


1994

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Isabel Alvarez-Borland

College of the Holy Cross, ialvarez@holycross.edu

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Recommended Citation

Alvarez-Borland, Isabel. "Displacements and Autobiography in Cuban-American Fiction." *World Literature Today* 68. 1 (1994) : 43-48.

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Displacements and Autobiography in Cuban-American Fiction

By ISABEL ALVAREZ-BORLAND The narratives of Pablo Medina, Omar Torres, and Cristina García are representative of a pivotal moment in contemporary Cuban-American writing. Medina, Torres, and García belong to a generation of younger writers of Cuban heritage who, in the words of Eliana Rivero, “are in the midst of effecting the transition from émigré/exile categories to that of ethnic minority members” (191).¹ These are writers whose literary identity is determined by history, in this case the diaspora which arose after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Their texts, written in English and published between 1990 and 1992, embody the dislocation of exile as they attempt to recapture a past that is marginal to their present.

In *At Face Value: Autobiographical Writing in Spanish America* Sylvia Molloy tells us that the idea of crisis is tied to the autobiographical moment in Latin American letters.² For Cuban-American writers, this crisis originates in two basic issues which they share with other cultures in exile: how do they reconcile their past experiences in their country of birth with present experiences in their adopted country, and how do they negotiate between bicultural and monocultural readers? My study seeks to trace the dramatization of the Cuban voice within the fictional world of these authors and to explore the solutions and substitutions these authors have devised in order to create a voice in a culture other than that of their country of birth. Issues of representation will be concerned with the autobiographical strategies used by these writers and the manner in which each text inscribes the reader in its process of self-revelation.

I have chosen the autobiographical accounts of these authors because their narratives illustrate simultaneous yet different stages in the evolution of contemporary Cuban-American narrative. Medina's childhood memories recall the prerevolutionary Cuba in which he spent his first twelve years. Torres's novel is a fictional autobiography of a young

Cuban-American poet very much engaged with his Cuban past and the politics of the exile communities of Miami and New York. Cristina García's autobiographical persona is a Cuban-American ethnic who grows up in New York desperately searching for her Cuban roots. Unlike García, who was only two years old at the time of her departure, Medina and Torres were young boys of twelve and thirteen and as such experienced a Cuban childhood. All three write in English about a past that took place in Spanish.

Any consideration of the creation of fictional selves for these authors must address issues pertinent to autobiography. Autobiography as a narrative form prompts the reader of the novel to consider the act of telling, the protagonist's particular purpose for telling his or her own story, and the links between the teller's own life and the manner in which it is communicated. Clearly, the choice of an autobiographical self, fictional or otherwise, is an appropriate one for these authors, since the narrative act is linked to the achievement of identity and thus is frequently used by writers who belong to ethnic and minority groups. Examining how each author tells the Cuban story will reveal how autobiographical strategies of representation serve to articulate their perceptions of self.

In her essay “Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice” Susan Stanford Friedman³ establishes a workable theory that is useful not only for the explication of autobiography in Anglo-American and European women's texts but also in regard to minority writers such as the ones we are investigating here. Friedman examines the reigning attitudes toward autobiography in contemporary theory and questions “the individualistic concept of the autobiographical self” such as it has been proposed by well-known scholars of autobiography such as Olney and Gusdorf.⁴ Friedman argues that for the “marginalized cultures” a definition of autobiography that stresses interdependent identification within a community is a much more useful tool of analysis. The autobiographical consciousness of marginal groups, according to Friedman, results in autobiographical forms that are not only individualistic but also collective (35). Friedman's theories of autobiography are useful to my investigation, since the autobiographical model employed by Cuban-American writers exhibits a desire to connect with a larger community of Cubans as well as Cuban-Americans in the process of telling their life stories.

ISABEL ALVAREZ-BORLAND is Associate Professor of Spanish at the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts. She is the author of *Discontinuidad y ruptura en G. Cabrera Infante* (1982) and of articles on Gabriel García Márquez for such publications as *Hispanic Review*, *Hispania*, and *Symposium*. Her previous contribution to *WLT* was an essay on Cabrera Infante (Autumn 1987). At present she is at work on a book on contemporary Cuban and Cuban-American fiction.

In *Exiled Memories*⁵ Pablo Medina's life in Cuba is chronicled via incidents which occurred in the places where he grew up: his grandparents' farm, the house in coastal Havana, his wanderings and explorations of the city's streets. The book begins with a vignette that illustrates the Narrator's arrival in the U.S. in 1960 and works back in time to return to this same moment in the text's final pages. Specific events of the Narrator's own childhood—his traumas, triumphs, and discoveries—are interspersed with vignettes about the life stories of his ancestors and how they came to settle on the island of Cuba. The incidents Medina narrates are chosen by virtue of the intensity with which they stand in his memory: the frightening experience of a night spent crabbing in the Zapata swamp (14), the finding of human bones belonging to a victim of repression under the Batista dictatorship (100). Medina recalls these events vividly, and his prose at times possesses an eerie intensity.

Even though the author tells us his primary wish is to record his past, the main interest of his text is generated from what the reader learns about Medina's present. According to Louis Renza, the predominant reason for writing an autobiography is the writer's present: "Autobiography is the writer's de facto attempt to elucidate his present rather than his past" (271). In the same vein, Roy Pascal observes that autobiography involves an interplay between the past and the present, that "its significance is indeed more the revelation of the present situation of the autobiographer than the uncovering of the past" (11).⁶ For Medina, the genealogical self-exploration which at first seems to be the central issue of his memoirs leads to the Narrator's conclusion that his self will forever and irremediably be split: "My childhood lies inside the bowl of distance and politics, unapproachable and thus disconnected from my adulthood. The two revolve around each other like twin stars, pulling and tugging, without hope of reconciliation" (113).

Although the text is primarily a revisiting of experiences of a Cuban childhood, Medina's story exhibits an emotional and ideological interaction between the writing self and the self recalled. The fact that many Cuban children were violently uprooted in the early sixties challenges the reader's perspective of the Cuban situation. Medina's past is marginal to his present but essential to it.

When the Narrator describes the slaughtering of a pig in the Cuban countryside, the event witnessed by Medina as a child is brought to the present by Medina's ruminations about his own imagined slaughtering.

He discarded the tools carelessly on the ground, grabbed each side of the crevice . . . and pulled until the ribs let go of the spine and the chest cavity opened like a pulpy fruit exposing a chaos of purple organs and

blue and yellow intestines. And then I wondered if I were split so unceremoniously like that whether my organs too would shine amorphously in the sun like multicolored gelatin. (25)

The pig's dismemberment brings to the writer associations of the fragmentation and dislocation of his own exiled condition. Such comments betray the anxiety of the Narrator as he views his uncertain present in the U.S.

Throughout the narrative Medina injects the fears of his present self into the story of his past self: "I am terrified of growing old alone . . . because my children will be too busy to care for me or because my presence makes them feel uncomfortable, put-upon, and limited from pursuing that vacuous activity called self-realization" (36). Cuban and American cultural mores are juxtaposed as the writer tries to make sense of their differences. The author at times is critical of life in both societies, and his criticism becomes an invitation to rethink the way in which life evolves in both cultures.

As I grow older and sink ever deeper into the loneliness of American society, this sense of family, of openness to others that she [his grandmother] and others of the family have deeded to me, becomes increasingly dear. Because I dread isolation, because I have been taught to define myself through others, I fight that tendency of our society to shut the door on anyone who is not a card-carrying member of the nuclear family. (36)

Medina's commentaries from his present vantage point as a writer in the U.S. reveal a desire to engage the reader in some value questioning: "Life in the United States for me has not been a search for roots (that presumes their loss), but rather a quixotic attempt to become a creature I never was nor can ever be: an American" (preface, x). By asserting his own marginal condition, Medina separates himself from the English-speaking majority. The stories and the events Medina relates took place in Spanish, whereas his narration takes place in English, and this linguistic severance produces anxiety in the Narrator. Spanish, the language of his childhood, is now silenced and replaced by English.

Medina feels that the kind of childhood he lived in Cuba will never be lived again either by the Cuban-American children in the U.S. or by the children in Cuba today. Dislocation for writers such as Medina is, in a sense, more tragic than the experience of adult exiles who were secure in their identities as Cubans at the time they had to leave their country. In his preface Medina explains the reasons for recording the memories of his childhood:

On visiting my great-aunt and my grandmother . . . I was awakened to the fact that they and the other old folks of the family would not live forever. . . . When they went, they would take with them the myths and folklore I had grown up with. That, I thought, should never be allowed to happen. And who better than I . . .

to chronicle our past for those generations who had never lived it? (x)

Historical changes on the island would not allow the children there to live as he had, and Cuban children living in the U.S. would be destined to grow up as Americans. Thus Medina's text assumes the task of preserving a way of life and a tradition which the author feels could be a source of strength and knowledge for other Cuban-Americans. His memories become a means to ensure the survival of a collective identity.

Medina's task of collecting the stories of his family is central in the development of his present self. It is precisely this rich and secure past that will lend stability to the uncertain present of the writer in his adopted country: "the house [of memories] stands and leans freely into the future. Whatever winds may come, welcome" (114). The stories provided to him by his community and his family members render context and become a necessary exercise to confront the present in the U.S.

As in Medina's case, the diaspora resulting from the 1959 revolution becomes the structural and thematic core of Omar Torres's narrative *Fallen Angels Sing*.⁷ As opposed to Medina's memoir, which relies on the security of a happy past, Torres's version of his present situation in the U.S. requires the distance of fiction as it conveys the existential anxiety of the divided self. The narrative imitates the structure of autobiography via a protagonist who seeks the capacity to tell his own story.⁸

The narrative takes place in the U.S. and concentrates on the present of a thirty-three-year-old exiled poet as he copes with the shattering experience of dislocation. Although this is a fictional autobiography, there are coincidences between the life of Miguel Saavedra, the protagonist, and that of Omar Torres, the author. Like Torres, Saavedra was born in Victoria de las Tunas in 1945; and like Torres, he is a poet who came to Miami from Cuba at the age of thirteen and eventually settled in the New York City area. Both Torres and Saavedra were thirty-three years old at the time of the publication of the text's original Spanish version in 1981.⁹

The reader meets Miguel Saavedra on his way from Miami to New York City as the protagonist agonizes about his frivolous life and the need to become more involved in the political future of his country: "I had been a Philistine, living on the periphery of my convictions about Cuba. I had dogged the issue, but it was in vain. Cuba was embedded in me; I had to harvest my involvement anew" (78). In New York, Miguel finds himself caught between pro- and anti-Castro groups who wish to use him as a symbol that will further their political causes. However, the protagonist's own inability to decide between these factions contributes to his deep anxiety: "The exiles admired my work, but distrusted me. Now it happened that those in Cuba also admired

me, but I distrusted them. They were clearly wanting to use me, but I didn't know for what" (97). In his search for meaning and commitment, the protagonist travels from university poetry readings to Santería churches to gay bars and finally to Cuba, where he dies in a failed attempt to assassinate Castro.

The hybrid structure of Torres's novel as well as his use of metafictional devices provides a potential avenue for the understanding of the protagonist's evolving self. The mixing of the genres of theater, poetry, and narrative in the telling of Saavedra's tale parallels the protagonist's anxious and undecided condition as he flounders between the Cuban communities of New York and Miami. A section entitled "Memories of My Father's Family" is narrated as a play within the narrative; another segment, entitled "We Interrupt This Program . . .," takes on the shape of a long poem. The protagonist's dilemma is well articulated when, in a play-within-the-text acted out by Miguel and his friends, his own generation confronts the values of his parents.

The question is not to forget, Dad. Take me or my friends; you have a life to remember, but in that life we are nothing, we don't belong, because we have nothing to share with you in that life. We don't belong there, and we don't belong here; we just don't belong. We're not Cubans and we're not Americans. (111)

Miguel Saavedra does not achieve a coherent sense of self; he is too involved in the reality of his elders and thus is paralyzed in his attempt to reconstruct his own story. As already noted, the novel's Spanish version (under the title *Apenas un bolero*) had appeared back in 1981. Torres's decision to publish a version of the same novel in English in 1991 points toward the ambiguity and unresolved pull felt by the Cuban-American writer regarding his likely audience. Early in the novel Saavedra addresses his potential reader: "You are what you read, but you are also what you write. I was part of this story, even though it's not autobiographical. I wrote it on my Smith-Corona. How would non-Latin Americans react to this story?" (27).

Saavedra engages the "non-Latin American" reader as an outsider, as someone to be instructed about the details of a country in crisis. Narratorial digressions about specific events in Cuban history abound in the narrative and become a way to inform and instruct the English-speaking reader about U.S.-Cuba relations (33, 83, 123).

The protagonist's frequent dialogues with his readers as well as with his author are examples of the many self-conscious narrative devices used by Torres in the telling of Saavedra's story. Moreover, the central issue in the novel is literature, since Saavedra's writings become the source of his own exploitation by factions from the Right and the Left. As an artist, Saavedra is pictured as a vulnerable element and as a likely victim of the politics that divide Cubans and

Cuban-Americans: "You are the Cuban exile; you're all of us with your longing and your endless nostalgia" (131), writes a friend to Miguel as the protagonist sets out for Cuba to meet his death.

In the closing pages of the book the figure of the author appears in the text and states his intention to travel to Havana, ostensibly to meet the same deadly fate as his protagonist Miguel. If the metatext is in fact a dramatization of the construction of the self as the pieces of writing come together within the fiction, in the case of Torres the metatext seems dooming rather than redemptive.¹⁰

Metafictional narrative strategies are also central to the search undertaken by Pilar, the protagonist of Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban*.¹¹ Unlike Miguel Saavedra's failed attempts to make some sense of his life through his writings, the diary that García's protagonist writes becomes a repository of stories which will help her piece together her life. The stories Pilar compiles describe a family split between two countries due to the harsh realities of the Castro regime. Pilar records their various stories in a diary she keeps in the lining of her winter coat. Her diary eventually becomes the reader's text.

Pilar dramatizes the anxieties felt by an ethnic writer about the issues of voice and identity. At the beginning of the novel she formulates the question she will pursue throughout: "Even though I've been living in Brooklyn all my life, it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out. If I could only see Abuela Celia again, I'd know where I belonged" (58). *Dreaming in Cuban* is significant because it treats the experience of exile from the perspective of an ethnic writer.

Like Cristina García herself, Pilar was born in Cuba but grows up in New York City. Pilar is the daughter of exiles, a kind of skeptical punk who dabbles in art and Santería. The text's story allows García to examine three important dimensions of Cuban exile: the story of the Cubans who remained in Cuba (exemplified in the book by Abuela Celia and Tía Felicia); the story of the Cuban exiles who came to the U.S. in the sixties (the story of Lourdes, Pilar's mother); and, finally, the story of the children of exile—that is, Pilar's story.

The novel is sometimes told in Pilar's first-person voice (when she narrates events related to her own life in the U.S.) and sometimes in her omniscient voice, as in the stories of Celia, Lourdes, and Felicia. The various interpolated sections constitute two moments in time: a Cuban past which goes back to the beginning of the century and incorporates the poverty and corruption under which Celia, the matriarch, grew up; and the present, which takes us all the way to Pilar's visit to Cuba during the early eighties. Although there are contradictions in how each character views events, virtually all the stories from the past of these characters help explain pres-

ent circumstances and demonstrate the links between past and present.

The tales contained in Pilar's diary seem to fall into two categories: those in which language loss is directly related to the exile experience, and those in which loss of voice transcends exile and becomes a metaphor for existential alienation. For Pilar herself, language loss is a given. After all, she has grown up speaking English, and English is the language in which she writes and records the tales of the Del Pino family. Thematically, Pilar's anxiety about losing the language of her culture is manifested through her obsession with painting and in her ruminations about visual texts. To the dilemma of language loss, Pilar finds that visual images communicate meaning much more effectively than does language: "Painting is its own language. . . . Translations just confuse it, dilute it, like words going from Spanish to English. . . . Who needs words when colors and lines conjure up their own language?" (59, 139).

In terms of the text's narrative process, Pilar uses nontraditional avenues such as telepathy to communicate with her grandmother. Celia, the Cuban matriarch, becomes Pilar's inner voice, and their frequent exchanges help Pilar cope with her daily existence: "I feel much more connected to Abuela Celia than to Mom, even though I haven't seen my grandmother in seventeen years. . . . Even in silence, she gives me the confidence to do what I believe is right, to trust my own perceptions" (63, 176).

In telling the stories of others, Pilar's omniscient voice inverts the relationship to figures of authority who have dominated her in the past. Lourdes, her mother, does not fare well in Pilar's narrative. As a representative of the exile generation that came from Cuba in the sixties, she is ridiculed in the text. Her politics are wrong, she is overweight and unbecoming, and, most of all, she is totally unable to understand her daughter. Not surprisingly, when Lourdes visits Cuba, the language she speaks cannot be understood by the Cubans in Cuba (221).

García does not shy away from the diversity and differences that separate Cubans from Cuban-Americans, yet she understands the challenges common to both groups. Like all the characters in the text, Lourdes is tormented by feelings she does not confront. Her anxiety about her own displacement is evident when she passes the Arab shops in Brooklyn which make her reflect on her condition as an exile: "What happens to their languages?" she asks herself, "the warm burial grounds they leave behind?" (73).

For the women living in the U.S., the loss incurred by exile is clearly expressed through the metaphor of language loss. Pilar knows Spanish but doesn't use it. Her telepathic conversations with Celia and her obsession with painting become the bridges that connect her two cultures. Lourdes, on

the other hand, speaks in Spanish but no one knows what she is saying.

As a narrator of and participant in her own story, Pilar believes that if she can get to Cuba she will be able to reconstruct the puzzle of her fragmented family and thus recapture a part of her life she knows has been missing. The stories of Abuela Celia and Tía Felicia will provide her with a context within which her life can be assumed.

The characters left in Cuba experience a loss of voice which can be understood in terms of gender as well as political history. As Rosario Ferré observes in her review of the novel,¹² Celia and Felicia are products of male-dominated Cuban society. Celia's husband tries to punish her for having had a lover before she met him; Felicia's husband abandons her as soon as they are married. As women, Celia and Felicia have been victimized by their men; as Cubans, they have not been served well by their history. Their poverty, their unhappy childhood, and their lonely existence are indirectly tied to events which have rendered them powerless. Both Felicia and Celia suffer from profound unhappiness born out of their inability to share their joy with others (119). Theirs is the silent world of inner exile.

Celia's story is a case in point: When her lover Gustavo leaves for Spain, she becomes inconsolable—in the words of Pilar, “a housebound exile” (117). If there is meaning in Celia's life, it is her magical link with her granddaughter Pilar. Celia will pass on to Pilar the family history which is contained in the unmailed letters she writes to her lover Gustavo during the twenty years she stays married to Jorge Del Pino. When Pilar visits Cuba, Celia will give them to her granddaughter, and these “texts within the text” will become part of Pilar's diary. In one of the letters Celia summarizes how she views her own situation:

If I was born to live on an island, then I'm grateful for one thing: that the tides rearrange the borders. At least I have the illusion of change, of possibility. To be locked within boundaries plotted by priests and politicians would be the only thing more intolerable. Don't you see how they're carving up the world, Gustavo? How they're stealing our geography? Our fates? The arbitrary is no longer in our hands. To survive is an act of hope. (99)

The novel ends fittingly with one of Celia's letters to Gustavo in which she designates Pilar as a keeper of the family's knowledge: “The revolution is eleven days old. My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today. It is also my birthday. I am fifty years old. I will no longer write to you. . . . She [Pilar] will remember everything” (245).

This last vignette is chronologically out of sequence, for we have been reading Pilar's diary all along. However, the vignette is significant from the perspective of its author, for here Cristina García identifies her protagonist as the narrator of the book

we have just read. Pilar leaves the reader with the conviction that the double consciousness of being both narrator of and participant in her own story has enabled her to find that part of her own identity she knew was missing. Listening to the stories of others binds García into a relationship with a community of tellers. Fictional autobiography functions in this text as a “community binding ritual” (Friedman, 50) in García's search for the ethnic voice.

The novels analyzed in this study focus on the implications of a specified cultural and political condition of displacement. If these narratives look to the community for answers in the reconstruction and healing of their life stories, in the case of Torres and Medina this reconstruction seems next to impossible. Torres fights to be different from the Miami Cubans but somehow does not achieve this goal. His protagonist never acquires verbal control over his experiences because he cannot achieve the needed balance to overcome his fear of not really belonging in the U.S. or in Cuba. Medina, on the other hand, wants to preserve Cuban culture and its traditions through the legacy of his memoirs. Nevertheless, he betrays a great deal of anxiety as he shares with the reader the uncertainties of his divided self. In the case of Cristina García, it is precisely Pilar's gathering of information about the history of her ancestors in Cuba that brings her life back into focus.

Eliana Rivero tells us that a writer's transition from exilic to ethnic concerns entails coming into a personal awareness of biculturalism and takes for granted the reality of permanence in a society other than the one existing in the country of birth (“Immigrants,” 193). Bicultural awareness, in the case of these writers, has mainly to do with the way in which they conceive the language and culture of their adopted countries. Although these writers are roughly contemporaries in age and write about the same concerns, their autobiographical perspectives vary significantly according to the degree of interaction they had with the language and culture of their country of birth during their formative years.

The findings of James Ruppert and Reed Way Dasenbrock¹³ on the subject of monocultural versus bicultural audiences are pertinent in the assessment of the translatability of these Cuban-American autobiographies. Ruppert coins the term *mediation* to designate the act of negotiation by the writer between two cultural codes. According to Ruppert, the bicultural writer must be free to use the epistemology from both cultures as a way to strike what he calls a “dynamic confluence of values and expectations” (223). The ideal writer of any bicultural text would be able to speak to two audiences at once. Dasenbrock tells us that “multicultural works of literature are multicultural not only in their sub-

ject matter, but also as far as how they allow readers into the text" (18).

In the case of Medina and Torres, their stance toward their monocultural readers seems at times critical, and there is a reluctance to allow the English reader into the world of the text. Medina assures us that he "will never become an American," while Torres's protagonist agonizes as to the possible reaction of the "non-Latin American reader" to his narrative. As an ethnic writer, García engages the U.S. experience directly and cannot separate herself from it. Pilar's story tries to reconcile two cultures and two languages and two visions of the world into a particular whole. It is precisely this pull between two places that the ethnic character experiences and that motivates her actions within the text. García's poetic descriptions allow her to display an ability to speak to two audiences at once.

According to Paul John Eakin, the autobiographical act recapitulates the fundamental rhythms of identity formation: "The writing of autobiography emerges as a second acquisition of language, a second coming into being of self, a self-conscious self-consciousness."¹⁴ In the case of the three authors discussed here this double translating act has had different degrees of success. English was not the experiential language for Torres or Medina; thus their task of translating became one in which the English reader could only be engaged from the outside. García's childhood, on the other hand, occurred in English, a fact which allows her to integrate issues of past and present more easily. As one of the first ethnic Cuban-American writers, García envisions questions of identity and heritage with less anxiety and thus greater distance from her material. If autobiography is a "theater of self-expression, self-knowledge, and self-recovery" (Eakin, 3), Cristina García leads a third generation of Cuban-American writers as they walk the path from exile to ethnicity.

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¹ In recent years there have been various attempts to classify the writings of Cuban-Americans according to their different waves of migration. Rivero, in particular, makes useful distinctions between the concerns of exiles and ethnic writers. See Eliana Rivero, "From Immigrants to Ethnic: Cuban Writers in the U.S.," in *Breaking Boundaries*, Asunción Horno-Delgado, ed., Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1989, pp. 189–200; and "Cubanos y Cubano-Americanos: Perfil y presencia en los Estados Unidos," *Discurso Literario*, 7 (1989), pp. 81–101. See also Silvia Burunat, "A Comparative Study of Contemporary Cuban-American and Cuban Literature," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 84 (1990), pp. 101–23; and Carolina Hospital, "Los hijos del exilio cubano y su literatura," *Explicación de Textos Literarios*, 16:2 (1987), pp. 103–14.

² Although Molloy's study concentrates on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American literary figures, her observations regarding these writers' perceptions of self are relevant to contemporary Cuban-American autobiographical narratives as well. See Sylvia Molloy, "Introduction," *At Face Value: Autobiographical*

Writing in Spanish America, Cambridge, Eng., Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 1–13.

³ See Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice," in *The Private Self*, Shari Benstock, ed., Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1988, pp. 34–63; In addition to Stanford Friedman, Valery Smith's *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative* (Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1987) provides useful insights regarding autobiography as it applies to the literature of marginal groups. For Smith, autobiography "underscores the importance of naming oneself and shaping one's own story" (153). Smith also studies the role of the community in the autobiographical accounts of Afro-American writers. See her chapter "Tony Morrison's Narrative of Community," pp. 122–55.

⁴ James Olney, "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment," and George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, ed., Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 3–49.

⁵ Pablo Medina, *Exiled Memories*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990. All page numbers in the text pertain to this edition.

⁶ Both Roy Pascal, in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1960), and Louis Renza, in "The Veto of the Imagination: A Theory of Autobiography" (in Olney, pp. 268–95), study the idea of the split self as it applies to autobiography. On the essential division of the narrating subject, see Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, London, Methuen, 1983, pp. 71–106. In addition, Rachel Feldhay Brenner's discussion on the interaction between the "formative and the present self of the autobiographer" is relevant to my work on Cuban-American writers; see Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "In Search of Identity: The Israeli Arab Artist in Anton Shammas's *Arabesques*," *PMLA*, 108 (1993), pp. 431–45.

⁷ Omar Torres, *Fallen Angels Sing*, Houston, Arte Público, 1991. All page numbers refer to this edition.

⁸ Paul John Eakin's *Fictions in Autobiography* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1985) offers a stimulating discussion on the role of fiction in autobiography as well as on the different theoretical stances regarding this subject. See his chapter 4, "Self-Invention in Autobiography: The Moment of Language," pp. 181–279.

⁹ Torres's Spanish original, *Apenas un bolero* (Miami, Universal, 1981), and its English re-creation, *Fallen Angels Sing*, are separated by ten years, although their content is essentially the same. Notable differences in the English version are the absence of a table of contents as well as slightly longer discussions by the Narrator regarding Cuban history.

¹⁰ In using the term *metatext*, I allude to the general subject of reflexivity as it appears in contemporary narrative. Specific studies on embedded texts, readers, and writers within fictional narratives have influenced my investigation. See Gerald Prince, "Introduction a l'étude du narrataire," *Poétique*, 14 (1973), pp. 178–96; and Naomi Schor, "Fiction as Interpretation / Interpretation as Fiction," in *The Reader in the Text*, Susan Suleiman and Inge Crossman, eds., Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 165–83.

¹¹ Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*, New York, Knopf, 1992. All textual references pertain to this edition.

¹² Rosario Ferré, "Review of *Dreaming in Cuban* by C. García," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 23 February 1992. Of the three writers studied here, Cristina García has received the greater critical attention. Reviews of *Dreaming in Cuban* have appeared in various mainstream publications. See Thulani Davis, *New York Times Book Review*, 17 May 1992, p. 14; and Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*, 25 February 1992. In addition, García was a 1992 National Book Award finalist.

¹³ See Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English," *PMLA*, 102 (1987), pp. 10–19; and James Ruppert, "Mediation and Multiple Narrative in Contemporary Native American Fiction," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 28 (1986), pp. 209–25.

¹⁴ Eakin, p. 18.