

# Spatial Dynamics and the Mariel Text: Leandro “Eddy” Campa’s *Little Havana Memorial Park*

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**Abstract:** This essay examines the spatial particularities of Mariel-generation Cuban writing, establishing the Mariel exile text as both the culmination of a complex negotiation with representational spaces, as well as the only viable space where exilic expression is possible for this exile group. Via a close reading of Leandro “Eddy” Campa’s *Little Havana Memorial Park*, and the use of several spatial theoretical frameworks, this study highlights the potential in the spatial for a better understanding of the intra- and extra-textual elements within Mariel fiction.

**Keywords:** Campa – Space – Mariel – Exile – Cuban.

## I.

**S**patial questions have long occupied a central place in diaspora studies, particularly in relation to the social integration and cultural self-positioning that are integral for exploring the complex trajectory from exile to diaspora. Inquiries into the multiple and varying spaces of exile have opened critical avenues towards a more comprehensive interrogation of the range of exilic experience within geographic, psychological, and symbolic frameworks. Scholars like Amy Kaminsky have delved into exile’s “spatial instability” (57), highlighting its role in exacerbating the exilic condition’s persistent movement and uncertainty. It is on these grounds that representations of space become “useful for understanding the physical and psychological experience of the spatial dislocation that is the hallmark of territorial exile and the cultural meanings attached to physical presence in, or absence from, a place” (Kaminsky 47). In the same vein, Edward Said points out that the traumatic physical deterritorialization of exile is marked by the “crippling sorrow of estrangement” (137), which, in turn, necessitates that “extra-textual” elements of the exilic condition be considered alongside

textual representation when evaluating the literature of exile.<sup>1</sup> Said observes that “to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself” (139). This experiential mapping, itself a spatial exercise, compels that the examination of exilic representation takes into account a broad inventory of spatial contexts that dispossess the exilic condition of any fixity to a singular place. Prompted by the understanding that in the literature of exile there is an intrinsic relationship between the “textual as space” and the varying “spaces of the textual,” we are obliged to examine the spatial dynamics of exile as both duplicative and continuously shifting. Moreover, we must consider the dynamics of space itself in relation to the exile subject as a social and cultural being who inhabits, belongs to, experiences, and creates space.

These critical underpinnings for examining the exile subject’s relationship to the spatial are particularly applicable when evaluating the “spatial mapping” in the literary production of writers who left Cuba for the U.S. via the Mariel exodus of 1980. An exile group whose spatial dislocation became further aggravated by an alienation in the adopted territory that mirrored the group’s experience on the island, the Mariel literary generation constructs in the U.S. the textual space that becomes both the affirmation of identity in action, as well as the creative repository of the patterns of negation and exclusion that marked the Mariel exile experience. This dynamic in Mariel writing can be illustrated through a spatial analysis of Leandro “Eddy” Campa’s *Little Havana Memorial Park* (1998), which can be read as Mariel’s “created” and “creative” spatial map in that it embodies an existential representation of the Mariel condition while also being the space of defiance from within and against the very margins to which the Mariel generation typically has been relegated.

## II.

Henri Lefebvre has defined “representational space” as “lived space,” or the “space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” and that tends “towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs” (39). Distinguishing representational space from the more conceptualized and verbal “representations of space” and from the more perceptual deciphering of space labeled “spatial practice,” Lefebvre emphasizes the interconnections between different spatial categories, pointing out “that the lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the ‘subject’, the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another without confusion—so much is a logical necessity” (40).

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<sup>1</sup> Svetlana Boym contends that estrangement cannot be divorced from nostalgia in the exile text and should be considered dually as an artistic device and as a way of life. See Svetlana Boym, “Estrangement as a Lifestyle: Shklovsky and Brodsky,” *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances* (Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 241–262).

Lefebvre's concepts prove useful for a better understanding of exilic subjectivity, as the exile's spatial instability demands that they engage in a spatial practice marked by repeated negotiations with the different networks of space in which the exile attempts to be and to belong. It is not surprising then, as noted by Said, that "the exile's new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction" (144). In this light, the verbal representation of space, the exile text, can be viewed as the exile's production of a space where belonging is possible but also where the despair to find that belonging can be simultaneously reflected, be it overtly or symbolically. The exile text, in as much as it might be associated with the realm of the fictional, is in effect both the produced space of, and vehicle for, exilic representation. Thus, to acknowledge the experience of exile as also the experience of space is to underscore space's dual nature, wherein "on the one hand, one (i.e. each member of the society under consideration) relates oneself to space, situates oneself in space. [...] On the other hand, space serves as an intermediary or mediating role" (Lefebvre 182-183).

In the exile text, the writer takes to the representational sphere of the written word to fashion a cultural subjectivity born from the integration within the multiple spaces of the adopted territory while paradoxically and simultaneously expressing a persistent differentness that forever prevents any sense of authentic belonging. In this sense, we are reminded of Homi Bhabha's views on the relationship between cultural difference and its enunciation: "The enunciative process introduces a split in the performative present of cultural identification; a split between the traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference, and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination, or resistance" (51). Examined through Bhabha's optic, and yet still considering the parameters particular to the exilic condition, notions of cultural- and social-identity formation as expressed in the exile text are intertwined with the forces of community and interaction within the multiple spaces where the exile is simultaneously integrated and othered. Indeed, in advocating for the social and the spatial to be conceptualized jointly, Doreen Massey calls for space to be recognized "as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (9). Massey's plea provides a path for how we might approach the exile text, itself a social and spatial product containing the social and spatial features that prompted its production. Viewed this way, the exile text subscribes to Massey's considerations about "the conflation of the spatial with representation" (30). And, in its fundamental connections to the specular, the metafictional, and the "extra-textual" as exacerbated by the interrelational, the exile text further adheres to Massey's proposition that space is "always under construction" (9). In effect, the literature of exile, like the exilic condition it reflects, is always open and always a work in progress.

Even while bearing in mind exilic instability as it relates to the spatial and interrelational contexts in which the exile subject wants to achieve some sense of

belonging and identity affirmation, questions surface: What happens when these already unstable spatial and interrelational markers informing the production of text, as both a representation of space and as a space of representation, are radically altered or severed? What becomes of the exile subject when spatial movement is no longer marked by oscillation and insecurity, but instead by the negation of space altogether? How does this spatial paralysis translate into the exilic expression of the representational text?

To begin to address these questions, we can turn once again to Said, who, while emphasizing that all exiles confront “a discontinuous state of being” that is accompanied by “an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives” given “the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation” (140-141), also suggests that certain exiles can face a more intense predicament when those attempts at reconstitution and community, difficult as they naturally are, are further hindered in ways that accentuate exilic trauma. Namely, Said writes about the phenomenon of being exiled by exiles: “Perhaps this is the most extraordinary of exile’s fates: to have been exiled by exiles: to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles” (141). Although specifically referencing the Palestinian-Israeli context, Said’s comments lend themselves to exploring how, for particular exile groups, being exiled by exiles can significantly impact those groups’ spatial dynamics of exile and their representation. This is most certainly the case for Cuban exiles from the 1980 Mariel exodus to the United States, as their spatial dislocation in the search for belonging is intensified by the marginalization to which they were subjected not only by the adopted territory at large, but also by the community of established fellow Cuban exiles that represented the Mariel exiles’ best hopes for achieving the reconstitution and identity affirmation they so desperately sought.

The socio-political circumstances surrounding the Mariel exodus negatively impacted the reception of Mariel exiles, complicating their exilic positioning and, in turn, further underscoring the trauma brought about by their spatial limbo —seemingly having no place in Cuba and subsequently having no place in the United States. Critical of the Cuban regime, Mariel exiles expected to find acceptance and achieve integration in their adopted country, particularly among established first-generation Cuban exiles with whom they aligned politically. However, as documented widely across political and cultural spheres, Cubans who arrived via Mariel are notorious among exile groups both for the obstacles they confronted, as well as for the general alienation that impeded their inhabiting of, in every sense of the word, the exilic spaces established by first-generation exiles. In addition to other factors prompting the rejection of Mariel exiles, the Cuban regime had capitalized on the exodus to ensure that undesirables like prisoners and the mentally ill would arrive on U.S. shores. Despite only constituting 4% of the 125,000 Mariel exiles who arrived, the Mariel stereotype became consolidated in the American mindset; the U.S. population saw all Mariel exiles unfavorably, and the Cuban exiles who had arrived at the U.S. in the first wave after the Cuban Revolution largely shunned their compatriots, seeing in them a threat to their model minority status. On top of that, first-generation Cuban exiles rejected a shared nationalism with Mariel exiles, distrusting a

group very different from themselves in its racial and social makeup, and who had lived on the island under Cuban socialism for over twenty years.<sup>2</sup>

Within this context, the Mariel exile text takes on a more pronounced role in its function as both the only possible representational space for the Mariel exile condition as well as the only site in which to convey the ostracism and exclusion that have marked it. If the exile text has the potential to be read as the space that is the product of interrelations in the exile's quest to belong and find positioning, even when those endeavors are rooted in uncertainty and contradiction, then the Mariel exile text stands out as an altogether different exilic space reflecting the alienation from the spatial and interrelational measures that have made the affirmation of self, cultural or otherwise, more complicated but no less desirable. In this vein, Cuban critic Iván de la Nuez has employed Marc Augé's notion of "non-place" and applied it to the spatial positioning of Mariel writing (106).<sup>3</sup> Although referring mainly to the cultural isolation of Mariel writers in relation to other Cuban writers on the island or in exile, de la Nuez's use of the term underscores how one might approach the spatiality of the Mariel text, where the negation of cultural and social integration functions as the catalyst for the production of a poetic space that makes room for belonging while also simultaneously reflecting the "singular identity" of the Mariel exile as a marginalized other.<sup>4</sup> This symbolic construction of space, which Augé would refer to as "anthropological place" (51), is brought to being through symbolic acting-outs, imaginative ruses linked to authorial self-representation, that enable self-figuration and self-positioning within the dual spaces of the text itself (the only space available) and the represented extra-textual spaces (Cuba and the U.S. as the adopted territory) from which the Mariel exile has been shunned and that have prompted the symbolic acting-outs driving the narration.

For many Mariel writers of the 1980s and 1990s, geographic location in the adopted territory serves as the marker through which the physical, social, and cultural

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<sup>2</sup> For a historical account of the Mariel boatlift and its aftermath in relation to the treatment of Mariel exiles, see María Cristina García, *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida* (University of California Press, 1996). And for an examination of the racial and geographic factors that impacted Mariel integration, see Emily H. Skop, "Race and Place in the Adaptation of Mariel Exiles" (*The International Migration Review* vol. 35, no. 2, 2001, pp. 449–471).

<sup>3</sup> Popularized by French anthropologist, Marc Augé, non-places refer to spaces that are transient and where human anonymity takes away enough significance from the space that it cannot be considered a "place." See Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (Verso, 1995). The concept has broadened significantly in recent decades across contexts, particularly as it relates to the status of a space as a "non-place" being guided by perception or temporal factors.

<sup>4</sup> In *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Marc Augé notes that: "Collectivities (or those who direct them), like their individual members, need to think simultaneously about identity and relations; and to this end, they need to symbolize the components of shared identity (shared by the whole of a group), particular identity (of a given group or individual in relation to others) and singular identity (what makes the individual or group of individuals different from any other)" (51).

isolation of the Mariel exile can be reflected and resisted in the poetic space of the text.<sup>5</sup> Unable to be accepted and integrated, neither in the micro exilic spaces of their compatriots nor in the macro spaces of the wider American landscape, the protagonists of many Mariel works perform symbolic acting-outs in the fictional space of the narration that reflect the very real alienation experienced by Mariel exiles. Through a specular relationship with the Mariel writers that have given them life in the fictional world, these characters' actions within the imaginative world of the literary text can thus be read as autobiographical acts linked to authorial self-representation. These characters' quest to seek out a representational space as a refuge for authentic belonging and expression, in reaction to the geographic and socio-cultural displacement and rejection to which they have been subjected, mirrors how the Mariel writer carves out that same space of representation through the Mariel text and uses it to symbolically depict the markers of his marginalized condition. Moreover, that these fictional-autobiographical characters are unsuccessful in their search for a viable representational space in which to belong both confirms and exacerbates the space of the Mariel text, the shared space of fiction, as the only exilic space or space of representation available for the Mariel exile.

### III.

Mariel writing's spatial dynamics are evident across the Mariel generation of writers. One example is Reinaldo Arenas's work set in the U.S., particularly the surrealist *El portero* (1989), which centers on a *marielito's* alienation in Miami and then in New York, as well as the human disconnection experienced in the microcosmic space of the Manhattan apartment building where he works as a doorman and where he is able to establish connections only with the tenants' pets. As both a commentary on and reflection of Mariel life through the acting-out of symbolic action, *El portero* parallels another Mariel novel of the time: Guillermo Rosales's *Boarding Home* (1987), republished in 2003 as *La casa de los naufragos*, in which the protagonist is rejected by his Miami family upon his arrival from Cuba in 1980 and is forced to live in a run-down boarding home, where despair, abuse, and violence abound. His many futile attempts at literal and symbolic escapes from his dreadful conditions cement the reality that indeed no belonging is possible, and that all that he has is the non-place of the boarding home, itself the mirror of his alienation

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<sup>5</sup> Several Mariel generation writers have reflected on their dislocation and on the extra-textual elements that unified them as a literary group. See: Juan Abreu, "Art and Politics and Passion" (*New Times*, 13–19 April 1988, pp. 7–12); Jesús J. Barquet, "La generación del Mariel" (*Encuentro de la cultura cubana*, vol. 8/9, 1998, pp. 110–125); Miguel Correa, "La generación del Mariel: literatura y transgresión" (*Espéculo: revista de estudios literarios*, vol. 23, 2003, no pp); and Carlos Victoria, "De Mariel a los balseros: breve historia de una insatisfacción" (*Encuentro de la cultura cubana*, vol. 15, 1999–2000, pp. 70–73).

and his spatial crisis in both Cuba and the U.S. The only true exilic space of representation becomes the text itself.<sup>6</sup>

When evaluating the spatializing of the marginal in Mariel texts like *Boarding Home*, Mónica Simal observes that individual authorial self-representation always signals the collective shunning of Mariel exiles (326). Moreover, regarding the narrating self, Simal emphasizes: “si este yo accede a la literatura en busca de un refugio o un asidero, este nuevo espacio termina siendo uno maldito: el hombre derrotado por la modernidad consume finalmente su propia abyección” (319). Similar forces are present in other works, including a range of Carlos Victoria’s texts and Esteban Luis Cárdenas’s poetry and short fiction. Yet, it is another text in particular that quite possibly goes the furthest in highlighting the spatial elements impacting and conditioning the Mariel experience, in drawing attention to the poetic space of the written text as that experience’s sole representation of space, and in further heightening the metafictional connections between authorial self-representation and textual selves through the lens of geographic and socio-cultural location: Leandro “Eddy” Campa’s 1998 epic work, *Little Havana Memorial Park*.

As one of the more illustrative examples of the symbolic acting-out of Mariel writing, Campa’s *Little Havana Memorial Park* evokes geographic location and socio-cultural space. Miami’s Little Havana, the specific locus of the Cuban exile community, serves as the text’s title and, paradoxically, as its most poignant marker of exclusion. A lyric inventory of an exile generation pushed to the limits of marginalized existence, the text can be read as a bizarre self-representational portrait of Campa, whose own life in Miami, like the lives of many other Mariel exiles, is the very dead end allegorized in the poem.

Son of a Chinese father and Black mother, Campa arrived in Miami at the age of twenty-seven via Mariel hoping for a new beginning and the opportunity to consolidate himself as a writer. Having experienced abject poverty in Cuba throughout his life, Campa resorted to the recourses of the imagination to document and make sense of his reality, writing poems from an early age that were closely connected to his immediate surroundings and circumstances. This poetic spirit reached a boiling point in 1968 when a fifteen-year-old Campa was arrested and sentenced to fourteen months in a labor camp as part of the hippie raids that were common in Havana at the time. Ultimately, Campa’s disillusionment with the regime reached its height in 1979 when, after writing the collection *Calle Estrella y otros poemas*, he was arrested, charged as an anti-revolutionary, and given an eight-year prison sentence, of which he served forty days once he apologized and confessed to the alleged subversive nature of his text. The regime had objected to the work as “being too close to reality,” and it was reality that undoubtedly obsessed Campa, who rapidly came to terms with his on the island. Experiencing the disconnection

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<sup>6</sup> For further consideration of narrative self-fashioning and the symbolic acting-outs of the Mariel condition in Guillermo Rosales’s *Boarding Home*, see: Raúl Rosales Herrera, *Fictional First-Person Discourses in Cuban Diaspora Novels* (2011); and Mónica Simal, “Narrar a Mariel: Espacialización y heterotopías del exilio cubano en la novela *Boarding Home* (1987) de Guillermo Rosales (1946–1993)” (2018).

between the desire to create and to express freely and openly, and a national space whose political and socio-cultural reality left no room for this to be possible, Campa and other alienated artists like him saw leaving Cuba as the only choice. So, when in 1980 the Cuban regime opened its waters to exile in the U.S. via the port of Mariel, writers like Campa undertook the voyage towards what they believed was a viable space where they could finally find the belonging they sought and were denied in Cuba. Sadly, in the U.S. this space was also negated to them.

After his arrival in Miami, Campa resided briefly in New York and then for a time in Texas until finally settling for good in Miami in 1989. A resident of the immigrant community of Little Havana, Campa held menial jobs to make ends meet, all the while continuing to write and hoping to make his work known. Falling frequently on hard times, but also actively subscribing to the simple life his poetic soul yearned, Campa periodically rented rooms in the neighborhood when he was not living out of his car or, ultimately, the streets of Miami's downtown. In his homelessness, Campa sold costume jewelry on the streets to survive, and witnessed the strains of life in one of Miami's most impoverished areas. And yet, amidst his own abject reality—and subsisting in an environment where crime, drugs, and prostitution were ubiquitous—Campa would visit the library almost daily and would resort to writing his poems and short stories by hand on the back of envelopes and on the blank spaces of supermarket flyers. A unique intellectual figure occupying a disparate physical space, Campa soon acquired a reputation as that space's uncompromising poetic voice; journalist Judy Cantor refers to Campa in a piece as the “griot of SW Eighth Avenue,” “street corner philosopher” and “neighborhood historian” (1). Indeed, Campa's unique positioning within the marginal spaces of Miami, along with his creative impetus to document and reflect upon that reality, allowed him to employ poetry and fictional recourses to craft an autobiographical and spatial representation of daily life as an exile on the margins. Meticulously preserving what he wrote because he always remained fully cognizant and confident about his literary talent, and taking advantage of the opportunity while staying with a friend, Campa completed the manuscript of what would become *Little Havana Memorial Park*, published with the help of friends through the short-lived Dylemma Ediciones.

Set in the location of its title, the Miami park on S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Third Street where Campa spent so much time reading, writing, residing, and witnessing, *Little Havana Memorial Park* serves as the portrait of marginalization, as the personal and communal account of the non-place of Campa, the Mariel generation, and others for whom exile or immigration never translated into the American dream. And yet, in exposing this reality, in granting voice to the voiceless and visibility to the invisibles, the text is simultaneously a poetic space where life, community, and self can be affirmed. The setting of Little Havana Memorial Park is the non-place of the forgotten, the shunned, the hopeless; *Little Havana Memorial Park*, the poetic text, is the *only* space, the *only* outlet, the *only* channel for the expression that Campa sought but was denied both in Cuba and in Miami.



The text's spatial duality mirrors several of its other registers, as executed through the polyphony of voices that dominates the work. *Little Havana Memorial Park* consists of twenty-eight different poetic vignettes that may be read collectively as a single epic poem about the lives of an array of individuals, both Cuban and non-Cuban, who reside in Miami's margins and underground, including Campa, whose voice narrates some vignettes while serving as a character in others. This element emphasizes the text's function as a lyrical catalogue of a community, but also as a self-representational piece given its autobiographical connections within the spatial framework. The work's first vignette introduces this dual nature:

Vidas que fueron un número  
 menos inequívoco que el del Seguro Social  
 edificaron este panteón:  
     Wichinchi; Quintana; Orlando, el ecuatoriano;  
     Frank, el jugador; Ordoñez, el Puro;  
     Miranda, el escurridizo; Sherman, el misterioso;  
     Rosario, la puta; Reina; Maritza, la loca;  
     Mr. Douglas, el Capitán de navío; Dantón,  
     el policía de los ojos claros; Oti, la mujer de Mr. Dinero;  
     Papiro, el usurero; Mr. Dinero; Pedro Marihuana;  
     Jorge Avila, el atómico; Maldonado el alcalde;  
     Mirtha. B. Miraflores; Eddy Campa el poeta y otros,  
     otros.  
 Todos, todos estamos en Memorial Park. (Campa 23)

Taking a page out of Guillermo Rosales's *Boarding Home*, which also includes an inventory of the marginalized, Campa makes Miami his boarding home, his literal dead end, for in his poem all of these characters, including himself, are already dead. The *panteón* or cemetery in the verse thus becomes the location of the text's action while operating simultaneously as the symbolic marker of Campa's commentary about Miami, about exile, and about himself, and thus further exacerbating the literary and extra-literary levels at which notions of space and identity in the text may be read.

Recalling Henri Lefebvre's argument that every society produces its own space, we can more closely examine Campa's *panteón* within the spatial networks of the poem. As both a poetic representation of Campa's Little Havana environment and as a symbol of Miami's exilic socio-cultural isolation as a mirror of Cuba's, the non-place of the cemetery constitutes both the image and reflection of death that the space of the text transforms into the space of life where the dead continue to exist and to speak through symbolic acting-outs of self-figuration and self-affirmation. According to Lefebvre: "Tombs and funerary monuments belong, then, to absolute space, and this in their dual aspect of formal beauty and terrifying content. A pre-eminence of formal beauty in such

spaces leads to the mausoleum, the prestigious but empty monument; that of a terrorizing political content, on the other hand, gives rise to haunted places, places peopled by the living dead” (235). Evaluating *Little Havana Memorial Park* through Lefebvre’s lens facilitates a more complete understanding of the work’s duplicative spatial relationships. For the outcasts like Campa, the empty spaces of Cuba/Miami/Little Havana/the cemetery become the poetic haunted spaces of *Little Havana Memorial Park* where the abandoned and the forgotten are rescued and immortalized.

The poem’s paradoxical engagement with the theme of death is pivotal for its spatial interpretation. The temporal element also plays a factor, with critics noting the juxtaposition between Campa’s present moment of narration and the poem’s content: “His vision of the neighborhood is set in the future, when all the current residents are dead and buried, a perspective that allows him to portray the arc of their lives, their daily interactions in the street, their successes and failures, and their ultimate demise” (Cantor 2). This narrative strategy of centralizing death affords Campa a narrative distance at the temporal level by which to examine his own condition as a Mariel exile and that of those with whom he shares Miami’s marginal world. On another level, however, these characters are very much alive, speaking from their graves. If this cemetery is read as a commentary on the real-life counterparts of these fictional characters, as their specular double, then we can interpret the poetic act and space as humanizing the marginal, as validating and bringing to life an existence that has otherwise been voided. By crafting a narrative approach through which characters continue living beyond death, Campa is resorting to the world of poetry to rescue him and others like him from oblivion, for, as Campa noted about his work: “It’s the story of a group of immigrants with no other destiny, really, than to die here in the United States [...] These aren’t people who lost it. They just never had it. It’s not the story of those who haven’t triumphed. It’s the story of those who can’t triumph” (Cantor 2-3).

In exalting Campa and those around him pushed to the limits of marginalized existence and negations of space—and in the process blurring the lines between reality and fiction, between autobiography and testimony, between the textual and the extra-textual—, *Little Havana Memorial Park* sketches a living portrait of a neighborhood whose residents are dead in the poem (and symbolically so in real life), and in both cases speaks for them or, like in several of the vignettes, lets them speak for themselves, thus highlighting the text’s testimonial nature.

The polyphony of voices serves as yet another key example of the text’s multiple spatial registers. On one level, the poems are Campa’s self-validation through the repeated iterations of himself as poet, as exemplified in the following verse:

Y venían perseguidoras, ambulancias y bomberos  
 y Maritza, la loca, detrás de las gaviotas  
 y Wichinchi Prenda Fu cantando guagancó  
 y Pedro Marihuana pregonando su mercancía

y Eddy Campa, el poeta, recitando sus poemas. (Campa 24)

The obvious testimonial and autobiographical connections give way to the metafictional, as Eddy Campa's poem depicts Eddy Campa, the character, who mirrors Eddy Campa the author, with the space of the text (and its readers) serving as doubles, reciting Eddy Campa's poems like Eddy Campa. This specular web is further extended by the following verse:

entonces él, Eddy Campa,  
 escribía los poemas más bellos;  
 los escribía en cualquier sitio;  
 el borde de una acera,  
 el techo de un auto,  
 el tronco de un árbol,  
 el mostrador de una tienda. (Campa 28)

Recognizing this as the writing process for the very poem at hand situates the reader within the register of Campa the poet, but also of Campa as one of the many excluded souls making up the corpus of Miami's ghetto. Joaquín Gálvez stresses this metafictional and testimonial bent as perhaps the most pivotal element in establishing *Little Havana Memorial Park* as the most paradigmatic example —along with Néstor Díaz de Villegas's *Vicio de Miami* and Esteban Luis Cárdenas's *Ciudad mágica*— of a dystopian but nonetheless authentic Miami in Cuban exile poetry: “el [paradigma] de Campa, más autobiográfico y testimonial, en cuya voz convergen coralmente las voces de los otros, se acerca más al lado humano de esta marginalidad, exponiéndonos sus polos opuestos: el amor y el desamor, la amistad y la traición, la bondad y la avaricia” (3).

The duplicative network of spaces in Campa's text aligns with Lucien Dällenbach's assertion that:

A reflection is an utterance that relates to the utterance, the enunciation or the whole code of the narrative. This phrase reveals and confirms that any reflection represents a semantic superimposition or, in other words, that the utterance containing the reflexivity operates on at least two levels: that of the narrative, where it continues to signify like any other utterance, and that of the reflection, where it intervenes as an element of metasignification, enabling the narrative to take itself as its theme. (43–44)

Indeed, the specular elements evident in *Little Havana Memorial Park*, from its reflective *mise en abymes* to its spatial superimpositions, showcase the text as the symbolic arena where Campa mirrors and tangles with extratextual reality. According to Emilio Ichikawa:

“Eddy Campa, as a poet, builds a new homeland and having built it, he submits it to a new loss, he accumulates another paradise to recover duplicating the experience of exile. Revolution within the revolution and exile within the exile” (63). Thus, viewed as the exilic space of recovery and self-affirmation, *Little Havana Memorial Park* further adheres to Dällenbach’s stance in that the text can “provide a kind of internal dialogue and a means whereby the work can interpret itself” (55). In line with Dällenbach’s ideas about textual reflexivity, Lefebvre speaks of the specular nature of space itself, noting the degrees to which space functions as a mediating point where bodies and objects continuously precipitate reflection: “One truly gets the impression that every shape in space, every spatial place, constitutes a mirror and produces a mirage effect; that within each body the rest of the world is reflected, and referred back to, in an ever-renewed to-and-fro of reciprocal reflection” (183).

Miami as non-place and as dystopian graveyard becomes emblematic of how Campa uses the poetic space of the text as a specular strategy by which to explore and reveal the markers of spatial and socio-cultural exclusion in characters who are actually not so much continuing to live after death as much as they are continuing to live their deaths (Gálvez 3). One vignette signals the space of the dead (or the dead space of the park), while exhibiting both the grim reality of daily life, as well as the emotional reaction to the departure of Reina, a beloved waitress at the local eatery:

¡Qué triste se ve la Ocho Avenida y la Tres Calle!  
 Nadie habla,  
     nadie se mueve.  
 ¿A qué se debe  
     que las luces de las perseguidoras,  
     las sirenas de las ambulancias  
     y los lamentos de los Evangelistas  
 no despierten el entusiasmo de otras veces?  
 ¿Hacia dónde apuntará el crepúsculo hoy?  
 ¿Acaso nadie va hoy a drogarse  
     o a componer odas? (Campa 42)

And yet, as the poetic space where the marginalized can paradoxically find life permanently despite the permanent hopelessness of their condition, the text ceases to be read less as a story of the dead and more so as the account of those whom poetry and the creative endeavor will not let die. Campa’s epic work thus crystallizes as both mirror and weapon, offering a resistant counter-discourse to the very marginalization that it reflects. Like other Mariel works, this text “parece decirnos que el espacio de lo literario, ese real e irreal, invertido y transformador, es, finalmente, un obstinado enclave contra la opresión y la exclusión” (Simal 327). In doing so, the poem expresses hope in the face of hopelessness, especially hope in the power of the written word, and hope in humanity’s

ability to recognize its power, as illustrated in the vignette in which Campa's first-person voice addresses the following verse to his love, Mirtha:

Mirtha,  
 estos versos escritos para ti,  
 no pretenden  
 la fama que mata la pasión.  
 Si han de quedar  
 en los fríos  
 laminados de las computadoras,  
 es porque en ellos se habla  
 de quien tu indiferencia sufrió  
 y de quien tus atenciones disfrutara.  
 Pero si acaso hay alguien  
 a quien estos versos no conmuevan,  
 desde mi sepultura sabré  
 que todo cuanto la Humanidad lograre  
 en vano será. (Campa 32)

Campa once remarked that “a sense of guilt and the fallacy of hope for a better life is what dominates man, totally annihilating him” (Cantor 2). Reflecting the dead end represented in his poem, Campa's words are juxtaposed by his poem's own verses to Mirtha, which underscore poetry as the space where some solace is achievable. Only by turning to the recourses of the imagination can Campa —like so many other Mariel writers— find the space to belong and to make sense of it all. Given the non-place occupied by the Mariel literary generation, the symbolic acting-outs made possible by the written word are the only modes of expression and the only space where the Mariel exile can affirm his identity because it is in the margins, as Campa himself noted, “where the purest forms of humanity exist” and because “the only thing that lasts is what is written by poets. And maybe that's my only reason for being. What would have happened if I didn't write this book? Two hundred years from now, when this is all an empty lot or maybe a great metropolis, nobody would have known that here lived a group of people who died not for love but for the lack of it” (Cantor 6).

Campa's words would prove all too prophetic because *Little Havana Memorial Park* —as both the space of symbolic self-representation and testimony, and as the space of the poetic text— survives as the only legacy to the conditions of exclusion experienced by Campa, his fellow *marielitos*, and all of the Miami downtrodden who became his neighbors. The work continues living the death, including Campa's own. As Ichikawa fittingly notes: “For Eddy Campa the conversion of Miami into a cemetery, in a progressive reunion of excluded people . . . was at the same time the condition of his own eternalization” (65). Less than three years after finishing the text that he thought would

put him on the literary map, but that until recently has been largely ignored, Campa disappeared. Some saw him for the last time walking the streets of Little Havana with a dialysis bag. Some claim he died in the hospital of a renal condition, but no one has been able to corroborate that information, and no one has ever seen his body, so he is presumed dead.

Campa's death, like the graveyard of this poem, is a marker of poetry's transcendence and of its power to expose the travails of the human condition. In *Resistance through Rituals*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson suggest that subgroups "win space by marking out territory" (45). In doing so, they claim not only a space but also the ability to create "maps of meaning" within it: "A culture includes the 'maps of meaning' which make things intelligible to its members. These 'maps of meaning' are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectivated in the patterns of social organization and relationship through which the individual becomes a social individual" (Hall and Jefferson 10–11). For Campa and the Mariel generation of writers, the creative act is their map of meaning, their pathway towards a socio-cultural integration that was systematically denied in their exile, but that in the space of the text is open-ended and not closed off from the future. As Massey declares: "Imagining space as always in process, as never a closed system, resonates with an increasingly vocal insistence within political discourses on the genuine openness of the future" (11). Paradoxically in *Little Havana Memorial Park*, with its theme of death and its mirroring of Campa's own, the text as cemetery becomes the poetic representation of space and the space of representation that make it possible so many decades later to recuperate Mariel exiles (Campa, fellow Mariel generation writers, and the other forgotten voices on the margins), validate them, and affirm their exilic identity now and for the future. This recuperation and validation of Mariel is perhaps the most salient outcome of examining the spatial dynamics of Campa's poetry, and highlights the potential in the spatial for better understanding and evaluating the complex web of intra- and extra-textual elements making up the corpus of Mariel fiction. The Mariel text's multiple spatial registers and specular network of spaces showcase a map of meaning rooted simultaneously in the symbolic acting-outs of creative expression and in the inventive exercises of authorial and communal self-representation. And as the spatial mapping of Campa's text elucidates, it is precisely these maps of meaning in Mariel texts that can become the most useful tools for establishing Mariel firmly and fixedly as a vital presence on the map of Cuban and Cuban exile literary production.

One of the poem's most poignant verses poses and answers its own key question, in effect extolling the realm of the poem that expresses it as the negotiating space, as its map of meaning for the future:

¿Es la amistad de los sepulcros  
un entendimiento mayor de la existencia?  
Mi puesto es el que está  
en el podio de esta incertidumbre.

Me aferro a esos temores  
que busco. (Campa 52)

In this way, *Little Havana Memorial Park* can be read as the emblematic Mariel text: long ignored, relegated to the margins, but whose poetic design and vision to grapple with the very circumstances of its existence, its content, and its spaces is finally getting some critical attention. It deserves a lot more.

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