

Virgil Suárez



The Charm of Repeating Islands

AFTER ANTONIO BENITEZ ROJO

My oldest daughter Alex brings me a map
of the island of Cuba she's found in her book.
I am shaving and in the mirror in front
of me and the mirror behind me, this island
of my childhood repeats itself as many times
as my eyes can look, and I think of the countless
times a man, shaving, looks at a map of his country
multiply in the mirror, his daughter's puzzled
look verging on annoyance. I say, "Look how
it goes, sweetie." She doesn't know what I'm talking
about, this endless repetition of exiles, caught
in the endless act of shaving, wiping the slate
clean, cutting themselves all this blood shed
in the traveling from one place to another. Sure,
it is a simple act, this act of repetition, but clearly
it shows us the way. There, on this mirror, that
one, the island rises from the depths of ocean,
dresses itself in its most luscious green, it beckons
us to return, the living and the dead, and suddenly
you can image what the Tainos saw, what Arawaks
saw, what Siboneys saw, what Columbus himself
must have seen, an island in the distance, its lure,
a trace of green-blue tinge blurring in the horizon,
a father, a daughter, on the verge of getting home.

