. She probably doesn't want to, her son is gay. *(Turns back to Elenita, loudly.)* Elenita, how's Tony? Such a good boy. Don't worry,

he'll get married soon, *(Barely speaks it.)* to Jonathan. *(To Elenita.)* Sit down, sit down, pray with us. *(Looks at Camila and laughs.)* Camila, don't joke around like that. That's not funny. *(In shock.)* Can you please explain what business you have going to Cuba? To find beauty? Get your head out of that cloud, mi vida! How you could ever consider going is beyond me! Why? Because it's dangerous, gorda! Don't you think they have records of how people left and why? Don't be cute, Camila, not about this, you know why we left. They tried to take away your father? Oh, si. But I recognized the miliciano that came to get him. I was his second grade teacher. I jumped in front of your father and I said, "You're not taking my son anywhere, descarado. I taught you how to read! Get out of my house!" Within hours, your grandfather put your father and the other four kids on a plane to New Orleans.

Figure 2: Carmen Peláez performs as "Alicia" from *Rum & Coke*

I was sure they were going to come back and arrest me. Everybody was scared. The random assassinations. The violent, ridiculous arrests. We had built this life together and just when we're living what we earned, Castro comes along and says that we are the enemy. That we deserve to lose it all. If you don't like it, take the next flight out with nothing but the clothes on your back and a nullified Cuban passport in your hand. And be thankful for it. There was nothing to say, nothing to do. Cuba was beautiful. I'm not saying it was perfect? No caballero, every country has its problems and we had ours and big. But it was our home. We spoke our language. Then from one day to the next, everything changed. The months after we sent the kids away were endless. Half of everybody we knew had left. You couldn't talk to your friends anymore because you didn't know who was on whose side. Your Abuelo and I were afraid to talk to each other. La Habana got so cold. In my backyard, I used to have five trees. One for each child. When they bloomed, you would swear the sun was sitting on top of our house. I would spend hours looking at each tree. Wondering what was happening to each one of my children. Mis hijos. I wondered if my brother and sisters had places to live yet. If they had food to eat. I'll tell you this, I never knew how beautiful those trees were until Castro took

over. *(She chants.)* "Castro, Traidor, Assesino y Dictador". Wait a minute, wait a minute! In English, coño! So that they understand us! No wonder they think we're crazy! Yes, they think we're crazy! The other day I got into a fight with this Canadian. He said he didn't know why we were still complaining. That he had been to Cuba many times and it was fine. A paradise. That we were a bunch of nostalgic aristocrats. The "Jews of the Caribbean". So I said to him, "Jews of the Caribbean?" That's right, that's right we are the Jews of the Caribbean and you, you let my people go! You animal. Don't you see? You can go to Cuba all the times you want, and do God knows what, but I will never step foot in my country again! Of course I can't go back Camila, I am political exile. I didn't get permission to leave Cuba and I will not ask for permission to go back to my country! *(In utter disgust.)* Let me pray because now I'm mad! *(She crosses herself.)* God I wish I had a cigarette! Si, Elenita, si! I quit smoking a year ago! You were there! We were on the cruise ship and Ramón got sick and we had to take that dingy boat to shore and I promised God that if he cured him, I would quit smoking. The second we walked into the emergency room, prah, he was fine. He had gas! Where is he? Every time I want a cigarette now I want to kill him. Nostalgic Aristocrats? *(Turns quickly to Camila)* I'm nostalgic because I need to be. When your grandfather retired, he insisted on planting the same garden that we had in Cuba. We had such a fight over it. "Chico no comas mierda. Our garden is fine! You don't know what you're doing and you're going to have a heat stroke!" "Coño Alicia! I think I can plant a simple garden!" "Aya tú! I'm not saying another word. I don't want it! And God save you if anything happens because I've already quit smoking.? Eh! Es que why did he want it." He started with the plants. They looked beautiful! Then the flower beds. They looked beautiful. Then he planted the same five trees. I was so excited. I could hardly wait for them to grow. I don't think I had ever let myself look forward to anything as much as I did to those trees. But they wouldn't take root. Camila, no matter where you go or how good you're doing, you're not free because you're Cuban and you're not home and the home you knew doesn't exist anymore. And now you tell me you are going to go to Cuba to find beauty? *(Surprised by her admission.)* I hope you do. *(Music plays.)* It's over. Niki, go get your Abo! *(Sees Ramón.)* Ramón, suelta el mojónete ya, Chico! (Bends over slowly.) Michael, come here! Give Aba a kiss. I love you too! *(She takes a look around focuses on Camila and winks as she pulls her chair off to the right as music plays.)*

Kimberly del Busto: Thank you Carmen for that special introduction from *Rum & Coke*, which just had its recent run at the Abingdon Theatre. Carmen and I have something in common. We are both the daughters of Pedro Pan exiles. Her mother, Alicia Peláez and my mother Marta del Busto are two of the 14,048 who emigrated on those flights from 1960-62. Others include some of the playwrights whose work we're featuring tonight, Eduardo Machado and Mario Ernesto Sánchez. Nilo Cruz and Melinda López who join

us tonight both have cousins who emigrated on those flights. Other Pedro Pan exiles you may recognize include Willy Chirino and Lisette—whose music was part of our pre-show lineup, the U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra Eduardo Aguirre, visual artists Ana Mendieta and Maria Brito, and the late Elly Chovel who was the President of Operation Pedro Pan, Incorporated, now a national charitable organization. From 1960 to 1962, more than 14,000 unaccompanied minors took flight from Cuba to the United States, establishing the largest recorded exodus in the Western Hemisphere. The underground operation designed a desperate alternative to the isolation, indoctrination, and labor assignments that faced the post-revolutionary nation's youth. Conceived by a young Irish Priest, Father Bryan Walsh, Operation Pedro Pan ensured prompt, safe migration and guaranteed lodging conditions for an urgent child exodus that had already begun. After assisting one desperate child, Pedro, who had arrived alone from Cuba to search for relatives in the U.S., Father Walsh, director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau of Miami, created the program with funds from President Eisenhower—the Department of State waiving visa requirements for all Cuban children. The young diaspora of Operation Pedro Pan turned simultaneously from their mothers and from their motherland to occupy places in camps and foster homes in various parts of the U.S. Many located relatives, or reunited with parents, though sometimes not for months or years. But nearly all of these children believed that their displacement was temporary, like a trip to NeverNeverLand, that they would return to Cuba. Separated from their country in a boundless wait for return, the displaced children's feelings are encapsulated by a popular Latin American nursery rhyme "La Manzana Perdida" (The Lost Apple). "La Manzana Perdida" serves as a kind of emblem for the exodus, providing the title for one PBS documentary about the Operation as well as for a book by political scientist and Pedro Pan María de los Angeles Torres. The nursery rhyme begins by posing a question that is subsequently answered but never solved: "Señora Santana, ¿por qué llora el nino?"...Señora Santana, why is the boy crying? "Por una manzana que se la perdido."…Because he has lost an apple. "Yo le daré una, yo le daré dos" I will give him one. I will give him two; one for him and another for you. "Yo no quiero uno; Yo no quiero dos"…I don't want one; I don't want two… "Yo quiero la mía, la que se perdió."…I want mine, the one that I lost. This vivid image of a lost, irrecoverable possession stalls both the child and the narrative's progression as they resist resolution. The quality becomes a trend that persists 45 years later, characterizing the Operation through a body of performance and dramatic literature about a nation's exiled children. Irresolution marks characters, dramatic structures, concerts, sculptural installations, and performance art. This evening examines the dramatic work created by playwrights about those flights, revealing performance as a primary, ongoing mode in attempting to resolve the displaced child self. We will expose a variety of dramatic interpretations in response a common migration, disunifying this group, and the vast groups of Cuban exiles—separated by years, class, motivations, and circumstances—who are often lumped together and flattened by such stereotypes.

Figure 3: Kimberly del Busto describes "la Pecera" while introducing a scene from Teatro Avante's *Matecumbe*.

Along these lines, Mario Ernesto Sánchez sends a particular message to this audience this evening. Mario Ernesto sends regrets; he's at the Festival de las Artes, in San José, Costa Rica. He asks us to remember that the title of his play is: ***Matecumbe: the Flight of a Pedro Pan / el vuelo de un Pedro Pan***. He says, and I quote him, "I have underlined the a and the un because it's very important for audiences to know my play is solely based on my experiences and no one else's. Not everyone felt the same way." This is a revision Mario Ernesto has done because it used to be called *El vuelo de Pedro Pan*, making it more universal, but as audiences have responded to it, he is punctuating it as his own biographical interpretation. He was born in San Antonio de Las Vegas, Cuba and emigrated to the US via Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. Of Camp Matecumbe, he says: "We were young boys, unaware of the magnitude of the crisis going on around us, afraid of being alone, but trying our best to turn around our fate into an adventure never to be forgotten. A lifetime educational experience that shaped our character and personality, that taught us "empowerment" years later, to eat everything on our plate, to be patient when waiting for a wish, to appreciate family life, and to realize that the human race was not perfect." This is **Teatro Avante's 1994 production of *Matecumbe***, which is the name of the camp that most of the Operation Pedro Pan boys were sent to. So here we're going to see a dramatization of him leaving his mother in the airport when he was a boy. And one very prominent feature of José Martí Airport—the International Airport in Havana—was that it had this area, it had a glass partition, the parents were segregated on one side and saying goodbye, heart-wrenching goodbyes to their youth that they might never see again. So this was called the pecera, the fishbowl. So here he tries to dramatize that through silent scenes and through light at the end. And we'll see the pecera come to life on the stage.

[Video projection of a silent scene from Teatro Avante's 1994 production of* Matecumbe*: BOY and MOTHER share an extended goodbye in the airport, separated by 2 MILITIAMEN who strip search the BOY and rob articles from his pack. MOTHER and BOY gaze through the glass of the pecera.]

Kimberly del Busto: Matecumbe ends with a poetic reversal of the opening scene, in which the boy and his mother are happily reunited when she arrives to rescue him from

Camp Matecumbe, ending his temporary but protracted orphanhood. Unlike the boy in Matecumbe, the character of Sonia in ***Sonia Flew*** never reunites with her parents. **Melinda López** dramatizes what in psychology is called "Delayed Grief Syndrome" as Sonia is forced to recollect a past she has suppressed. She never forgave her parents for sending her away, and it is not until she has children of her own--When her son Zak enlists in the Marines and goes to war--that she revisits the horrible memory of being sent away from her family forever on Operation Pedro Pan. The action proceeds achronologically: The first act is set in Minneapolis, December 2001. The second act is set in Havana, April, 1961. At two different points in the play, Mother and Son deliver almost identical monologues about how they were read the story of Peter Pan during their childhoods. **Jason Ramírez performs Zak's monologue from Act I:**

> **Zak:** My mother used to read me Peter Pan. The boy who could fly. He lived in Never Land with all the lost children. And one day, Peter got sad, and he missed home so much that he flew back there, across the ocean. He flew to the window of his bedroom. But his mother had locked it. And he couldn't get back in. I always used to wonder, what kind of a terrible mother would do that? Even after years and years, wouldn't you keep the window open? Even through blizzard and rain and heat and locusts, wouldn't you keep the window open? In case? Just in case?

Kimberly del Busto: The company will now present a scene from **Act 2, Scene 4 from *Sonia Flew* by Melinda López**:

[Frank Robles performs as Orfeo; Miriam Cruz as Pilar; Glenda Pezuela as Young Sonia:]

> **Orfeo:** They came early in the morning. My students—in uniform. With guns—do you see? To my lecture. Cellular division—do you know? They asked to address the hall—I said of course, and I offered them the lectern. Other members of the faculty had not been cooperative, they said. Other members of the faculty had resigned. But they wanted to assure the student body that Professor Santiago was on the list of the approved faculty. And they wanted the students to know that my classes would continue uninterrupted through this difficult period. That the understanding of science, hard science, was elemental to our progress as a nation. They gave me a pin, and I put it on my lapel.
> **Pilar:** Orfeo, no….
> **Orfeo:** Even Galileo bowed his head. Of course I don't mean to suggest that I am Galileo. He was a great man. But even Galileo. Even he.
> **Pilar:** The other faculty?
> **Orfeo:** Collected their things in boxes. Went home. Others—the soldiers—my god—in a truck, Pilar, the faculty in chains—In chains! Our director. *(He weeps)* Is lost. A great man he was.
> **Pilar:** Shhh, my darling.
> **Orfeo:** He is lost. Pilar. *Paredón*.

Pilar: What next?
Orfeo: They looked so scared. And then at —the rally, I thought they would sing songs. And Sonia there, my god she saw it all.
Pilar: She hasn't come out of her room since she came back. She won't speak to me.
Orfeo: Sonia.
Pilar: She watches us now. Do you know? Watches everything. Like she's taking notes. Dear God am I saying this? I think she talks to Tito. I think she tells him things.
Orfeo: No.
Pilar: Forgive me. To even think—She talks constantly of leaving us. Marrying, or going to the provinces, of the future constantly. I am losing her.
Orfeo: As it must be.
Pilar: No! Not this way! Not her mind—her heart yes, her heart, to a boy, to a man who loves her. A man we know, that we know his family, his background, his education, but not like this. Not stolen from us like this.
Orfeo: She has to go. She is expected to go. You understand that, Pilar? To the provinces. All girls, all patriots must go to teach—
Pilar: Patriots! Damn them to hell, the thieves who stole that word and turned it filth.
Orfeo: She is expected to go to the provinces.
Pilar: No! I won't allow it. There is another option.
Orfeo: They'll come for me. Don't you see that? If we show any weakness, any sign of doubt, they'll come for me. They are already watching me, reading my papers, reviewing my publications. Sonia has to go to teach—three months no more. She has to go.
Pilar: You'll trade her flesh for your position?
Orfeo: To keep us safe? To see her marry, to hold my grandchildren? To keep her here? Oh yes, Pilar. I'll trade whatever I have. What God gave me, I'll trade for the chance to live peacefully and die an old man, surrounded by my wife and daughter, and grandchildren. We can live—here—quietly. Stay here, live quietly. I'm not proud, Pilar, forgive me. I am not too proud. To keep her?
Pilar: To keep her. Yes. And if they say three more months, and another six cutting cane. And another year in the provinces, and another? How long will we stay quiet? Until the air isn't ours to breathe anymore?

Figure 4: Miriam Cruz, Glenda Pezuela, and Frank Robles perform a scene from *Sonia Flew*.

Orfeo: Not long. It won't be long, that's what I tell you. There will be an invasion. A coup. No one is going to sit back and watch us go the way of Moscow—no one will do that—
Pilar: You will.
Orfeo: Not so. Not so.
Pilar: We'll wait it out. We'll stay quiet. We'll cut cane, and you will stop your research, and I will trade kisses for luxuries. I can do it. I need so little.
Pilar: I can survive this. You can survive this. Of course we can. But not Sonia. Not her. It's our fault, Orfeo, because we loved her too well. What will happen when she starts to see, to ask why? What happens to those of us who can't stop asking questions?
Orfeo: What happens to those that do?
Pilar: It takes years to learn to be quiet. God help us.
Orfeo: You said there is another option.
Pilar: Yes.
Orfeo: What?
Pilar: Marta has been helping me all afternoon. My darling. My darling. I think we have a way to get Sonia out—this madness can't last, it won't last, I know, I believe that with all my heart. I do. But I am so afraid. Forgive me. I have done something—something—
Orfeo: What have you done, Pilar?
(YOUNG SONIA enters, still wearing her uniform)

Young Sonia: What are you whispering about? Why is everyone always whispering in this house?
Pilar: We thought you were sleeping.
Young Sonia: I'm sorry I ran away at the rally, Papá. I know you must be upset about that. But I don't want any lecture from you.
Orfeo: I was worried about you.
Young Sonia: Why? I'm not a china doll.
Orfeo: I know that.
Young Sonia: They shot Professor Waldman.
Orfeo: I know.

Young Sonia: Why?
Orfeo: I don't know.
Young Sonia: He must have done something. He was teaching something? Was he smuggling? Sedition? He must have done something—what did he do?
Pilar: You mustn't look at your father like that.
Young Sonia: You knew him—he was your colleague, what did he do?
Orfeo: I don't know. He taught. He told bad jokes. Made terrible coffee.
Young Sonia: Papí? Are they coming for you?
Orfeo: Why would they?
(Beat)
Young Sonia: I want to go to the country to cut cane.
Pilar: No.
Young Sonia: The schools are closed down. There is nothing for me to do. The cane is rotting in the fields, and we all have to help in this difficult time.
Pilar: There are ways to help besides cutting cane.
Young Sonia: Then I could join the literacy campaign. Tito goes to the Provinces next week.
Pilar: Why go to the provinces? You can stay here and teach Marta.
Young Sonia: I already talked to Tito about it, and he has signed me up.
Orfeo: Tito said this? Our Tito?
Young Sonia: Yes. He is counting on me. It's only for the summer.
Pilar: The summer?
Young Sonia: Yes. The summer! What's wrong with you? Tito! The summer! It's happening all over the place.
Pilar: Over my dead body. Over your fathers dead body, and mine.
Young Sonia: You sound just like the nuns!
Pilar: That is not what you are here for.
Young Sonia: What do you mean here? Do you mean on the planet?
Pilar: You know what I mean.
Young Sonia: What am I on the planet for, Mamá? Can you tell me that? What have you done? I'm not going to end up like you, I know that much. I'm going to do something with my life. Things are changing everywhere, and I am part of it. And if I don't go this summer, I'll go next summer, or I'll just get out of the house soon, and get married and then I can do what I want. (*PILAR finds this incredibly funny.)* What? What?
Pilar: *(Laughing)* Get married and do what you want? Oh mother of God.
Young Sonia: Stop it! You always do that? What? What is it?
Pilar: Oh my dear, my dear one. (*She is erupting again, laughing.)*
Orfeo: Enough.
Young Sonia: Fine. Don't tell me anything.
Pilar: I'm sorry. I am sorry. I'm sorry. We were only trying to give you some good news…. Let me, Orfeo.
(Beat.)

Orfeo: Yes. Tell her. Wonderful news, Sonia. Listen.
Pilar: Your father and I have found you a scholarship to attend school in the United States. They can take you right away.
Young Sonia: I don't understand.

Pilar: Study abroad.
Orfeo: *(To PILAR)* For a year.
Pilar: Anything you like. And then come back. You'll be sixteen by then. Old enough to make your own decisions. Go to the country. Or get married and ruin your own life. (*She starts laughing again.)* I'm sorry. Run your own life.
Young Sonia: I can't go. I need—
Pilar: We have a visa.
Young Sonia: How did you—the embassy is closed—how?
Pilar: A student visa. For students. For studying.
Young Sonia: Papá?
Orfeo: My dove?
Young Sonia: You're sending me away?
Orfeo: Never! This is to school. For a year.
Young Sonia: But what about Tito—can I go in the fall?
Pilar: We've decided.
Young Sonia: You haven't even talked to me—I won't go—You can't make me go.

[applause]

Kimberly del Busto: Like Sonia in *Sonia Flew*, the character of Oscar in Eduardo Machado's Kissing Fidel has unresolved feelings about his past. Whereas Sonia was 15, Oscar was only 8 when he flew alone on Operation Pedro Pan. The play takes place 33 years later, in a Cuban funeral parlor in Miami. Oscar's grandmother has died, but he arrives with the shocking announcement that he is going back to Cuba to kiss and forgive Fidel. Chaos ensues, and hundreds of cups of Cuban coffee are drunk from jittery hands, continually dispensed from two large urns center stage. Playwright Eduardo Machado was born in 1953 and emigrated to the US on Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. He was received immediately by relatives, so he did not go into an orphanage like most Peter Pan children. Eduardo was engaged to be with us tonight but had a dental emergency at the last minute. He sends his regrets with this statement: "I have written over 30 plays about Cuba; I have struggled to find enlightenment and peace in doing this. Cuba is too complex for just one play or one simplistic sentence. Fifty years of politics--or really one hundred fifty years--takes a lifetime to express. *Kissing Fidel* I consider a minor play, written out of my not understanding why my father refused to love me and my brother and sisters. That is all it is about. It was a plea from me so he would listen to us. He is now dead, and all I hear from him now is what I heard always: absolute silence. Enjoy the scene." With those, Machado's words, **a scene from the first Act of *Kissing Fidel***.

[Gilberto Arribas as Oscar; Miriam Cruz as Miriam; Felipe Gorostiza as Daniel, Alina Troyano as Yolanda:]

Oscar: I have to find something that saves me. I can't keep living in the past. I'm always this scared kid on an airplane leaving it…home…island..Cu…Cu…Cojimar…Coji-mar. *(starts to cry.)*
Miriam: Don't cry again.

Daniel: Listen, cousin. We have an opportunity to bury the past and live here happily.
Oscar: What would you know? You were born here.
Daniel: So what?
Oscar: You're a dentist, right? What would a dentist know about passion?
Daniel: I'm an architect.
Oscar: Right. Your father is the one that's a dentist.
Daniel: Why are you being mean?
Oscar: Cause I jump into emotion… I need a drink. How can there be nothing to sedate one at a funeral?
Daniel: I can steal a Valium from my mother's purse.
Oscar: You're a sweetheart. Thanks.
Daniel: Oh. You're welcome.
Oscar: Go steal for me.
Daniel: Okay. Maybe later?
Oscar: Anything can happen.
Daniel: You couldn't tell by looking at me, could you?
Oscar: No, you are "muy macho."
Daniel: I practice a manly walk all the time. No one can tell, right?
(He walks up and down in a manly fashion.)
Daniel: Right?
Oscar: Absolutely, no one can tell. Only me cause I'm so sensitive.
Daniel: About the subject.
Oscar: Got a built in radar.
Daniel: Why did you get married?
Oscar: Tradition?
Daniel: I'm thinking of getting married myself.
(DANIEL exits.)
Oscar: Silly queen. Because I loved her. Not everything is black and white.
(OSCAR takes out a gold pen and a small notebook. He writes. Then reads.)
Oscar: "If I write 'please forgive my father" a hundred times. Would I have paid my penance?"
(YOLANDA enters.)
Yolanda: Well, hello Oscar *(She kisses him politely.)* Such a long time.
Oscar: Hello, hello Tía. Are you alright?
Yolanda: Of course it's not my mother that died. You should come in. They're doing a rosary soon.
Oscar: In a minute.
(He starts to shake.)
Oscar: Sorry.
Yolanda: Sit down.
Oscar: No.
(The shaking gets worse.)

Yolanda: You're not having a seizure are you?
Oscar: I haven't had one of those since… I was eighteen and the vampire came in, and I said, "OK, do it." And it felt good.
Yolanda: The vampire?
Oscar: Yes. The men with canes were vampires. Don't you remember?
Yolanda: I thought they were zombies.
Oscar: They were every fear known to man. I let him bite me. And they never came back. I'm sorry. I can not stop it. I'm sorry. It must be my body's reaction to Miami.
Yolanda: Should I get a doctor? Your cousin the doctor is inside…
Oscar: No.
Yolanda: But.
Oscar : It's just anxiety and panic.
Yolanda: About Cuba
Oscar: Even at her mother's funeral Miriam can gossip. And fast.
Yolanda: Actually your mother told me and I told her.
Oscar: My mother is not here, is she?
Yolanda: No.
Oscar: Thank God.
Yolanda: I understand why you think you have to go.
Oscar: You do?
Yolanda: To finish a story.
Oscar: Partly, yes.
Yolanda: But go quietly please.
Oscar: Why?
Yolanda: We have to live in Miami.
Oscar: I remember when you lived in New York, in Jackson Heights. I remember being stuck with you on the express in the middle of a snow storm.
Yolanda: Blizzard.
Oscar: My first.
Yolanda: Yes.
Oscar: You remember?
Yolanda: Yes.
Oscar: You remember me?
Yolanda: Of course. I love you.
Oscar: You do?
Yolanda: In the blizzard yes…we had fun.
Oscar: I remember you friends there.
Yolanda: In New York?
Oscar: Yes.
Yolanda: You liked them.
Oscar: They were intelligent. They wrote and painted and went to the theater.
Yolanda: Why did you turn away from me?
Oscar: Because you of all people should have understood.

Yolanda: Understood what?
Oscar: You tell me.
Yolanda: You got jealous when I had my own children, because you were used to being the favorite.
Oscar: You could have saved me.
Yolanda: From what.
Oscar: Loneliness at least.
Yolanda: You're not lonely anymore.
Oscar: How do you know?
Yolanda: Men don't allow themselves to get lonely.
Oscar: Maybe I am not really a man.
Yolanda: Don't you ever say that.
Oscar: Maybe I'll always be a boy being sent away alone.
Yolanda: It's been thirty years it's time to get over that.
Oscar: It's been thirty years it's time to end the embargo.
Yolanda: Don't you dare start talking about that.
(MIRIAM and DANIEL enter.)

Figure 5: Gilberto Arribas, Felipe Gorostiza, Alina Troyano (aka Carmelita Tropicana), and Miriam Cruz perform a scene from *Kissing Fidel*.

Oscar: Where is my father?
Daniel: Praying.
Miriam: You could have asked me for a Valium. I would have given it to you. You don't have to sneak one.
Oscar: So generous with your drugs.
Miriam: They're legal. They're medicine.
Yolanda: He hasn't stopped shaking.
Miriam: Guilt.
Oscar: Never.
Miriam: Remorse.
Daniel: I'll get you water.
(DANIEL goes to get water.)
Miriam: You know when he was a kid, he loved you. My son.
Oscar: Why? I didn't know him.

Miriam: When you were in "Time" magazine, he put the photo up on his wall.
Oscar: I heard.
Miriam: What?
Oscar: Very sweet, your son.
Miriam: And very handsome and extremely manly.
Oscar: Like his Mama.
Miriam: Very funny.
Oscar: But true.
Miriam: I guess what I am trying to say is that…
Yolanda: For better or for worse we are your family.
Miriam: So don't turn your grandmother's funeral, who you didn't speak to for twenty years into…
Oscar: She never called me.
Miriam: She didn't know your number.
Oscar: Miriam!
Yolanda: Call her Tía.
Oscar: Tia Miriam. You gotta be kidding. Didn't know my number!
Miriam: All I am saying is, keep the Cuba crap to yourself. Tonight.
Oscar: Where is my water!
Daniel: Here.
(OSCAR takes the Valium.)
Miriam: Now go inside.
Yolanda: Yes.
Oscar: No.
Yolanda: Come on.
Oscar: No. I have an embargo against that room. We don't agree ideologically about life. So I will not enter the room. Till there are no differences between us.
Miriam: The rosary is starting soon. You can kneel. Pray. And not talk.
Oscar: No.
Yolanda: Do a rosary, and you'll feel better.
Oscar: No.
Miriam: My mother's life was destroyed by communism. I won't let you ruin her funeral with that same bullshit.
Yolanda: Please Oscar; pay your respects to your grandmother.
Oscar: Who am I!
Yolanda: You were the most polite little boy I ever knew.
Oscar: Then why did you let them send me away on Peter Pan…
Miriam: You were not Peter Pan!
Oscar: Yes I was. That was the visa they sent me on.
Miriam: But I was here waiting for you. You did not go to an orphanage.
Oscar: You were worse than an orphanage.
Miriam: Bastard.
Yolanda: Stop it!
Oscar: You told me my parents were never going to come here.

Yolanda: How could you Miriam?
Miriam: I was young.
Yolanda: You were mean.
Miriam: I was only twenty one. I was confused.
Yolanda: But you took it out on a child?
Miriam: Leave me alone.
Yolanda: What else did she tell you?
Miriam: I locked him out of the house.
Yolanda: I see.
Miriam: I was young, I was broke, I was alone. Don't judge me. You were not here at the beginning, Yolanda. So don't judge me.
Daniel: Poor Mama.
Miriam: It's all so sad.
Oscar: Yes it is.
Yolanda: That's what that bastard did to us.
Daniel: Fidel?
Yolanda: Yes.
Oscar: Sometimes I think we did it to ourselves.
Yolanda: Never.
(YOLANDA exits.)
Oscar: It wasn't all his fault, and you know that.
Miriam: It was.
Daniel: All his fault?
Miriam: Absolutely. Fidel destroyed our family.
Oscar: How can you be so sure?
Miriam: Because my life depends on it.
Oscar: Not mine.
Miriam: Lucky you.
Oscar: Yes.
Miriam: I'll see you inside.
Oscar: I am staying out here.
Miriam: Why?
Oscar: He doesn't want me with him.
Miriam: Who?
Oscar: Your brother.
Miriam: The rosary is starting soon.
(MIRIAM exits.)
Oscar: Now they're worried.
Daniel: Good.
Oscar: You're enjoying this?
Daniel: Hypocrites, liars.
Oscar: He who is without sin cast the first stone.
Daniel: What?
Oscar: Everybody is a hypocrite, everybody is a liar.
Daniel: Including you?
Oscar: And you.

Daniel: I love your books.
Oscar: They're not me.
Daniel: You wrote them.
Oscar: Yes I did.
Daniel: They have insight.
Oscar: But they are not me.
Daniel: Oh.
Oscar: They're all of us.
Daniel: How can you remember Cuba so clearly?
Oscar: Because, because. Because… Because it's the only happiness I've known.
Daniel: What?
Oscar: Fiction.
Daniel: There has to be a way to be happy.
Oscar: Is that what you are looking for?
Daniel: Yes.
Oscar: Then it's good that you are an architect. That you can define structure.
Daniel: Sometimes.
Oscar: You want to be stable?
Daniel: Sometimes.
Oscar: You want to be destroyed.
Daniel: Yes, like the people in your novels.
Oscar: While I lived in fiction and you learned to build shopping malls, we were both blind to our country. And it's hungry now. Hungry and dying and the houses are falling down. And it does not matter anymore whose fault it is. And if I can make them see that it's time to forgive, if I can convince the people in there praying… It will mean more than any novel I have ever read or written. Or any woman or man I have ever wanted, or gotten. I don't want us to be blind, Daniel. I want us—for once—to see clearly. Daniel help me.
Daniel: I hate Cuba.
Oscar: What!
Daniel: I don't want it to have anything to do with me.
Oscar: Why do you like my novels?
Daniel: Because of the sex.
Oscar: Really?
Daniel: Because of the incest.
Oscar: That's just a subplot.
(OSCAR takes out a cigar case.)
Daniel: Not to me.
(*OSCAR cuts a cigar with a cigar cutter.)*
Oscar: Want one? Cuban!
Daniel: Never!
Oscar: Never say never.
(He starts to light the cigar.)

Daniel: Don't smoke those terrible cigars please.
Oscar: Our heritage.
(The cigar goes out.)
Daniel: I'm glad you can't light it.
(He starts to light it.)
Oscar: You have to keep sucking to get it to stay alive.
Daniel: You'll never light it.

[applause]

Kimberly del Busto: Oscar does not return to Cuba during the action of the play. Nilo Cruz's *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* is the only play tonight in which grown Pedro Pan exiles return to the lost homes of their childhood. The action takes place entirely in Cuba. Estranged siblings Luca and Luciana return to the island for the first time since their Operation Pedro Pan departure, arriving during the Pope's visit in 1998. In a casting note in the playscript, Nilo Cruz calls for actors much younger than the characters they are portraying--a visual metaphor for the exiles' lost years. He writes "Luciana and Luca should look younger than their actual age as if their lost childhood has stopped them from aging." **We begin with an excerpt that is the play's first scene, entitled "Traveling" from *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams* by Nilo Cruz:**

[Gilberto Arribas as Luca, Glenda Pezuela as Luciana, Miriam Cruz as Mamá Fefa, Frank Robles as General Viamonte, Alina Troyano as Delita, Carmen Peláez as Hortensia, Jason Ramírez reads stage directions and scene titles:]

The music of an Afro-Cuban lullaby plays. In darkness we hear the sound of an airplane flying. A slide of a boy and a girl holding suitcases is projected on a wall. Spotlight on Luciana and Luca, each sitting on their suitcase. They are in different spaces and don't relate to one another. Both hold travel journals and address the audience.
TRAVELING
Luca: January second: The Airport.
Luciana: January second: The Plane.
Luca: My mother gave me this travel journal.
Luciana: *(Looks at the journal in her hand.)* She said write everything down.
Luca: Write everything down, she said.
Luciana: Because the island will never be the same.
Luca: *(Opens the journal. Laughs.)* My mother.
Luciana: *(Holds journal close to her chest.)* My mother.
Luca: *(Looks at the journal in his hand.)* What do I do with a journal? Do I write that I don't know how to begin? Should I write that I'm looking for my sister?
Luciana: (Reading from journal.) I am a traveler about to disembark on the land I left with my brother when I was eleven.
Luca: Should I write that I have to find my sister? Should I write that it's

been so long since I saw her last?
Luciana: In case you find this journal, please get rid of it—throw it into the sea…
(Sound of a large wave drowning the scene. Airport sounds. Two men dressed in militia clothes enter the stage and approach Luca and Luciana in their separate spaces. The officers face the audience.)
THE ARRIVAL
Officer 1: Passport señor?
Officer 2: Passport señora?
Officer 1: Where are you coming from?
Luciana: The U.S.
Luca: The U.S.
Officer 1: *(Flips through passport pages.)* Visiting relatives?
Luciana: No, I am a journalist.
Luca: Visiting relatives, officer.
Officer 2: Documenting the visit of the Pope?
Luca: No.
Luciana: That's correct.
Officer 1: Where are you staying?
Luciana: Hotel Capri.
Luca: Staying with relatives, officer.
Officer 2: Proceed.
Officer 1: Proceed. *(Sound of drums.)*
IN THE CITY
Luciana: January second: Havana.
Luca: If I close my eyes I can see it like before…
Luciana: The seawall…
Luca: Same old streets.
Luciana: Same old blue…
Luca: Same cars.
Luciana: Nothing like this blue.
Luca: Just like yesterday.
Luciana: This is the place we went to school!
Luca: This is the park we used to go to every afternoon!
Luciana: I can remember Mamá's voice the day we left…
(Lights up on Mamá Fefa wearing a 1950s dress and a scarf. She holds a red suitcase.)
Mamá Fefa: Never let go of your brother's hand. Hold on to your ticket. Over there you'll be in different surroundings… Never forget me and your father, and take care of your new shoes…
Luciana: But I didn't come here to retrace the past, I came to see the new generation… The new island…
A PLACE CALLED HOME
Lights up on Tío Lalo. He's a man in his sixties. He wears glasses and looks disheveled. He is hard of hearing. He holds an old cigar box full of photographs. He stands next to Luca.

Tio Lalo: Here are some old photographs of you and your sister.
(Lights come up on a Hotel Receptionist. She hands Luciana the key to her room.)
Hotel Receptionist: Here's the key to your room, señora. Here are some papers for you to sign. And I will need your passport again.
Luciana: My passport?
Hotel Receptionist: Part of the procedure, señora.
Tio Lalo: Here's a towel and soap. It's better to bathe in the morning because the electricity is cut off after six.
Hotel Receptionist: Here's your itinerary for tomorrow… Wake-up call is at eight… Your tour guide is Ramón.
Luciana: But I don't want a tour guide.
Hotel Receptionist: It's all been arranged for your convenience, señora.
Tio Lalo: If you want to bathe in the evening, you'll have to heat up water in this bucket. And if you want hot water, you have to take the bucket across the street and buy some charcoal.
Luca: Tio Lalo.
Tio Lalo: I'll go get you a pillow.
Luciana: *(Facing the audience.)* I was told about the organized tours for visitors.
Luca: *(Facing the audience.)* I was told about the power outages.
Luciana: I wasn't going to take part in any of this.
Luca: But a bucket of water!
Luciana: I never liked tours to begin with…
Luca: A bucket of charcoal! *(Luciana and Luca open a couple of maps and spread them on the floor.)*
MAPS AND THE CITY
Luciana: If I make a right on N Street… If I walk down L Street.
Luca: If I walk straight through La Rampa Boulevard…
Luciana: If I make a left on K Street I can cut through the park…
Luca: *(Folds the map.)* I'm remembering the streets…
Luciana: *(Folds the map.)* The streets are remembering me…
Luca: Blue skies, faded awnings, orange tiles…
Luciana: The world is not forgetful… A sidewalk never forgets to be a sidewalk… A tree never forgets to be a tree.
Luca: If I stop at the Coppelia…
Luciana: If I stop at the university.
Luca: No, I don't need a map… *(Lights come up on the Hotel Receptionist.)*
Hotel Receptionist: I'm sorry, señor, but the guest you're looking for is not in her room.
Luca: Can I leave her a note?
Hotel Receptionist: If you wish. *(Luciana turns around and faces the audience. Slide projection of a young boy holding a suitcase.)*
Luca: My Dear Sister, I've only been here for a day and I was wondering if it's possible to see you. After all these years we should talk again and

settle the past. I'm staying a t Tio Lalo's house. I must confess to you that this morning there was once again a kind of hope in me for a new beginning. I could see the two of us traveling together and visiting our old house. In some ways I was arranging all the furniture in my mind and telling them: Shsh! Soon she'll be coming back. Love, your brother, Luca.
Luciana: *(Astonished.)* My brother… *(Lights up on Mamá Fefa with a small red suitcase. Sound of an airplane. Luciana looks into the distance.)*
Mamá Fefa: *(Waving and crying out to her children.)* Never let go of your brother's hand. When you go up the stairs to the airplane, look for my polka-dotted scarf in the crowd and wave good-bye, so I know you're safe. So I know you're leaving, my love. Never let go of your brother's hand!
DELITA AFTER LOVE
Luca and Delita. He's barefoot, wearing only a T-Shirt and pants. He walks forward with a drink in his hand. Delita remains standing in the back.
Delita: Don't leave yet.
Luca: I have to go back to my uncle's house.
Delita: You look sad.
Luca: I'm not.
Delita: *(Approaches him.)* It's always like this when you do it in the afternoon. I get blue just the same. Maybe because there's too much light. Would you like me to make you some café? I always drink some after I make love, or I stand on my head. I do it to thin the blood… The blood gets crazy, it starts palpitating on its own, forming little hearts everywhere in the body. *(Holds him.)* – You know, you never told me how old you are. Let me guess, twenty-eight. *(He shakes his head.)* Thirty.
Luca: No.
Delita: Thirty-three.
Luca: Sometimes I don't know how old I am.
Delita: What do you mean?
Luca: I don't know. I mean, my body has stopped recognizing my age.
Delita: God, don't tell me I've slept with a vampire!
Luca: *(Laughs.)* No. A doctor told me that I suffer from an aging disorder. My sister, too.
Delita: Is it contagious? Will it make me be young for the rest of my life?
Luca: *(Laughs.)* Maybe.

Figure 6: Alina Troyano (aka Carmelita Tropicana) and Gilberto Arribas perform a scene from *Hortensia and the Museum of Dreams*

Delita: I like it when you smile. Why don't you stay longer?
Luca: I ought to go… My uncles…
Delita: You look like you need to talk.
Luca: What makes you think that?
Delita: I know these things. I'd be dead if it wasn't for my mouth.
Luca: So you think talking helps.
Delita: *(Nods.)* Come on, tell me. Why are you so gloomy?
Luca: Just trying to adjust. Everybody tried to prepare me for this trip. They told me about the power being cut off, the shortage of food. How buildings are falling apart. How people live double lives.
Delita: Is that what it is?
Luca: Well, nobedy can ever tell you how it affects you inside.
Delita: Don't leave yet. Stay a while longer. *(Sound of a large wave. The wave takes Luca and Delita away.)*
STROLLING THROUGH HAVANA
Luca and Tio Lalo enter talking. They stand in front of a church.
Tio Lalo: This section is called the Angel's Hill. And this is the church where you and your sister were baptized.
Luca: Is this the same place where the parents would come and sign off the children?
Tio Lalo: What children?
Luca: You know, all the kids that were sent to America. The Pedro Pan kids, like me and my sister.
Tio Lalo: I don't know. I didn't take part in any of that. I was opposed to the whole thing for the beginning. But your mother was afraid for you and your sister, with your father being in prison and all. Everybody thought there was going to be a war, you see. And there were rumors that the government planned to send children to work on Soviet farms, so she wanted to protect you. And when she found out there was a way of sending the two of you to America through the Catholic Church, your mother was one of the first ones to put your names on the list. And no one could stop her, I tell you. No one. – It's curious how the church took you

away and now it has brought you back.
Luca: Do you want to go inside?
Tio Lalo: I don't pray anymore. But if you want to.
Luca: I do. *(Angelic music plays.)*
THE FUTURE OF THE MUSEUM
Luciana: January fifteenth: Midday. A meeting with General Viamonte.
(General Viamonte enters. Luciana covers herself with a shawl. A desk and two chairs are brought on. Luciana and Hortensia sit to the left of the desk. The General walks around as he interrogates Luciana and Hortensia.)
General Viamonte: When I heard from my daughter Melva that you were going to help with the museum, I thought to myself we seem to have an important foreigner in our town.
Hortensia: She's not a foreigner, Viamonte… She was born here.
General Viamonte: She's a foreigner to me! When did you leave the country, señora?
Luciana: 1961.
General Viamonte: Ah! The Pedro Pan flights. The 14,000 children that were shipped away to the States…
Hortensia: Compañero Viamonte…
General Viamonte: Don't interrupt me, compañera. I'm talking to Luciana Maria. So, the Pedro Pan project, they called it, like the children's book about the boy who runs away to never-never land and never grows up… That's a young age to have a child fly alone on an airplane…
Luciana: I wasn't alone. I was with my brother.
General Viamonte: Even worse – two children.
Luciana: I thought we were going to talk about the museum!
General Viamonte: We are – It's very Christian of Hortensia to think that you could do something for this museum… It shows that we haven't managed to abolish the colonial mentality of having foreigners taking care of our problems—
Luciana: I think you're mistaken. I took it upon myself—
General Viamonte: No I'm not mistaken… When Hortensia came to us with the idea of this museum, it appealed to us. Anybody would want to finance a Museum of Dreams… But then—
Hortensia: You funded the Museum of Humor that was opened down the road!... I'm sure it took plenty of money to build it.
General Viamonte: We need to laugh, compañera. We need to laugh at how we live despite all the difficulties imposed on us… It's what keeps us going, our humor.
Hortensia: Our faith, compañero…Faith…Go to the river…Go to the seawall in Havana and you'll see how many oblations have been offered to the Virgin of Regla…There's the Procession of Miracles every year.
General Viamonte: That's once a year, compañera… And it involves a few locals celebrating an old tradition…

Hortensia: Tradition! It has to do with people who pray who have dreams.
General Viamonte: But it has nothing to do with tourists coming from afar… It's certainly not about exposing things which tend to be overdrawn, like those silly miracles that have been documented in books.
Hortensia: You know well my miracles are simple acts—
General Viamonte: All miracles have an element of exaggeration! In every religion: Buddha making five hundred elephants grow out of a lotus flower, Mohammed cutting the moon in two pieces…
Luciana: For a man who doesn't believe in miracles, you know more about then than I do.
General Viamonte: I read about things I dislike, compañera, so I can understand why I feel resistance and aversion. *(Pause.)* We live in an age of reason, of natural science. We take pride in the real. Our system gave me a pair of shoes, a home, a refrigerator. If compañera Hortensia wants to call our accomplishments miracles, then these are the miracles that need to be exhibited in her museum…
Luciana: Those are not miracles.
General Viamonte: Then what are miracles?
Hortensia: It's a pity, compañero, but I don't think you will ever understand.
Luciana: It has to do with faith, compañero.
General Viamonte: Faith. Faith… And what do you know about faith? You come from a so-called religious land, dollar bills that read: "In God We Trust." What Devil do they worship there? It can't be in the name of God that your country has tried to blockade and starve a small island like ours for years.
Luciana: I didn't come here to talk about politics.
General Viamonte: But you certainly have opinions! How did you get involved in all this religious hysteria? *(Picks up her passport.)* Your visa is strictly for journalistic purposes. Why aren't you in Havana following the Pope?
Luciana: Well, I got a letter from Hortensia.
Hortensia: My letters, compañero… She responded to one of my letters…
General Viamonte: *(To Luciana)* You're lying!
Hortensia: The letters we sent abroad when we found out the Pope was coming.
General Viamonte: What letters? All the letters you tried to send never left this country.
Hortensia: What do you mean?
General Viamonte: We weren't going to have any commotion around here, compañera. Did you actually think we were going to have the Pope in this town?
Hortensia: *(Looks at Luciana in disbelief.)* What are you talking about, compañero?
General Viamonte: You live in a world of fantasy, with angels and

spirits, and you don't want to face reality…
Hortensia: No. What happened to my letters! What happened to my letters!
General Viamonte: Don't get emotional.
Hortensia: What happened to my letters!
General Viamonte: Maybe one letter slipped by, but most of them are in our possession. We have a democratic process in this country, Luciana… A meeting was held in this town as to whether this museum should be made into a public building and most people voted against it.
Hortensia: Lies…Lies… That's a bunch of lies…
General Viamonte: She knows well that we're not interested in tourist attractions.
Luciana: But her museum—
General Viamonte: Nobody wants tourists in this town. You can see what's happening in Havana: prostitution, corruption. That's why we voted against it…
Hortensia: It's a bunch of lies… You passed around a few papers… Who knows how many were signed! Who knows how many were kept away—like my letters…
General Viamonte: You see? Hysteria. That's all… Religious hysteria… *(Lights a cigar.)*
Hortensia: *(Gathers her strength and rage.)* All these years you've tried to sink me down, to bury me alive. A few days from now all the ceremonies of the Pope will end. Luciana will leave and the two of us will have to live long after all of this is over, in this small town, on this little island. But let me tell you something, compañero, for thirty years I've wanted to spit in your face. Thirty years building up the courage… This froth, and bitter spit in my mouth… But now that I face you, I believe my spit is too clean for your face. If ever I curse anybody in my lifetime then let it be you, Agusto Viamonte. *(Trying to show his indifference, he smokes his cigar.)* May those cigars you smoke burn a hole on your tongue and in your lungs, and may those holes fester. Death I don't wish you. I leave that to God. May you continue to breathe the same simple beautiful air I breathe in this town. Good day, compañero!

[Applause]

Kimberly del Busto: I want to thank the wonderful cast we have for this evening, as well as Guillermo Linares, Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs for accepting this event into this the first day of New York City Immigrant History Week. I would also like to thank Teatro Avante, who has invited Dos Alas Theatre to be part of a special panel this summer at the International Theatre Festival in Miami to discuss Nilo Cruz's work. At this time I would like to invite Nilo Cruz and Melinda López if they would be so generous in the educational spirit of the event to answer any questions that the audience might have about *Hortensia* and *Sonia Flew* or Operation Pedro Pan in general, or sharing your reactions and impressions.

Jason Ramírez: I would also like to invite Carmen Peláez to please come up for her work on *Rum & Coke*, if the 3 playwrights would care to join us in the middle of the room. In general before we engage in this I would just like to say that it is a rare treat for me to be in a place where I'm honored—I don't know how much you're aware of this—not only to have these 3 incredible playwrights here but we have Latino theatre history on that side of the stage, with some of the most incredible actors. I'm just in shock..I would just like to thank…I'll go from the back, Gilberto Arribas, would you please stand. Glenda Pezuela. Felipe Gorostiza. And then…I finally got to direct these 3, so I can die very happy: the incredible Frank Robles, the incomparable Miriam Cruz, and finally my great honor Alina Troyano. Questions from the audience for the playwrights…we have a mic coming around.

Figure 7: Q & A session. Foreground L to R: Melinda López, Carmen Peláez, Nilo Cruz; Background L to R: Frank Roblez, Miriam Cruz, Alina Troyano, Glenda Pezuela.

Audience Member 1: I think that these plays have caught the complexity of the issues so well. I've become very involved in issues pertaining to Cuba and happened to pick up a book in a bookstore called *Waiting for Snow in Havana* and I'm wondering if you've read it by Carlos Eire and I'm wondering if you've read it…

***Melinda López**, **Carmen Peláez**, and **Nilo Cruz** all nod emphatically.*

Audience Member 1: Everything that he talked about with Peter Pan was of course in all the plays so thank you so much…

Audience Member 2: Have you had any response from Havana or Cuba in general on any of your accomplishments or any of your writing?

Carmen Peláez: I have. When I was visiting my aunt—My great aunt Amelia was a painter—so when I went to visit her sister Ninita I would stay in the house, there was always Cuban Cultural people around and I was very surprised on my second trip when they came and asked me about my play because I knew Ninita hadn't told them anything.

And they offered actually after a very good run in Miami to bring the play to Havana. But they said I would have to incorporate a few edits *(audience laughs)* and then I said well fortunately my grandparents had the foresight to put me in a country where I can say whatever I want and this play really belongs to them. I don't really need to edit in the United States I'm not going to edit it here. But they did invite me to go to Havana to do it. And I had absolutely no interest because of that—I didn't want them to own me. That was my choice. Other playwrights do their work over there—great—but…

Audience Member 2: Was that…do you know which theatre it was?

Carmen Peláez: It wasn't a theatre. It was through the government. It was a…you know whenever I'd show up people would show up out of nowhere. So it was such every time I came there was always a like a little swarm of people at different times… so I know, I mean I can tell you…I know what he looks like; I could do a police sketch of him. Pero el nombre…I'm not going to remember exactly which part of the government he was from—some cultural something of some ministry of culture…

Melilnda López: My work hasn't been translated into Spanish and it hasn't ever been performed…but I was doing a show in Miami and when my mother saw it she said "Pero cuando tu tía Consuela viene you have to cut that part out" so you don't have to go to Cuba for…you can't say that when your family comes.

Carmen Peláez: I expected more of that when I did my play in Miami for the first time there was definitely not as much open mindedness or…and understandably, I'm not going to take away their tragedy…but there wasn't as much willingness… When I'm going to Cuba people in New York actually said I was a little "pink" where as people in Miami understood it and I was very surprised…I don't know why though because I grew up there and I know the duality…and *[to Nilo Cruz]* I'm sure you find it, too, Miami's much more moderate than people assume it is, but nobody ever told me—I mean there were people that didn't come see my play because it had to do with me going to Cuba which is their choice—I don't begrudge them that—but nobody ever told me "you shouldn't say that" or "you should say " you know… I was fortunate…I thought it was pretty commonplace, but…

Melinda López: Well that was just about telling tales…family secrets…

Carmen Peláez: That's always difficult, isn't it? When all of a sudden you're saying something and you're like…"really, am I going to say that?"

Nilo Cruz: One of my plays was read in Cuba, *Lorca in a Green Dress.* Which had nothing to do with Cuba, it had to do with Lorca's death, and of course during the Spanish Civil War, and in the beginning the play was censored because the Minister of Culture said that I had written against the government. And then at the end they decided to do the reading, so… that's my experience.

Figure 8: Q&A. Nilo Cruz elaborates on the Pedro Pan protagonists he created in *Hortensia*.

Audience Member 3: Going through the lists of children that came and that grew up to be writers, musicians, very successful people, uh, what in your experience and knowing the individuals who came in that period, what was it that you think that they grasped to come here at twelve, a foreign country, not knowing the language, in many cases not seeing the parents again and yet be able to adapt in a miraculous way…almost, and be so very successful. What do you think they were able to grasp to, hang on to, and that drove them and guided them?

Melinda López: I met my cousin in Miami, she was in her early 50s I guess. It was the first time I had ever heard the Pedro Pan story. That was my first experience learning about it and what she said was, she came at 10, she spent four years in an orphanage in Boulder, and the way I heard about it was my parents were already living in this country and they drove from Massachusetts to Boulder to try and get her out, but the orphanage wouldn't release her because they weren't her parents and she didn't, you know, so that's how I came to hear the story. She said, "I'm not afraid of anything." She runs her own business she's an incredibly conscientious one of these survivors, and so I was so captivated by that, um, that really balls out kind of approach to life. But because I'm interested in what happens inside people, I was very curious about what that cost the person, what's the cost of that. And I think it's both things, that you can be fearless and still it costs you something and so that's what I wanted to explore in my play, was an accomplished successful, fully Americanized, fully integrated, ambitious, terrific woman, who, you know, the cost is what's catching up with her.

Carmen Peláez: I was going to say because they didn't think it was forever. So you do day to day what you need to survive. They didn't think it was forever, they thought it was temporary, some still do, after fifty years. I still think "el ano que viene en Cuba." *[To Melinda López]* and you said something that was really…the last line of *Rum & Coke* is to survive (?), because there is a cost to survival. But what you earn when you survive is so much more than the price that you pay to survive it, that when you come out with it, and I think that once you go through that there's nothing you can't do and it's almost like now in hind sight, we can think and we can analyze and we can wonder, but in that moment it's "what do I have to do today?" and I think when you're forced to live in the moment like that, the years go by in a heartbeat, and all of a sudden, you survived. But I

also think que el carácter Cubano is fearless in a way, and is very, very adaptable, which is why I think the revolution has lasted so long. Those people will improvise anything to survive.

Nilo Cruz: I think there is a difference between an immigrant and an exile. An immigrant can always go back to their country but an exile doesn't have that option. So these kids, even though at one point they thought they would unite with their parents, they would realize later on that they were not able to go back to their country. In my play, I can only speak for my play and based on the interviews that I did, and in my work I am very interested in human behavior. In my play it's a brother and sister of course, which you saw, and they're really holding on to each other to the point that even at one point they cross boundaries, they even, they not only want to be a brother and sister to each other, they almost want to be lovers. And even though they are successful, because it is a journalist and—he's not as successful as she is—but he does work, he's a merchant, the wound is still there, it's still open, and they're still trying to figure it out. And of course when they go back to Cuba during the Pope's visit, that wound opens up again. And then they sort of go back to the memory of leaving and the unfinished business.

Figure 9: Q & A. René Buch reacts with thoughts on exile, Pedro Pan, and Repertorio Español.

René Buch [from audience]: What poses the distinction that some of the exiles do with the resentment to the parents. That is the most important element. I found it extremely moving because Hell is paved with the best intentions. And I don't say that…I have lived in this country much longer than I had lived in Cuba. I've been here for 50 something years. And when we were invited, the company, Repertorio [Español], to play in Havana, Matanzas, and Santa Clara, by the UNEAC, the Union of writers and artists in Cuba, I was terrified. Fortunately, I was directing a play in NYU, so I didn't have to go. But the company went, and they were very successful. Of course the same people appeared in every stage as you said. And a big hit of the company, we took Eduardo Machado's play, *Broken Eggs*, which I thought had to be done in Cuba, because it is a family in California. And it was…there was one line, there was one scene in which the sister-in-law and the mother are talking, and they are society people, and they're middle-

aged, and one says, while smoking a cigarette, "Do you remember when we thought Fidel was sexy?" And the whole theatre went into the biggest laugh of the whole tour. So, I don't agree with the embargo; I don't agree with the separation. I'm not for the government of Cuba; I'm not pink. I'm not even yellow. But this has been a very great experience for me. To see what you are doing. And I know Nilo and we've done two of his plays, and I think he's brilliant. I want more plays.

Jason Ramírez: If there are any Pedro Pans in the house, would you please stand? [*two audience members stand; audience applauds*]. We have time for one or two more questions.

Audience member 4: Of the 14,000 kids that were brought here, they all obviously eventually got out of interim camps, to me it's almost kind of akin to…it's almost like a prison-type camp, and it's just amazing the spirit that survived, of those children. I think I should kind of relate a little bit to what we kids going through the Holocaust and being separated from their parents might of felt, or their parents pushing them away to save them. It's the same type of thing that happened when the Cubans tried to save their children. And I'm just amazed by the spirit of the survived.

Figure 10: Playwright Melinda López reveals how she first learned of Operation Pedro Pan.

Melinda López: I think that the American authorities—I'm not an expert—were unprepared for the numbers that started arriving when they thought there would be 50 kids, 100 kids, there were more and more, thousands, and they were panicking, calling, where, and finding this old military base, and finding…and suddenly the desperation of "it's full…we need more housing." And so going to Nebraska and Kansas and Colorado, and Oklahoma, and Maine, and finding any orphanage, any house of worship, any place that would take foster children. It so quickly escalated beyond what any of the American—I don't mean authorities—or any of the people who were starting this ball rolling…

Audience Member 4: Was it well publicized? I was in college…I don't recall any publicity about it.

Audience Member 5: You weren't in Cuba.

René Buch: We all knew. My niece and nephew came out in 51, not on Peter Pan but—

Figure 11: Jason Ramírez and Alina Troyano (aka Carmelita Tropicana) with distinguished audience member Luis Santeiro, playwright and writer/creator of *¿Qué Pasa USA?*

Carmen Peláez: I think we all take for granted how quickly we find everything out, I mean, when Fidel…Raúl actually resigned we knew before the Cuban people did because we had access to the AP before they did, um, but like when my mom, she went to New Orleans with her sister, and then somebody came to pick up her sister…I don't know why mami and … got separated, but mami got sent to….My mother when to this house, and when they took her to church—in Mississippi I think—they brought her to church and they stood her in front of everybody, and said "this is our Cuban." And people in school asked her if she wore shoes, if her family lived in trees. So we're taking for granted now that we have, again, we have perspective, we have history, we have information, we're taking for granted "how could we not have known." I mean now, a lot of the atrocities that have happened in Cuba over the past 50 years are starting to come out thanks to these new information channels and people are kind of shrugging their shoulders and saying, "we didn't know," but like René said, "Cubans knew." We tried to tell ya'll but ya didn't listen.

René Buch: This is the only international country that is very proud to be ignorant.

Jason Ramírez: I know we have one more question, but I would just like to introduce Commissioner Guillermo Linares who is here with us today.

[*applause*]

Guillermo Linares: Thanks for the wonderful presentation kicking off Immigrant Heritage Week which has now been going for 5 years and this year has grown from 50 or so events last year to 130 events. And it is wonderful to have an opportunity to highlight what Immigration has meant historically for this country. What it means today particularly, and how it is tied to the future of the greatness of this country. And I think what is most powerful is that we're able to share the multiple dimension of what it means for you to disconnect from your home country. Whether you come from the Caribbean, the former Soviet Union, any country, Africa, any corner of the world, we need to also

celebrate that which has made this country, but also share it and appreciate it and take it in. I think we need to do that with people who have many generations of parents that arrived here and makes you think somewhat different but it is the powerful message that your story brings that needs to continue to be shared. Because it is an unfolding story as you speak and as we are here sharing. So I want to commend you and say thank you on behalf of the Mayor. And on behalf of all New Yorkers, but especially on the behalf of immigrants and New Yorkers, I think we've learned tremendously from what you have to share. I personally have appreciation because I met someone, one of the children of Peter Pan who is a great friend … Martínez. I mention him because I learned a lot from him and what the story was like for him and I'm sure that for every child that left Cuba under those circumstances there is a story to be told. And it is an unfolding story still. But thank you very much and we appreciate your being part of Immigrant Heritage Week.

[*applause*]

Figure 12: NYC Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs Guillermo Linares addresses the audience.

Audience Member 6: Have any of these plays been performed to the younger generation of Cubans. And by that I mean at this point we're probably dealing almost in the third generation. And do they have any kind of visceral connection to Cuba, and if they do what form does it take and how do they think about that? I know we're a country of immigrants but I was wondering, Cuba being so much a part of the current political scene still, whether they get involved with it politically, or culturally…

Carmen Peláez: They very much do. I've been invited to speak to Cuban-American students at NYU, at Wellesley I've gone. There's an incredible student group called *Raices de Esperanza* that actually reinvigorated my hope and my passion that there can actually be a solution. And I think you have this incredible generation that was raised here and was raised with democracy from day one, and was raised with process from day one, and they've seen what their parents and their grandparents have lived, and their passion is actually very inspiring to me and the way at least that they've reacted to my work has been…it keeps me going. But the kids I find are very well informed. How to use the internet, how to organize…it's in their blood, it's in their upbringing and I find them incredibly inspiring.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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