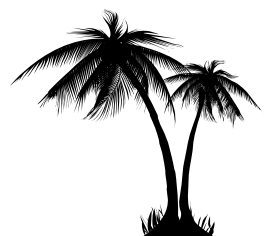


*Charley Connelly and Myrna Pagán at home in Esperanza, Vieques.  
Photograph by Susie Ravitz. Reprinted with permission.*



# USMAÍL: PEDRO JUAN SOTO'S CLASSIC VIEQUES NOVEL

## AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLIE CONNELLY AND MYRNA PAGÁN

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KATHERINE T. McCAFFREY

### FOR ROUGHLY FOUR DECADES,

Charlie Connelly and Myrna Pagán have lived on the beachfront in Vieques, Puerto Rico, across a tumble of seagrapes and coconut trees framing the old sugar pier at Esperanza Beach. Although Connelly and Pagán have become fixtures of the Esperanza neighborhood, they were born in New York and San Juan, respectively, and raised in New York City. They met in San Juan and settled in Vieques in the 1960s. Connelly first came to Vieques in 1950 at the age of 18 in the US Marines as a “trained killer. I came to invade the place—shoot it up.” After serving in Korea, where he earned four medals, including a silver, a bronze, and two purple hearts, Connelly returned to Puerto Rico to work as a journalist in San Juan. He met Pagán, who was a lounge singer in an after-hours club. Pagán remembered:

**In '59 I graduated from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. [with a] Masters in Fine Arts and I was a singer and an actress. I was singing at Gatsby's, a chic supper club and slummin' at Al's little club (after hours) and fell in love [deep voice] with Charlie of the glorious blue eyes...who now and then played bass in this club. And we sang together [she laughs]. And then I went off to the States. And then I came back to Puerto Rico and I was singing at the Americana and in he came. And that's the short version of the book. And then he brought me to Vieques...I'd never been here...He took me out of the plastic bedlam of San Juan and put me to scale fish... much to the chagrin of my poor parents who had paid for an education!**

Connelly and Pagán traveled to Spain and Morocco before settling on Vieques Island, where they raised five children. He ran the island's only bilingual newspaper, *The Vieques Times*, for 18 years. He wrote and translated most of the stories, developing

an insider's perspective on island politics and society. She wrote a column, "The Gypsy Woman," in which she dispensed advice and new age reflections. She also founded and ran TAINA, a woman's pottery cooperative, to promote arts in the community, especially to work with children, and was one of the founders of the Vieques Conservation and Historic Trust. Pagán became active in the struggle to stop the Navy's bombing of Vieques, and was arrested for civil disobedience in 2001. She remains active in efforts to address the islanders' health crisis. Since he has stopped publishing the *The Vieques Times*, Connelly passes most of his days half-dressed in a sarong, reading and smoking hand-rolled cigarettes at a long wooden table in their home. A constant stream of visitors and grandchildren, darting sparrows and cats, pass through their open doors and windows.

In 2007, Connelly and Pagán published the first English translation of Pedro Juan Soto's classic Vieques novel, *Usmaíl*, which was first published in 1959. At that time it was hailed for accurately describing the "political and social chaos of Vieques Island." *Usmaíl* tells the story of the abandoned son from an illicit affair between a dark-skinned *Viequense* woman, Chefa, and Mr. Adams, an *Americano* bureaucrat stationed briefly on the desperately poor island to administer Depression-era relief. Usmaíl, the protagonist of the story, is named for a U.S. Mail sack by his distraught mother, who haunted the post office daily for any word from her lover. She receives none. Mr. Adams, her only ticket out of grinding poverty, takes off when he discovers that Chefa is pregnant and never returns. Dying in childbirth, Chefa names her son, "Usmaíl," after the gringo whose first name she never knew, who brought nothing but disappointment. This word play reflects Soto's dark humor and exquisite awareness of the footprint U.S. society left on every aspect of Puerto Rican life. Throughout the novel, Usmaíl struggles to build an identity and future for himself, always weighed down by an uncomfortable awareness of his name, which he firmly rejects. In the summer of 2007, I interviewed Connelly and Pagán about *Usmaíl*, and their relationship with Pedro Juan Soto.

Pedro Juan Soto (1928–2002) was one of Puerto Rico's finest writers. In his novels and short stories he chronicled the struggles and experiences of Puerto Rican migrants in New York City, the complexities of Puerto Rican identity, racism, and the overwhelming domination of the United States in the Puerto Rican experience.

Soto was born in Cataño, Puerto Rico, and attended primary and secondary school in Bayamón. He arrived in New York in 1946 at the age of 18 to attend Long Island University, where he studied English and American literature. After completing his BA, he was drafted and served in the Korean War for a year. Upon his return, he attended Columbia University, where he received a master's degree in creative writing. He returned to Puerto Rico in 1954, where he lived most of his life.

Soto understood the darkness of the Puerto Rican experience both intellectually and personally. His son, Carlos Soto Arriví, was assassinated by Puerto Rican police in one of the most disturbing episodes of modern Puerto Rican history. On July 25, 1978, two youths were set up and ambushed by police at Cerro Maravilla. Initially described by government officials as a victory against terrorism, the killings later came to epitomize the violent repression of the Puerto Rican independence movement and the collusion of the FBI in island politics. Soto was deeply affected by the tragedy and worked hard to seek justice for his son.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to *Usmaíl*, Soto's most notable works include *Spiks* (1956); *Ardiente suelo, fría estación*, (Hot Land, Cold Season) (1961), which received the Ateneo of Puerto Rico prize; *El francotirador* (The Sharpshooter) (1969); and *Temporada de duendes* (Season of Gnomes) (1970).

Charlie Connelly was a long-time friend of Soto. Connelly met Soto when Connelly was working for the English language paper, *The Island Times*, and Soto was working at the Associated Press. Soto helped Connelly find a job at the AP when *The Island Times* went under due to competition from the newly launched *San Juan Star*. Connelly remembered that he was at a disadvantage as a gringo looking for work in a Puerto Rican field. Soto advocated for Connelly at the AP, arguing that he would be an asset at an international desk. Soto's compassion and loyalty impressed Connelly: "He did shit that other people didn't do."

In the 1970s, Soto asked Connelly to translate his short story "Garabatos" (1953) into English. "It was kind of weird, his English was totally fluent and he hated translators," noted Connelly. The request spoke to the understanding and the appreciation the two men had for each other's work. Connelly translated "Garabatos" into English as "Scribbles." It later appeared in the English anthology of *Spiks* (Monthly Review, 1973) and was produced along with *The Innocents* in 1974 as an off-Broadway play.

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## IT WAS HERALDED AS THE TRUE STORY, AND THEY WERE SO PROUD WHEN THE BOOK CAME OUT.

**Katherine T. McCaffrey:** Do you remember what kind of a reception the book got when it came out? Was it well read? Was it talked about in the Puerto Rican press?

**Charley Connelly:** I don't remember it in the press really. I remember it in Old San Juan, in the intellectual coffee klatches. And basically it pissed off the San Juan intellectuals because it wasn't in San Juan. Vieques was a foreign country, and it wasn't about Puerto Rican independence per se. It was much darker than a book about independence in the situation. Why did we take it away from Sam's [a favorite writer's hangout] that day? So, he, the writer [Soto]...he took a lot of static. Why would you locate a book away from us, the center of the world? San Juan is the center of the world.

**Myrna Pagán:** I know from conversations with Carmelo Rodríguez, who is another Viequense writer, that for the university students—not the gang at Sam's—it was like a revelatory condemnation of the situation in Vieques. It was heralded as the true story, and they were so proud when the book came out. Proud that someone had really gotten into the heart of Vieques and the situation—the horrible situation here—and published this wonderful novel. To them it was like a miracle. [And] Pedro Juan Soto was not actually from Vieques. It was his father who had been jailed here that introduced him to Vieques, on visits to the father who was in jail at the fort.

**KM:** Do you know why the father was in prison?

**MP:** Yes. He was supposedly a not very honest peddler of goods [laughs].

**CC:** Vieques was a devil's island. It was a place to get rid of prisoners from the big island.

**MP:** The book is profound. The book is deep, and the book is heavy for the occasional reader. I've had many people tell me, "Oh God, I've tried it." Spanish teachers, sociology teachers. Cynthia Martínez [a local Spanish teacher] thought it was a beautiful, wonderful book. But I did speak to a sociologist who sat here, and Charlie was trying to start a conversation on the book and the necessity of reading the book.

And what the high school teacher said was, “Oh God, they tried to push that on us in school. I couldn’t read that. Too heavy, too dark.”

**KM:** Do you think the people had problems reading it because of the density of the language or because of the message that it was conveying?

**CC:** Reading is not a big deal. It’s not a real polished work.

**MP:** I think it had to with yes, the language, but number two, for me, he actually falls into the rhythm of *el campo* in Vieques. And it’s slow, and it’s not—it’s not a TV story.

The development is slow and it’s vital, it’s natural, it’s life. For me, it was especially important because the characters came so alive to me that I had an actual vision of each one of them. They materialize. The characterization is so in depth and touching in its simplicity. I had a physical vision of Usmaíl. Which is fortunate because I enjoyed the book to such a degree because of that and especially, having done illustrations. I did the illustrations as I was reading the book, actually. The reality—it’s not bombastic. It’s very emotional and very spiritual, and it’s telling a very sad, sad story.

**KM:** What he describes of the island is bleak and the descriptions of small-town life emphasize its cruelty.

**MP:** They were hungry. They were in dire poverty, they were hungry. It was the Depression.

**CC:** It was the beginning of Roosevelt’s New Deal so the book starts talking about the PRERA, the Economic Redevelopment Administration. The WPA, and the CCC, and PRA...people were lining up and on page one and we started and shifted gears. The writer describes a line of people waiting for their food hand-out at this place, and he breaks it up because he can’t accomplish that in one long sentence because there is too much involved. [What] he’s talking about actually, on page one, is the fear running through this line....so fear becomes the issue.

**MP:** But it’s fear of nature.

**CC:** Fear. Then he tries to describe all the reasons for fear, the establishment of the fear. That’s when we started translating and started arguing. We have a tendency to immediately want to bring out the thesaurus and change adjectives. And my realization of this is you can’t do it that way. Just take a block of text, put this whole thing, whether it’s a paragraph or a chapter, put it in English and then deal with the rules and regulations. So, we shifted gears.

**KM:** Did you do all the translating together? [They nod yes].

**CC:** Once we made a shift, I just started dictating what I was reading to Myrna and then we began to work on the language—after it was all down in English. Block by block. Now, she’s making faces.

**MP:** I’m making faces because that’s not the way I remember! [Laughter]. Because for me, we were so *meticulous* about the language, which can be very confusing, you know? What exactly did he mean? And often times in it he would fall into metaphors that *son particulares de Vieques, de aquí*, of that way of thinking. And to me, to do it the way you have just described now as doing these blocks of “What is he saying? What is it meaning?” and then we would discuss it. I think that’s where we got bogged down. [We translated] word by word.

**KM:** Can you give an example of any particular part that was difficult to translate?

**CC:** Line One! [Pause]. We ran into a crisis where he had used a local slang term in reference to a flower. The honeysuckle, hibiscus. They called them *pavón*. I had to call everybody. It took us forever, with all the dictionary horseshit. Then I called an Afghan, a Parsi from Afghanistan in St. John who had some plants in an extra garden, an islander who said, “pavón,” obviously, a pavón. Pavón...couldn’t be simpler, but it’s not in the dictionary.

**KM:** In general, I haven't found a Spanish dictionary that captures the essence of Puerto Rican Spanish.

**CC:** Puerto Rico's not a big place. I had a big dictionary. They have new editions out, but mostly these decisions are made once every fifty years. Fifty years is a period in which they invented the airplane, the television, etc.!

**MP:** Here's one. [She reads a passage]:

*Griffin, la patria necesita tu sangre y tú te niegas, Griffin. Yo no entiendo por qué tú tienes miao. Tú no eres patriota, Griffin. Me da pena decírtelo, pero tú no eres patriota. ¿Qué le hubiera pasao a la patria, si nosotros no hubiéramos soltao sangre en la guerra? Dime, Griffin—y le echó un brazo sobre los hombros para acercarle a su camisa apestosa, a sudor, que él rechazó rápidamente. “Vamos a ver, Griffin, no te pongas así,”—intento untarle la burla en la cara, mediante un hipócrita caricia.<sup>2</sup>*

[Griffin, the country needs your blood and you refuse. Griffin, I cannot understand what you are afraid of. You are no patriot, Griffin. It hurts me to say so, but you are no patriot. What would have happened to the Nation if we had not shed our blood in the war? Tell me, Griffin... and he threw an arm over his shoulders drawing him closer to his shirt, smelly with sweat, which he rapidly rejected. “Let us see, Griffin, don't be that way.” He tried to rub it in his face with a hypocritical caress.]<sup>3</sup>

[MP continues] He's alphabetizing...that's what it is...he's alphabetizing a rhythm and a way of speech which ain't particularly the word, you know, so if you're trying to then really understand what he's saying and put it in another language, yet [it's difficult].

**KM:** So it sounds like some of the challenges you faced were similar to people translating poetry which is to capture not only the essence of the words, but the cadence and rhythm.

**MP:** Exactly, and then it's not just the word or the essence of the word, it's the essence of the people, of the island, and that's what I believe he captured and you don't want to lose that when you translate it.

**CC:** This guy was amazing. He could not have spent the amount of time I have living here and known the island better.

**KM:** When you first read it, did the book speak to you this way? Did you say, “This is a guy who really gets it?” You had mentioned earlier that you had a lot of news crews in [during the protest movement 1999–2003], asking you about Vieques and you told them to read *Usmail*.

**CC:** I'm not going to discuss this issue with anyone who hasn't read that book because anyone who hasn't read that book doesn't know shit about Vieques. I feel like today...

[MP interrupts. She has been paging through the book, looking for examples of difficult translations].

**MP:** There were a number of sentences that if translated literally would have turned into buffoonery, something which *por cultura* would be very foreign to Charlie, but I, as a Puerto Rican [understood]. Double entendre in the language was common to me at home, you know, so...that was perhaps my most valid contribution to the translation was *Puertorriqueñidad*. And it's true.

**CC:** You saved me from three million bloopers!

**MP:** I know! Heavy *heavy* bloopers, and that's what I'm trying to find because they were very funny...you know. Man, you are really totally off the track and because it wasn't just in the word, it was in the intention and you put it beautifully that it was like translating poetry, yes.

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Connelly and Pagán had a relationship with Gerald Singer, a publisher in St. John, US Virgin Islands. Singer had recently written and published a coffee table book, *Vieques: A Photographically Illustrated Guide to the Island, Its History and Its Culture*, aimed at the tourist trade. Connelly and Pagán assisted him with the book and helped with the Spanish translation. Singer became interested in translating *Usmail*.

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**MP:** Loving the book, we both felt like, Can it possibly be that this thing has not been translated? Right? And so we investigate and no, it has not been translated. Why not? So we're here talking about how this has got to be translated, it's perfect. It's so alive...we should really translate this. When a call comes from the publisher: "You know I just read this *Usmail* book. Would you be interested in translating it?" And it was like total synchronicity...total.

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*Usmail* describes the overwhelming presence of the military on the island, arriving by the thousands on monthly maneuvers. It describes the brazenness of the troops, sexual assaults on women, and theft from local merchants. Justice was nonexistent, as the military used intimidation to persuade complainants to drop charges.

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**CC:** They would bring him to the base, call for the formation—four thousand Marines in uniform on the parade ground—and then say: "Show me the man who did this, who kicked you." It was a lot scarier than any line up at the police station on television where you have four guys in sweatshirts.

**MP:** [sympathizing] They all look alike to me.

**CC:** And the attitude of course, it was a natural thing to the natives, every one of them looked the same.

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Connelly shifts the conversation to discuss a conflict he had with the publisher. Connelly and Pagán clashed with the publisher, who removed one of the three original epigraphs (written in English) from the original Spanish volume of *Usmail*: "Puerto Ricans are niggers!—Dicho popular norteamericano."

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**MP:** We wanted it in. And the publisher decided...

**CC:** Politically incorrect!

**MP:** It was politically incorrect, and he refused to put it in. And to us it was his whole read on the North American view of Puerto Ricans ergo Viequenses. They're all niggers. And the publishers said....

**CC:** You cannot use the "N" word, so we had a big fight about that. He flew over to hang out with me...then he told me, "I put it back in; don't worry about it. We don't have to discuss it." But he didn't.

It wasn't an idea I had, it was right out of the book! It was politically incorrect to say "nigger." Not Faulkner [the second epigraph]. You can say Faulkner and sell away with it. He thought it would kill the souvenir rack.

**KM:** What does this book mean to you as residents of Vieques who have lived here for I don't know how many years?

**MP:** It seems like decades.

**KM:** Why was it important for you to see this book translated?

**CC:** I feel like it's the only way I know for an outsider to have an inkling of what Vieques is all about. An outsider is going to come [and ask], "What was that hassle with the Navy you people had? The situation is, the book very rightly explains, is that Vieques is the colony of the colony. Laying blame on the Puerto Rican government as well as the Washington government.

**MP:** For me, it's so pertinent to the root of the relationship of the Viequenses to the influx of tourists. The fact that so many people are still alive that actually lived through what is in the book. The emotional reality of so much of the population of Vieques...it's not like they heard tales. It's like, "My mother lived through that! That's what happened to my grandmother!" It's the history which is still alive *en la comunidad, en la familia*.

**CC:** There are living women who remember barricading themselves in their homes at night with machetes under the fucking sheets to fight off rapists! That's a living reality. An American doesn't want to hear that. They'll say, "Our boys...our boys wouldn't do that."

**MP:** And right now you have two *farmacias* in town which did not exist in the time. What existed at the time was *la viejita, la curandera*, Nana Luisa. The barrio that I live in, Esperanza, was known as *El Barrio de la Bruja*, you know. And I'm not a couple of hundred years old, you know. I am as old as this book...I am as old as the story in this book.

I did not grow up in Vieques. I came to this and to me the book truly helped me understand this island. Like, I grew up....

**CC:** She came from the "Hilton."

**MP:** I came from the "Hilton." I grew up in New York. I was educated in the States. I knew Puerto Rico—"the Hilton," whatever, and then I came to Vieques and I was like a foreigner....not that I felt it. I felt I had finally come to live in Puerto Rico when I got to Vieques....Aaaah.

But people wouldn't speak Spanish to me. They called me, because of the way I dressed at the time, which now no one would even notice, but here I was on this little tropical paradise and I dressed in sarongs [she laughs]. That really was...wasn't the costume of the day.

**CC:** *¿Quién es la Hawaiana que trajo el gringo?*

**MP:** The Hawaiian "que trajo el gringo." They knew him, they didn't know me. "Where'd he get that Hawaiian woman?"

**CC:** He went off and brought back a foreigner.

**MP:** So I was like...I was really pretty upset about it.

**CC:** The women were all upset about you.

**MP:** Yeah. I remember this one lady waylaid me down by the pier. She came up to me and she said, [deep, dramatic voice] "*¡Aquí la gente no se viste así!*" [Speaking English in a thick, Spanish accent] "We don't dress like that here! Don't put on those clothes!" She's dead now—I didn't kill her! [Laughs] You know it was like...where are these people coming from? Why are they like this, why am I so strange? And I'll tell you, the book helped me to understand where these people are coming from.

**KM:** What did women wear in those days? What were you expected to wear a house dress?

**MP:** In those days, I lived on the beach. I've always lived on the beach in Vieques, In those days women were going into the water, almost fully garbed, you know, fully dressed. The girls were going into the water with shirts, blouses, and pants, fully dressed.

**KM:** Did you wear a bikini?

**MP:** Did bikinis even exist then.... [scolding] No, I did not wear a bikini! I wore a bathing suit with a sarong. And the fact was that, to me, I'd come to live in paradise. This, to me, was Eden. I started having a lot of babies when I got here. And before my

babies were a month old, I had them in the water with me at the beach. *This was a no no*. She must be insane to put a baby in the water!

**KM:** What would happen to them?

**MP:** I don't know.

**CC:** Drown.

**MP:** Really, a lot of people say they are respectful of the sea, but for a tiny island, a lot of people are really afraid of the sea, of letting their children go in the water.

**KM:** One of the things that are noticeable in the book is the presence of "*la negra*" the black people. Race is brought up in a couple of different ways... in terms of [the epithet] "All Puerto Ricans are niggers"—the way that the North Americans look at Puerto Ricans, but also within Vieques, there's the curer and the presence...the African presence. Do you think that [this acknowledgment of race] is typical of Vieques? Do you think that it is something that comes out in other Puerto Rican literature?

**CC:** Racism or?

**KM:** Well, the acknowledgement of racism.

**MP:** But I don't think [blackness in Vieques] is much acknowledged as African black... I think it's down islanders...you know....

**CC:** Who happen to be black.

**MP:** Okay, *pero en el concepto de aquí, de las islas*.

**CC:** There is a definite a prevalence of racism in Puerto Rico today. It's expressed in different ways. There's no "sit in the back of the bus" shit.

**MP:** I picked up a magazine called *Nuestro Imagen*. This is done in Puerto Rico. As a matter of fact, I believe the publisher is a past Miss Universe, Miss Puerto Rico. I was irate! I went through this entire book which is called "*Our Image, Nuestro Imagen*." This is who we are as a people; this is Puerto Rico, Mr! And I wanted to burn the damn book! There was *not one—not one*—person of color...[not] one black person in that entire issue of a thick—"*this is us*"—Puerto Rican, modern, glossy magazine. And I told him, what are they writing? What exists for them, truly? Only "*el blanquito*" is worth exposing? Talk to somebody from Loíza Aldea. [She leaves the table to go into the kitchen and make sandwiches for us].

**CC:** I don't know, Kate. I don't want to waste time speaking of racism, for example. What you got here in general is a bureaucratic, shitty complex. The Comité [local grassroots activists], for example, which Myrna is in, celebrate Leguillou day. Observe the Leguillou tomb. They celebrate Leguillou [French sugar planter and founding father of Vieques]. There's a day reserved for Leguillou's tomb. This guy split Haiti when it was the revolution, for his life. He brought the San Juan government into Vieques, which nobody thinks about. He had many slaves, house slaves, and they still celebrate this shit! His enslavement...their concept of tradition. Leguillou. If Leguillou would have knocked on my door, I would have had to shoot him. Celebrate his birthday [mutters in disgust].

Later on this week, there's a ceremony for Bolivar, "hero" of America.

**KM:** Did you know Pedro Juan Soto?

**CC:** Yes!

**KM:** What kind of person was he?

**CC:** Studious, hard-working...I got along with him fine.

His wife's a writer; she's a college professor [Carmen Lugo de Filippi]. She, I guess, is handy in English, Spanish and French. I told our publisher, "Get her to write the introduction." But I guess he was afraid she'd charge him more.

**MP:** [Calls out from the kitchen] She *loved* the translation.

**CC:** But Pedro Juan got involved in...you know the story about the son.

**KM:** Yeah.

CC: [Long, emotional pause. His eyes flood]. Pretty hard hit. [Long pause].

But also he was a writer and a reporter which in essence is the makings of a good detective. So he went out, did a lot of detective work. And it takes....it takes a bit of nerve to sue the FBI [long pause]. Put the police chief in jail. I guess whatever money came in there, he grabbed it and bought a house in the country.

KM: He moved to the hills after his son was killed?

CC: Apparently. He was more deeply affected by...what do you call this shit that everybody's dying from?...Diabetes. In some people it causes different things. He had a leg amputated.

He was always kind of a...dry humor and heavy. His grouchiness scared a lot of people. Even some of his contemporary associates in journalism called him very neurotic. It might have had to do with some of his later books, [which were] very psychological.

MP: [From the kitchen] I had the opportunity of meeting Pedro Juan. He had come to visit in Vieques in a little bar in a town called La Copa de Oro [a hangout for *independentistas*]. I shared a conversation; I shared a social time. He was here. What I remember mostly, the man had the most *intense* look, penetrating, dark...almost...ah...one felt almost like you were being totally *scrutinized* by this penetrating look.

CC: He paid attention.

MP: He was soft spoken. Brilliant, an independent thinker. That's what goes through me when I think of Pedro Juan Soto. You may have even felt menaced by that look.

CC: I think a lot of students were scared. [Yes, MP agrees] Starry-eyed, wanna be writers.

MP: But it's who's writing this book. He's not interested in the...the icing, you know.

Today, Vieques Island still struggles with the legacy and ongoing domination of the United States. With the Navy's exit in 2003, developers and North American speculators all clamor for a piece of "paradise." Connelly and Pagán live in the epicenter of Vieques' rapidly gentrifying Esperanza, a beachfront neighborhood attractive to real estate speculators. Most former military land has transferred from the Navy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be managed as a wildlife preserve. Many residents are angered by the continued restrictions on access to the land and are worried about the real estate land grab that excludes them. The uncertainty of Vieques's future finds echoes in the opening scene of *Usmail*, where islanders line up for food handouts, facing both economic insecurity and the uncertainty of an impending storm. In short, there can be no better time than the present to reflect on the insights Soto had on Vieques and the Puerto Rican experience.[*Usmail* is available from Sombrero Publishing Co, PO Box 1031, St John, VI 00831, stjohnbeachguide.com, (340) 693-8739, and on Amazon.com.]

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the Cerro Maravilla Case, see Manuel Suarez's book, *Requiem on Cerro Maravilla: The Police Murders in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Government Coverup*. Maplewood, New Jersey: Waterfront Press. 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Soto, Pedro Juan. 1988. *Usmail*. San Juan: Editorial Cultural, pg. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Soto, Pedro Juan. 2007. *Usmaíl*. Translated by Charlie Connelly and Myrna Pagán. St. John, Virgin Islands: Sombrero Publishing Company, p. 116.