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Isabel Alvarez-Borland

College of the Holy Cross, ialvarez@holycross.edu

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THE MEMORIES of OTHERS: ANA MENÉNDEZ AND ALBERTO REY

Isabel Alvarez Borland

“I live between two worlds, like a photograph that is always developing, never finishing, always in transition or perhaps translation, between past and present, English and Spanish, Cuba and the United States, the invisible and the visible, truths and lies.”

María de los Angeles Lemus ¹

How are the discourses of memory produced, conveyed, and negotiated within particular communities such as heritage Cuban American artists? A literature born of exile is a literature that by force relies on memory and imagination since the cultural reality that inspires it is no longer available to fuel the artists' creativity. This is especially true of U.S. Cuban heritage writers who are twice removed from this reality and obliged to create vicariously from the memories of others. Retracing the remembrances of their elders becomes an obsessive task for these writers for the past that had been real for the older exiles can only be imagined by these American authors of Cuban heritage.² These writers, who have been referred to as “American Bred Cubans” (Pérez Firmat 1987); “ethnics” (Rivero 1989; Alvarez Borland 1998); and, “Cubands” (O'Reilly Herrera 2001), have produced a body of writing in English in which the recovery and exploration of a heritage become central.³ The transmission of memories from one generation to another, a concept referred to as “postmemory,” has been the subject of study in other literatures under a variety of historical circumstances.⁴ In this essay I want to explore how the idea of inherited memories impacts the creative process of today's U.S. Cuban artists. If the memories of the artists are vicarious how does their borrowing affect the works created?

Since the early 1990s, Cuban American novelists, led by Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), featured within their fictional worlds embedded diaries, documents, and photographs that allowed the central protagonists to gain access to a buried or forgotten past. Novels published in the mid 1990s such as Pablo Medina's *The Marks of Birth* (1994), Margarita Engle's *Skywriting* (1995) and Cristina García's second novel, *The Aguero Sisters* (1997), told stories based on documents or manuscripts that had to be recovered and interpreted in order to gain an understanding of the story of the Cuban exodus---- an interior text that served as an archive of memory.⁵ In all instances these writers were looking to uncover facts that would give them and their community a sense of future and origin. The memories these writers wanted to keep alive were part of a personal but also public dimension of Cuban history that responded to their need to preserve the stories of the first exiles.

Yet, as time passes and the events of 1959 get further away from its tellers, the nature and content of these embedded or interior texts have changed. Because U.S. Cuban writers of recent generations have had to create their stories from the void of absence their borrowing process affects the artists' notions of memory, history and the relationship between the two. Rather than documents designed to preserve the Cuban story of exile for future generations, today's interior text turns away from the idea of history altogether. If in *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) the protagonist's diary was the archival site of the grandmother's memories, in Ana Menéndez' *Loving Che* (2003), the story the daughter records is an invented story based on the appropriation of Ernesto Guevara's public photographs. Discomfort with official renditions of history leads the younger writers to invent rather than to recollect the tales passed down by their elders.

Because the politics are disappointing, because the fights are not theirs, today's U.S. Cuban writers turn in and away from the facts of history.

I have chosen to examine the role of the photograph as a text of memory in the work of visual artist Alberto Rey and writer Ana Menéndez. For these heritage artists, the photograph becomes a point in time that because it is frozen allows for its appropriation and for a different framing of the experience of inherited exile. The writer and the painter use the photograph as a bridge to a past that was not theirs; their appropriation, multilayered both in meaning and in content, allows each artist to display central themes tied to their Cuban American heritage. It is my contention that the images both authors have appropriated function as primal figures that provide both a metaphor for a lost history and a code to that history's make up. Born ten years apart, in 1960 and 1970 respectively, Rey and Menéndez were raised in the U.S. by Cuban parents. Menéndez traveled to Cuba for the first time in 1997, Rey in 1998. An examination of Alberto Rey's visual works will allow the reader a better understanding of appropriation as a strategy in the visual arts and will further illuminate its role in the literature of Ana Menéndez. Together, Menéndez' and Rey's use of the photograph signals an attempt on the part of U.S. Cuban heritage writers to rethink the memory of the aftermath of 1959.

The Photograph as a Text of Memory

"These images are an abstracted past . . . The untainted aesthetic of a country that I cannot remember and probably never really existed." Alberto Rey ⁶

Born in Havana, Cuba, in 1960, Alberto Rey's family left Cuba for Mexico in 1963 and moved to Miami in 1965. Two years later, his family relocated to Barnesboro, Pennsylvania, a small coal-mining town where he lived until the early 1980s. In his

website and in interviews with O'Reilly Herrera in 1998, and with Jorge Gracia in 2006, Alberto Rey indicates that he felt a range of emotions and a sense of alienation from the story of the aftermath of 1959, a story which somehow was his, but that at the same time he had not lived.⁷ It wasn't until graduate school when---prompted by the tragic death of his grandmother whose raft never made it to U.S. soil---the artist felt an intense need to confront the story of his parents' exile, a story that he vehemently had avoided during his teens. It was then that Alberto Rey understood that his identity had been shaped by his parents' exile and indirectly by the 1959 revolution.

Four series of paintings, all created between 1995 and 1999, exemplify Rey's most important work on identity: *Icons* (1993-95), *Las Balsas* and *Balsa Artifacts* (1995-99) and *Appropriated Memories* (1996-97). While each series of paintings is thematically and stylistically unique, they are tied together by their Cuban themes and by Rey's creative use of the aesthetics of appropriation (Bosch 2001).⁸ The *Icon* series, consisting of ten large paintings of single objects (5 x 8 feet), evoke the aesthetics of pop art through a coded and playful visual language that allows the artist to connect with Cuban viewers and participate in the experience of a shared culture. *Bag of Chicharrones* (Fig. 1) depicts a greasy brown bag whose contents only the Cuban viewer could identify as pork rinds (*chicharrones*) a coded way to find a connection with a community the artist felt he had long ignored. In another painting such as *Ancel Guava Paste*, Rey appropriates the commercial label "Ancel" and the product *dulce de guayaba* (guava paste) as he speaks in different levels to Anglo, Hispanic, and bicultural viewing audiences. As Rey observes in conversation with O'Reilly Herrera (1998), in *Icons* he wanted to recognize "the

integral function of food in preserving and transmitting culture, memory, and tradition” (298).

If in *Icons* Rey searched for his identity through single objects such as ethnic foods that would symbolize the uniqueness of his Cuban background, in *Las Balsas* and *Balsa Objects*, his task of appropriation is of a different sort. The images in these series were inspired by empty rafts or *balsas* that had washed ashore from Cuba and that the artist had seen on a visit to the Cuban Refugee Center on Stock Island during the summer of 1995. Rey’s *balsas* provide none of the anticipated context of the subject image as these vessels render only the essential physical elements that constitute a simple raft, yet upon which all the complexities of the loss of human life are entrusted. Here the subject is explicit and somber, and the visual language is not coded by cultural familiarity as it was in *Icons*.

Lynette Bosch observes that Alberto Rey makes use of available traditions in art history that would bring additional meaning to his coffin-like rafts. In *Balsas IV* (fig.2), Rey endows his vessel with a sense of spirituality by placing it as a singular object within a spotlight and surrounding it with darkness as if it were on a stage. The image of the raft and what it represents to the Cuban memory is reinforced by the artist not affording the viewer the slightest chance for distraction. A general lack of additional information leaves the viewer quite alone with the raft creating a sense of bearing witness to its tragic journey. The *Balsas* series constitute Alberto Rey’s most political work since the artist’s depiction of these fragile vessels confronts the viewer with an ocean holocaust whose proportions will never be documented. According to Bosch, Rey’s use of a fresco-like technique, a format that had historically been used during the Renaissance, coupled with

the representation of the balsas as altar pieces in the manner of the *Retablo* religious paintings and the artist's use of *grisaille* tonalities achieved the solemnity the painter sought to attain (Bosch 2001, 142).

Yet it is Alberto Rey's *Appropriated Memories* (1995-1997), a series of paintings inspired on black and white archival photographs of Cuba taken between 1890 and 1920, that most completely represent Rey's exploration of the story of the 1959 exile. The memories 'appropriated' are inspired by photographs, familiar representations of Cuban landscapes and landmarks that Rey had never seen. According to the artist, the use of photographic references from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was very intentional and places the images, in the painter's words, in "a country without politics or individuals." As Rey indicates, this type of unhistorical depiction would remove the artist from the political issues that forced his family's exile, allowing him to create a separation between the imagery of the past and the reality of Cuba's present. Moreover, the artist's use of archival black and white photographs allowed Rey to express his inability to create from the memories of others: "I could have gone into the mid-1990s and found color images but I wanted to work with the black and white because I wanted an untainted separation from the present" (Gracia 2006, 98).

In *Appropriated Memories* the viewer detects the same reverence for the image that characterized the *Balsa* and *Balsa Objects* series, but here it is bolstered by further experimentation with light on the black and white photograph. As in his previous works, the artist draws the viewer into an intimate relationship with the image by providing only the most meager context and by forcing the viewer to look closer at the images due to the insufficiency of light. In appropriating and depicting the century-old images of Cuba, the

artist struggles to imbue the work with a reality that he understands was not his own, but which nonetheless is fully resident in his psyche. A lack of resolution or a blurring withholds their details and the viewer is left groping to make sense of the landscapes and monuments that characterize the series.

When the artist paints the images from these archival photographs, he manipulates the light from the original images so that the light source comes from only one point in the painting. Everything else is made darker in order to control the order in which the viewer looks at the painting contributing to a clear but somber mood. In *El Morro* (Fig 3) the viewer is unsure if the image's darkness is produced by night time calm or by an ominous, impending storm. The only light available to the viewer is the flat, weakened light which escapes from the low, gray clouds painted above the structure. A bluish tint further forces the viewer to struggle to see the well-known landmark that had been a Cuban prison since Colonial times. In a similar vein, in *Behind El Morro* (fig.4), the viewer senses a sad evanescence to the place as gray fog seems to be rolling just ahead of rain-bearing clouds. Another picture, *Havana Harbor* projects a sense of uniformity as the harbor shows none of the expected signs of life from vessels, man, or sea. Along the harbor's fog-darkened coast nothing seems substantial.

Similar to the landmarks, the landscapes in this series of sixteen paintings such as *San Juan Hill*, *Matanzas*, and *El Caney* project the same emotional flatness by the artist's application of a bluish-grayish tint to the composition, a procedure that provides his images with an unreality that was not part of the original photographs. In *Isla de Pinos* (fig. 5) nothing looks solid in the gray of the landscape. The mist envelops the viewer and there is a sense that it would not take much at all to make it all disappear. The darkness

that prevails in most of the images in this series confirms the separation and stillness of memories not owned, an intentional strategy that parallels the artist's struggle to create art from an unseen reality. Past and present blended; these images depict Cuba as a place dedicated to impermanence, spectral in memory.

Alberto Rey's play with light creates an intimate, personal rendition of classic Cuban landscapes and provides an example of how a visual artist is able to appropriate only *the image* of a memory in order to create a 'postmemory' of a geography never seen. The title of the series, *Appropriated Memories*, is playful and somewhat misleading since Alberto does not transpose, enhance or paint over the photographs as would be expected of most artists who work with photographic appropriation in the visual arts.⁹ According to Rey, "the paintings, although painted in a devotional sensibility, are painted in a gestural manner so that the brushwork is evident and so it is clear that the work is a painting, not a photograph. The manipulation of the image is important so that it is clear that [only] the image is appropriated and that it is a selected visual metaphor for a much larger concept."¹⁰

The archival photographs of Cuba serve to mediate memories that Alberto Rey could not have. In fact it is the viewer, and most particularly the Cuban viewer, who provides the context to Rey's act of appropriation by 'understanding' the reason and emotion behind these somber and gloomy images. In 1998, Rey returned to Cuba for the first time in 36 years. As a consequence of his trip, Rey's work moved away from the Cuban story of identity as the artist decided to create colorful videos of Cuban coastal scenes. The solace of nature unperturbed by human greed and politics now possesses the

dynamic of movement signaling the experienced reality that was absent from the *Appropriated* series.

The Photographs of Strangers

I suppose in a way Teresa's story is all about the sustaining power of fantasy. Growing up, that's all that Cuba was for me—a fantasy land. Ana Menéndez¹¹

The Cuban American heritage artist's yearning to create an alternate history-- even if that history never existed in the first place seems to be one of the main goals of *Loving Che*. Menéndez' aesthetic exploration of visuals in *Loving Che* takes up where Alberto Rey leaves off as the younger author seems to turn her back on the lies of "official" history in order to explore the possibilities of the personal story. Rehearsing the modern and postmodern argument about how contexts can affect our perception of visual images, Menéndez invents a story around Guevara's public photographs and invites the reader to consider the effects of truth and illusion in the construction of Teresa's story.¹² And if Rey uses photography in order to gain access to memories he could not have, Menéndez appropriation of the public photos of Che Guevara signals an unprecedented retreat from history and from the traditional recording of the stories of exile. In 1997-- four years before the publication of her short story collection *In Cuba I was a German Shepherd* and six years before *Loving Che* --Ana Menéndez had gone to Cuba for the first time. While both works are the products of the writer's confrontation with her parent's Cuba, *Loving Che* becomes the author's most complete conceptualization of the story of inherited exile.

The novel opens with an anonymous narrator who is searching unsuccessfully for details about her birth mother. She knows that she was brought as an infant to Miami

from Havana by her grandfather with a Neruda poem pinned to her baby gown as her only link to the past. When a mysterious package arrives, the novel shifts to the mother's account of her affair with Che Guevara. The central segment of the book recreates the mother's composition of her memoir, while the first and last sections of the novel are narrated in the daughter's voice and concentrate on her "reading" or deciphering of the box of mementoes (vignettes and photographs) contained in her mother's package.

Through the character of Teresa, Menéndez is able to put forth her theory about the personal imprint as it reaches both the creation of a story--the mother's imagined affair with Che Guevara-- as well as the crafting of a work of art through Teresa's career as a visual artist. While the mother's tale as a frustrated artist who had been commissioned to paint a landscape she had never seen provides autobiographical parallels with the struggles of writer Ana Menéndez, Teresa's affair with Guevara concentrates on the importance of the individual's story over the collective official record we call history. Both the love story and the artist's tale coalesce in Menéndez' exploration of the relationship between images and the role of fantasy in our remembrances or memories.

There is no pretense of factuality in Teresa's love story as she herself offers us an instance of how she came to forge her imagined affair. When Teresa finds a picture of Che Guevara in a magazine, she tears it out and places it in a box with other pictures; in this way, she literally removes the historical figure of Guevara from his official context and places him in the realm of the "personal" or private story:

When the new Bohemia came, I sat on the couch, turning the pages quickly, until I came to his photo. I searched the papers, the foreign magazines. Each time I

came across his image, I lay there looking at his face for a long time; then I carefully tore out the page. Over the next weeks, I did the same with other photos I found. I trimmed them and stacked them carefully in a box in my closet with these recollections.¹³

By creating a private context to Guevara's public photographs, Ana Menéndez is clearly reinventing Ernesto Guevara for the reader. Teresa's imagined affair with Guevara allegorizes the construction of a memoir or personal story that for Menéndez could be more real than the official account preserved in the historical annals. Yet the vision of history presented by this mother figure is a peculiar one. As Teresa claims, "Memory is the first story teller. Anyone can simulate history, its easy enough" (47). Teresa's love affair recreated through the pictures she found of Guevara would be "an idea" of herself that would have little to do with factual or recorded history.

Menéndez' ideas on how images affect writing and memory are further illustrated through the story of Teresa's career as a visual artist, a story reminiscent of the real life tribulations of artists such as Alberto Rey. Throughout the novel, Teresa struggles with the creation of a commissioned painting depicting a Miami landscape and complains about her impossible situation: "But I had never been to Miami and was forced to work from photographs and postcards, other people's interpretations. The strain of it would hurt me deeply. It was a hideous way to make art" (63). When Teresa decides to "add" fictional characters to her picture, the "invented" couple—Mina and Sami--allows Teresa to add an aspect of herself to a task that she felt was devoid of personal meaning: "Already Mina's face is a little rounder, a little echo of my own mother's . . . and Sami

is himself, but someone else too, someone who is living inside me” (108). In order to inhabit the memories of others, Teresa needs to add to them a part of her own self.

The imprint of Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* (1977) on Menéndez book --in particular Sontag’s essay “In Plato’s Cave”-- is evident in the way the mother protagonist appropriates the public pictures of Che Guevara for herself, a fact that is analogous to the predatory relationship between the photographer and his subject, a relationship that Sontag discussed at length in her writings.¹⁴ Photography, according to Sontag, could turn people into objects that could be symbolically possessed: “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power” (*On Photography* 4). While in *Loving Che* the main story related to Che Guevara’s photographs considers appropriation explicitly, the entire narrative of *Loving Che* can be interpreted as an allegory on the task of appropriation. The daughter’s initial pursuit of her mother’s story as a newspaper article, coupled with her obsession with the photographs of strangers, are among many instances of appropriation across the plot of this fantasy tale. As such, Menéndez’ book can be read as a post-modern rendition of the uses of “historical evidence,” a novel where the strategy of appropriation serves as the source of a necessary fantasy for the writer. Most importantly, through the mother’s invented story, *Loving Che* metaphorically recreates Menéndez’ effort to examine the process through which her parents forged their own personal stories which in turn became Menéndez’ “borrowed” memories.

Yet it is Roland Barthes’ theories expounded in *Camera Lucida* (1981) --- a book that continues the dialogue started a few years earlier by Sontag’s *On Photography*---

that most influence Menéndez's view on the subject. At the end of *Loving Che*, the nomadic and nameless daughter is left in a Paris bookstore in a scene reminiscent of the way she had been introduced to the reader in the first pages of the novel. This time the daughter is again looking at pictures of strangers, wishing to be part of a story that could only belong to her parents (223-28). While in the bookstore, the owner of the shop approaches her with a copy of *Camera Lucida* and quotes a few lines from Barthes' book to the protagonist: "Photographers labor diligently with their lights and their chemicals, without realizing that they are agents of death" (*Loving Che* 223). In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes had theorized on the significance of photography and its role in his own life in particular on the occasion of his mother's passing.¹⁵ According to Barthes despite every effort by the photographer to keep his subject alive, the subject of the photograph inevitably becomes an object, "a product of the operation of photography" and thus of "Death" (*Camera Lucida* 10-14).

Barthes further notes that in the act of being photographed the subject of the photograph changes as s/he becomes aware of what is happening: "everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (*Camera Lucida* 10). While in the bookstore the daughter encounters and buys one last photo of Guevara in which he appears holding a camera "with a yearning to record the world that lies before him"(226). As Roland Barthes would have observed, the image of Che as photographer in this last picture is also an example of someone trying to create a particular image of himself, just as Teresa's tale had been an attempt to create an image of herself that she wanted her daughter to accept and remember. By introducing this last picture of Guevara in her

novel, Menéndez once again conveys to readers that our own representations are dependent upon the history we create of ourselves.

The nature of Menéndez' writing can help us understand the position of a writer whose fiction manifests a tension between the desire to uncover the truth and the need to preserve the memories of her Cuban ancestors even if they could be false. In both *Loving Che* and an earlier short story entitled "Her Mother's House," the daughters are willing to put aside the reality they encountered in Cuba, choosing instead to go along with their mothers' versions of the past.¹⁶ In the short story, a daughter named Lisette soon finds out that not only has her mother misremembered the physical description of her house in Cuba, but also the memories of her time there. For Lisette, her mother's house in Cuba was "The house of someone else's imagining, a different story" ("Her Mother's House," 219). In the process of looking for the official details of their mothers' stories, Menéndez' fictional daughters each uncovers a truth they did not mean to find. However, instead of pursuing the facts, the young women choose to let illusion survive over truth. And yet, neither has the capability for the kind of self deception that had provided their mothers a way to survive their life in exile. The irony, however, is that Menéndez' daughter-protagonists cannot possess a personal story that relates to Cuba. The identity found through their mothers' invented stories reveals that they cannot establish an identity that is tied to one place, and does not allow them a singular identity.

As artists who have inherited the memories of others, Rey and Menendez depict in their works a combination of formal experimentation with a discourse that is subjective and personal, traits that have been identified by contemporary theorists as marks of the postmodern (Sarlo 2005, 146). Rey's blurry photographs draw attention to the process of

seeing as a questioning of identity, while Menéndez's public photographs of Guevara take the narratives of exile to a different point of understanding by explicitly suspecting the veracity of the stories of her elders. For both artists the photograph becomes a repository of the "history" and the "story" of exile, a figure that is at once a site of affiliation and rupture. And if Rey displays reverence and draws inspiration from the historical photograph, Menéndez's irreverence provides a perspective on history that is as much about memory as it is about truth. If the photograph is contextualized falsely, then the memories need not be true. By inviting their viewers and readers to *understand* rather than remember the memories of others, Rey's and Menendez's use of photography not only represents a stage in the development of each artist, but also provides an example of the constant reformulation of the memories of exile in U.S. Cuban artistic production.

Reference List

1. Lemus, María de los Angeles. 2001. From "Stories My Mother Never Told Me." In *ReMembering Cuba*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, 284-89. Austin: University of Texas Press.
2. Today's Cuban heritage authors join an already existing corpus of U.S. literature of Cuban heritage, not explicitly about the stories of the 1959 revolution, that is central in the appraisal of English literature of Cuban heritage in the U.S. This body of writing comprises authors such as Pulitzer Prize winner Oscar Hijuelos (*Mambo Kings*, 1992) who lived in the U.S. prior to the 1959 exodus. The perspective towards the national space of the Cuban American ethnic artist is quite different from that of the older exiles

or from that of the hybrid writer who left Cuba as an adolescent or pre-adolescent. If anger and despair towards history drove the fiction of the older exiles and vacillation and uncertainty fueled the fiction of the hybrid generation, it is the recovery of the memories of their elders that motivates most of the works of younger U.S. writers of Cuban heritage. Among the most notable, Cristina García (*Dreaming in Cuba* 1992, *The Aguero Sisters* 1997, *Monkey Hunting* 2003) and Ana Menéndez (*In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, 2001 and *Loving Che*, 2003). Also see: Ernesto Mestre (*The Lazarus Rumba*, 1999); Beatriz Rivera (*Playing With Light*, 2000); Andrea O'Reilly Herrera (*The Pearl of the Antilles*, 2001).

3. Pérez Firmat, Gustavo. 1987. Transcending Exile: Cuban American Literature Today. In *Dialogue #92*, ed. Richard Tardanico, 1-13. Miami: Latin American and Caribbean Center of Florida International University; Rivero, Eliana. 1989. Cubanos y Cubano-americanos: Perfil y presencia en los Estados Unidos. *Discurso Literario* 7: 81-101; Alvarez Borland, Isabel. 1998. Introduction to *Cuban American Literature of Exile: From Person to Persona*, 11-13; 123-49. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia; O'Reilly Herrera, Andrea. 2001. Introduction to *ReMembering Cuba*, xvii-xxxiii. Austin: University of Texas Press.

4. In her chapter 'Posmemoria, reconstrucciones,' Beatriz Sarlo examines how the concept of 'postmemory' is used in contemporary criticism. Citing Marianne Hirsh (*Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory*, 1997) and James E. Young (*At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Literature*, 2000) Sarlo indicates that the qualities of vicariousness and fragmentariness that these authors attribute to their definition of 'postmemory' are not sufficient to describe the

neologism since all memories in a sense are fragmented and vicarious. Examining examples of vicarious memories from the literature of contemporary Argentina, Sarlo indicates that while these ‘postmemories’ are vicarious and fragmentary, the essential quality that distinguishes these writings from others is that they are subjective and personal. Moreover, these remembrances are collected for non professional reasons by family members of the second and third generation in order to investigate and discover their family’s past. See: Beatriz Sarlo, 1997. *Tiempo pasado: cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo: una discussion*, 125-159. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Siglo veintiuno editores. On the specifics of the Cuban case see O’Reilly Herrera, Andrea. 2007. *The Politics of Mis-remembering: History, Imagination and the Recovery of the Lost Generation*. In *Cuba: Idea of a Nation Displaced*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly Herrera, 176-194. New York: State University of New York Press.

5. In using the term “embedded or interior text,” I allude to the general subject of reflexivity as it appears in modern and postmodern narrative. For an examination of interior texts in Cuban American narrative of the 1990s, see: Alvarez Borland, Isabel. 1998. *Collecting the Tales of the Community*. In *Cuban American Literature of Exile: From Person to Persona*, 123-49. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia.

6. Rey, Alberto. 2008. Quoted from artist website.

<http://albertorey.com/appropriated-memories>.

7. For interviews that discuss the trajectory and works of the artist see: O’Reilly Herrera, Andrea. 2001. *Alberto Rey: Appropriated Memories*. In *ReMembering Cuba*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly Herrera, 299-306. Austin: University of Texas Press; Also see: Gracia, Jorge

J.E. 2006. Landscapes of the Mind: An Interview with Alberto Rey. In *Identity, Memory, and Diaspora*, eds. Jorge J.E. Gracia, Lynette M.F. Bosch, and Isabel Alvarez Borland.

91-103. New York: State University of New York Press.

8. For a critical overview of Alberto Rey's works see: Bosch, Lynette. 2001. *Cuban-American Art in Miami: Exile, Identity and the Neo-Baroque*. 138-46. U.K.: Lund Humphries.

9. In the visual arts, the strategy of appropriation usually refers to the use of borrowed elements in the creation of a new work. In particular, the borrowing of photographs has had a long tradition in the visual arts and this kind of appropriation has brought a different meaning for each generation of artists. In his 1 April 2007 *New York Times* review of the exhibit "The Photograph as Canvas" curated by Richard Maine, art critic Benjamin Genocchio observes that in the 1960s artists such as Richter and Keefe painted on photographs and at times defaced them; in the 1970s Baldessari altered photographs with pen and paint; and, in the 1980s postmodern artists such as Richard Prince constructed collage photographs. Today's artists, according to Genocchio, appropriate photography in a variety of ways including painting over already existing photographs, bleaching out portions of vintage photographs, or burying the photographic imagery under many layers of paint often resulting in abstract or expressionist paintings. It is important to note that Alberto Rey's work with archival photographs does not fall under any of the above categories since for Rey the photograph is only used as a mediating image that allows him to access the memories of others.

10. Letter from Alberto Rey to Isabel Alvarez Borland, September 2008.

11. Alvarez Borland, Isabel. 2006. Crossing the Crest of Forgetting: An Interview with Ana Menéndez. In *Identity, Memory, and Diaspora*, eds. Jorge J.E. Gracia, Lynette M.F. Bosch, and Isabel Alvarez Borland. 173-81. New York: State University of New York Press.

12. In her Introduction to *Literature and Photography*, J. M. Rabb traces the detailed history of the relationship between literature and photography. According to the critic, in the early years photography set a standard of veracity, while after the First World War photography demanded recognition for aesthetic as well as documentary qualities. Global crises such as The Depression and the Second World War compelled writers and photographers to collaborate. Rabb avers that since that time photographs have been regarded “as complex mirrors of society rather than the transparent windows some had thought” (liii). See: Rabb, J. M. 1995. Introduction to *Literature and Photography Interactions 1840-1990*. xxv-lv. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

13. Menéndez, Ana. 2003. *Loving Che*, 84. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press. All references come from the above edition.

14. Sontag, Susan. 1973, 1990. In Plato’s Cave. In *On Photography*. 3-27. New York: Anchor. Sontag’s essay is mostly concerned with the idea of the democratization of photography and what that can mean in terms of the power relationships between subject and object.

15. See: Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*. 10-14. New York: Hill and Wang. In the aforementioned interview Ana Menéndez acknowledges Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag as influential to her novel. See note #11

above: Crossing the Crest of Forgetting: An Interview with Ana Menéndez by Isabel Alvarez Borland.

16. Menéndez, Ana. 2001. Her Mother's House. In *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*, 203-229. New York: Grove Press.