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René Marqués, Ángel Lozada, and the constitution of the (Queer) Puerto Rican national subject

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ABSTRACT
In this essay, I explore the subject of the binary homophobia/homosexual desire as a component of the Puerto Rican personal and national masculine subject. I focus on two novels, La mirada by René Marqués and La patografía, by Ángel Lozada, exploring the ways in which both focus on the homosexual subject and conflate it with a national identity. I have approached this material as an informed queer reader, who has tried to find since adolescence positive queer role models in the literature of my country. La mirada has not received the critical scrutiny it deserves. Critics have emphasized its pathological elements without exploring its deep structure, which subverts the surface message. On the other hand, La patografía exposes internalized homophobia as a component of Puerto Rican queer writing and unwittingly buttresses the parameters of heterosexual dominant discourse. My conclusion: our political identity plays a decisive role in our imaginal gender identity.

[Key words: masculinity; identity; Puerto Rican; homosexual; queer; narrative; nationality; imaginary]
Perhaps there is no more difficult decision for a critic than to attempt an explanation of texts he has disliked as a reader. The first time I read *La mirada* by René Marqués I was motivated by the curiosity of a young Puerto Rican gay *independentista* reader trying to find something about himself in the pages of a novel by an older Puerto Rican gay independentista writer. To my dismay, I found what I considered at the time to be a “sick” narrative whose negative, defeatist depiction of homoerotic desire had nothing to do with my life, my identity or my political ideals. To use an old word in an old meaning, it read queer. My reading of Marqués’s “foundational” anthology, *Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy*, whose themes Agnes Lugo-Ortiz aptly describes as: “The masculine body: allegory and self-destruction in “El Josco”; mutilation and metamorphosis in “El sapo en el espejo”; castration, effeminization, and transference of the phallus to the female corpse in “En la popa hay un cuerpo reclinado” (87) further convinced me there was a dis/ease, a pathology in Puerto Rican literature concerning the masculine subject which was alien to my own personal or creative experience. Further readings reaffirmed this judgment. I decided to avoid Puerto Rican literature and investigate the presence/absence of homosexuals in Latin American narrative, following what I call an *archeological*—that is, historical, nose-to-the-text approach.

Several incidents during my creative career brought me back to the question of the placement of homoerotic desire within Puerto Rican cultural products. When Pedro López Adorno published his massive anthology of Puerto Rican literature in New York, *Papiros de Babel*, in 1991, he chose Efraín Barradas to be the keynote speaker at the presentation at The Americas Society. Barradas stunned the public—most of whom were poets included in the anthology—by brazenly announcing that the very question of a “Puerto Rican identity” was open to discussion because it implied an unmovable essence, and “everybody knew” that there was no essence, since identity was a social construct.
I was reminded of Barbara Christian's 1987 essay, "The Race for Theory," where she had already sounded the alarm as to the appearance of Theory as a neocolonial ideology of power, which declared the concept of essential identity invalid at the very moment when minorities—women, blacks, gays—were beginning to create themselves. Christian also expressed a preoccupation, which I share, for the given nowadays to theory-oriented criticism (which she considers another tool of neocolonialism) rather than to a praxis-oriented criticism dedicated to the careful analysis of texts in order to explain the cultural circumstances they reflect. She also expressed the contempt she felt for the new terminology containing the hegemonic premises of the producers of the new literary discourse: the philosophers. Thus, I had to ask myself: Would he question or deny his "homosexual" identity under these same premises?

A second incident involved the putting together of David William Foster's massive encyclopedia on authors who have written on gay and lesbian themes in Latin American literature. With respect to Puerto Rican literature, two names immediately came to mind: René Marqués and Luis Rafael Sánchez. I found out that Joe Lacomba (his former lover) had refused permission for Marqués to be included. With respect to Sánchez, I myself received an urgent message from one of his colleagues at City College of New York (CUNY), advising me that if he were to be included in the volume "his mother would die from a heart attack." He accepted being included only after Foster agreed to his two demands: Foster himself would write the section on him and would not describe Sánchez as a "gay author"!

The discovery of the closet as the preferred abode of Puerto Rico's most prominent gay writers just deepened my suspicions about the dis/eased nature of the relationship between homoerotic desire and Puerto Rican cultural production, a relationship including a good dose of internalized homophobia and absorption into postmodern neocolonialist discourse, particularly in the critical writings. But it also deepened my curiosity to find out what exactly was going on. I looked elsewhere. "¡Jum!," by Sánchez, brought no relief. Where Lugo-Ortiz finds an indictment of the society that condemns the homosexual subject to death (97), I found a clever, almost glib, depiction of stereotypes. Sánchez shows but does not explain homophobia among blacks—themselves a marginalized minority—leading to vigilante justice, which involves racism to boot. It is not only the fact that the unnamed protagonist breaks gender norms, but that he also breaks racial barriers. One wonders. If he had had an affair with a neighborhood macho, would he have been spared his fate? Moreover, the ending struck me as pathetically trite. It is a Western literary commonplace that homosexuals—like "bad women", interracial couples and other "transgressors" of socioeconomic norms—do not survive to the end of their narratives.

Enter Ángel Lozada and La patografía. A cursory reading horrified me. Twenty years after La mirada, a text rivaling and finally surpassing it in its morbid description of homoerotic desire. It out/queered the older text in terms of oddness. Yet I found a kind of continuity between them. If in style and structure, La patografía was a poor version of La guaracha del Macho Camacho; in content, it referred back to Marqués. I wanted to explore in what precise ways both novels repelled me.
Insularismo, by Antonio Pedreira, has been widely identified as the bête noire of Puerto Rican cultural production, as Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé exhaustively points out in his essay on Marqués and Manuel Ramos Otero:

Puerto Ricans’ equivocalness, superfluity and mobilization are finally problematized in Insularismo’s closing chapter in the figure of the “effeminate.” Dissecting what he considers the Puerto Rican’s “inferiority complex, Pedreira finds in the island’s tupida cantidad de afeminados (abundant number of effeminates) a visible sign of the geographical historical and political limitations that hamper the Puerto Ricans’ ability to create and thus constitute the nation (167). (Cruz-Malavé 236)

An “effeminate” is a man who adopts traditional “feminine” behaviors, defined in “vulgar” Freudian terms as passivity, submission, and obedience. Pedreira’s arguments are not exclusive to him; in fact, they reflect the prevailing racial and geographic determinism of his day. Michael Aronna finds arguments very similar to Pedreira’s in Nuestra América (1903) by Argentinean Carlos Octavio Bunge, and Pueblo enfermo (1909) by Bolivian Alcides Arguedas, all traceable to the French psychologist Le Bon’s theory of the congenital inferiority of hybrid races (149). Aronna points out: “Significantly, the debilitation of the nation is once again grounded in the equivalent to the male body and psyche. The debilitation of the nation is equivalent to the dissipation of male fluids, energy and spirit, lumped together by Arguedas under the generic concept of ‘virilidad’” (163).

Moreover, since the national body, as George L. Mosse has shown exhaustively, is conceived of as masculine, male colonial subjects who choose a path of accommodation or assimilation rather than revolution become “feminized” or “effeminate.” Nations are commonly imagined simultaneously as male and female, Germany as “fatherland” has its female counterpart in the figure of “Germania,” England in “Brittania,” and France in “Marion.” Thus, the masculine national subject functions as a male in a double role: as the fatherland’s dutiful son and as the male protector/defender. Puerto Rico, given its colonial status, cannot be imagined as a “patria,” but, on the other hand, it lacks a national female image. Instead, there is that lamb on its shield: the classical image of the passive, sacrificial offering.

Assuming the Freudian premise of the human psyche’s primary bisexuality, I tried answering a question which has always haunted me: how can heterosexual males release or act out their passive libidinal drives without violating the homosexual taboo? On examining Al vencedor, by Argentinean Silvina Bullrich, I found the answer in vassal relationships—represented by male hierarchical structures, the Church, the Corporation, the Army—which allow males to express passive drives such as obedience and submission within masculine frameworks without crossing the thin line into overt homosexual behavior—let us say that the homosocial contains and regulates the homoerotic (only to a certain degree for there are all kinds of slippage).
acting out a male role, and thus national masculine self-image was preserved. This was not Puerto Rico's case. In my History of Puerto Rico class I learned a little known fact: Puerto Ricans were invited by Simón Bolívar to join in the war against Spain and declined. They would not take up arms against their revolutionary "brothers," but considered themselves "loyal to the King of Spain." They chose the role of obedient sons, that is, vassals. Spanish colonial rule thus allowed Puerto Ricans to maintain the image of a male national body while maintaining a passive political stance.

All of this changed with the American invasion. John J. Johnson has made a study of political cartoons in North American newspapers at the time of the Spanish American War. Latin American republics and contested territories were portrayed as unruly children and lazy blacks in need of both protection and discipline. Most significantly, they were also portrayed as señoritas in flamenco dress needing to be rescued by Uncle Sam from a fate worse than death at the hands of some conquistador. The North American invasion of Puerto Rico was thus imagined and publicly depicted in gender terms as a contest between a heroic male and an evil warlord for a female body. No longer allowed a male national identity, Puerto Rico had become a passive female awaiting penetration by the winning male. This is substantively the image Iván Silén projects of San Juan in his Poemas de Filí Melé.

How, then, to construct an individual male identity within a female national body? A second reading of La mirada, from what I call a homocritical stance, shows how tortuously Marqués deals with this problem. I want to focus on two scenes: the LSD party on the beach and the so-called "rape" scene in jail. The first has been labeled "a manifestation of homosexual panic," and the second a "gang rape" by Cruz-Malavé (231). I propose that they are related, and that, taken together, they offer a solution to the problem of the creation of the masculine subject within the colonial condition.

Just prior to the LSD party, a mysterious woman offers the protagonist a book by John Allegro, called The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross, which is described quite precisely: "Como única ilustración tenía un pequeño hongo cuya cabeza o 'paraguas' era de un rojo vivo encendido salpicado de puntuílos blanco-amarillos" [As the only illustration it had a small mushroom whose head or 'umbrella' was bright red covered in small yellowish white spots] (54). This is a picture of such a cover, corresponding to "un libro en rústica bastante manoseado" [a heavily used paperback], the American Bantam edition:

The woman points to a curious but significant detail: "¿Habías notado que la cruz con el ajusticiado es en realidad un hongo?" [Had you noticed that the cross with the condemned man is in reality a mushroom?] (54). He answers that he had not noticed, that the mushroom looked more like something phallic. The illustration of which he is not aware, confusing it with the cover, is the following:

She adds: "Hay que comer el hongo sagrado para la separación mística del cuerpo y el alma" [The sacred mushroom must be ingested for the mystic separation of body and soul] (54). A little later he ingests the hallucinogenic—but it is not until the rape scene (63–5) that he assumes the position of "the man on the cross." Marqués surely intended to endow the rape scene with some kind of spiritual significance while desacralizing the imagery of the Catholic Church.
The drug triggers a flashback to the time he had seen the mysterious Sem, a Puerto Rican student at the University. Sem has joined a hippie commune as its leader and has possession of a strip of land on the beach. At that point of first contact, the protagonist was correcting essays on Greek mythology, specifically the myth of Ghea, Uranus, and Chronos. Sem's name itself contains a biblical reference to the founder of the Jewish nation. It also leads to the word "semen."

Thus, Marqués refers the reader to a foundational myth dealing with the establishment of hierarchies through mother/son incest and castration of the father. In other words, a myth with its own self-contained pathology. In his hallucination, the protagonist acts out a significantly altered version of the myth. He first decapitates Ghea, the incestuous mother, and then mutilates Sem, now Uranus, cutting both his arms and castrating him. A Freudian will read this performance as the enactment of the Oedipal trauma. But there is another subtext. Uranus, through his daughter, Venus or "celestial Venus," a classical trope for homosexual love, is the root word for "Uranian," a word coined by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in 1862 to describe homosexuals. Thus, by castrating Uranus, the protagonist is ironically investing him with a "homosexual" (that is, "castrated") identity. By removing his arms, he is taking away the power to grab, to hold, to possess. I am reminded of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," where the narrator's inability to grab and hold with his arms is proof of his less than sexually aggressive, masculine status.

But the scene does not end there. The protagonist also stabs the friend with whom he had masturbated in childhood, Julito, in the arm, rendering it useless. Julito has turned into Atlas, a Titan who refused to go against Chronus at the time Zeus rebelled against him. So the protagonist as Chronus wounds the figure who in the myth would be his own "vassal." And then, for good measure, he cuts down the afro worn by the black man who had attracted him initially because of his well-muscled body, and whom he assumes to be a norteamericano, now turned into Haephestus, husband to Aphrodite and reputedly the ugliest among the Olympians. Moreover, as we have learned from the biblical story of Samson, for a male to lose his hair also means the loss of his phallic power. Such a move is also a sign of tonsure, or voluntary "castration" in the ascetic life.

To summarize, in this rewriting of the myth, the protagonist kills the mother figure, castrates and incapacitates but does not kill the Father figure, wounds the faithful vassal, and shaves the head of none other than Aphrodite's husband. In literal terms he has disposed of the female figure, the woman who had shown him the book, and wounded the three men who have aroused him sexually, depriving them of external signs of Phallic power: hair, testicles, arms. But
The protagonist lands in jail. Forced homosexuality is a fact of life within jail systems everywhere. Rape is a common occurrence. But once more, Marqués subverts the surface meaning of his text. The black man turns out to be from that site of interracial desire in the Puerto Rican Imaginary, Loíza Aldea, an exhibitionist to boot, as evidenced by his having performed nude in Paris, of male Josephine Baker. He tells the protagonist: “tienes una cara que no se olvida,” which points to an identity based on what I have called the Somatic Order in opposition to Lacan’s Symbolic order, and whose goal is physical, not mental pleasure. Sem is there, minus balls and arms, and Julito, with his withered appendage. Other characters enter the performance; the two hippie guitarists (again, arms), a huge blond Americano and his effeminate boyfriend, and two guards. They want a public confirmation of the sexual relationship between black man and the protagonist. Marqués uses this scene as a pretext for the first overt and explicit description of masculine same-sex desire in Puerto Rican literature, presented as a sacrificial, crucifixion scene, which Marqués turns upside down—inverts?—quite openly. As we have seen, this scene refers back to the conversation with the woman prior to the ingestion of the hallucinogenic. Because this passage from the novel was censored, the text was not allowed to be published in Spain but was published in Puerto Rico.

The episode is carefully constructed as a mise-en-scène, in which each participant occupies a specific space (64–5). The protagonist and the black man are at the center. What begins as forced sex soon turns into an orgiastic celebration of same-sex desire with bodies plugging into each other until they become one gigantic desiring machine. The protagonist begins sucking the black man, who is penetrated by the blond Americano, thus becoming active and passive simultaneously. The latter’s boyfriend zeroes in on one of the protagonist’s nipples. Sem may not have arms or balls but he does have a mouth which he puts to good use, attaching himself to the protagonist. He was not excluded; the castration is over. Julito may have a withered arm but other organs are functioning ord

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“castration.” He penetrates the protagonist, who in turn puts his own arms to work, jerking off the two guitarists, one on each side of him. The guards look on and masturbate. The protagonist discovers homoerotic pleasure, “un placer indescriptible,” both as goal and process. It must be stressed that in this scenario the assumed loss of phallic power does not hinder the male’s capacity to give and receive somatic pleasure.

But, as usual, there is another subtext. Given the heretical use of Crucifix imagery, the protagonist is also the sacrificial lamb. The lamb on the national shield is the sacrificial lamb. When the protagonist, completing the parody, calls for the Father, he receives no answer. The unnecessary Father has been erased. Castration is only a threat within a heteronormative matrix. In the scene described by Marqués, if you don’t have a prick, you have a mouth. If you don’t have arms, you have a prick. A tonsured head
does not mean you've renounced sex. Bodies will not be denied access to pleasure.

Let me emphasize key elements that are absent: the rigid role-assignment associated with sexual binarism, the equation of passivity with femaleness, power as pleasure, all of them components of the Law of the Father. We are in the realm of the Somatic Order, the giving and receiving of pleasure, the capacity to use both the hole and the stick, orifices and organs, without sacrificing one's maleness.

Christ has been portrayed many times as a practicing homosexual, surrounded by a band of male lovers (particularly John). Marqués reveals the unnamed but homoeroticism of the Judeo-Christian tradition, grounded as it is in male relationships: God-the-Father, God-the-Son, and exclusively male disciples who have souls that become “the Brides of Christ.” As they appear in Matthew 19:12: “Eunuchs for the sake of Heaven.” Marqués’s characters do not define themselves as such. They re-appropriate masculinity by connecting libidinally with other males. They have found that in the Somatic Order non-hierarchical relationships are possible. The leveling element: pleasure.

Marqués also exposes the betrayal by the Father, whose fiction is the most unstable of all. The passive son may found a Father-oriented religion, but not a male-identified nation, for the very concept of “patria” requires masculine, that is, phallic, males.

At the end of the novel, the protagonist seems to have taken on Sem’s place as a visionary and a spiritual leader. He has learned to overcome castration, but the ending is left unexplainably ambiguous. Marqués did write a coda to La mirada. In his short story, “La ira del resucitado” Christ, as a shirtless, shoeless, Puerto Rican hippie, with a burning gaze, descends from the mountain to punish Puerto Ricans for their materialism and political conservatism. For a “paternalist pig,” Rene Marqués has turned out to be more transgressive and daring than many of his critics. But not daring enough to satisfy this reader.

Ángel Lozada’s La patografía does not move beyond the most common of commonplace. It tries very hard to be “postmodern” in structure but only achieves a repetitious, numbing rhythm, interrupted by innumerable digressions into religious texts, in a pathetic effort to achieve intertextuality. It is meant as both a critique of religious Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Spiritualism, Santería—and Puerto Rican culture as it shapes and rejects gay identity. The protagonist, also called Ángel, exhibits what has been called “the sissy syndrome” as a child, identifying himself as a girl and acting out his fantasies of becoming Charitín and the Bionic Woman. Even before he is born, the women in his family, all of whom have suffered domestic violence, imagine him as a girl. The mother is a particularly repugnant character, an aggressive and abusive monster to whom her son’s problems can be primarily traced. Males are depicted as violent husbands and lovers, indifferent or absent fathers, retarded siblings. Puerto Rican society is depicted as fundamentally hypocritical in sexual matters, ruled simultaneously by an obsessive need for privacy and an equally obsessive need to deluge other people’s lives, indifferent to the plight of homosexuals, or downright homophobic.

Because of his Pentecostal beliefs, Ángel himself is the most homophobic character. He clings to religion as the only “cure” for his condition: “Estoy seguro que al entregarme, Cristo me limpiará con su sangre de todo pecado y me liberará de todos los demonios que me tienen encadenado. Y aunque me gusten los nenes y soy afeminado, no se lo he dicho a nadie. Sé que esto es un demonio, una maldición...” [I am sure that when I surrender, Christ will clean me from sin with his blood and will free me of the demons enchaining me. And even though I like boys and I am queer, I haven’t told anyone. I know this is a demon, a spell tied to me] (264).
Todo el mundo dice que soy un PATO. Todos mis compañeros en la escuela pública me llaman, me gritan y me lastiman diciéndome pato, marimacho maricón, marica... todos me dicen que me parto, que soy marica. Me preguntan todos si tengo tota. Y me hacen así con la mano, la tiran para atrás y para delante y me dicen que me parto. Que soy una gallina y que no sé pelear. Que no me gusta ni las nenás. Yo me quedo callado. No me puedo defender porque tengo miedo que me vayan a matar en una pelea. Y como todos los demás nenes son más fuertes que yo, sé que me van a ganar y me pueden romper la cabeza. Nadie quiere jugar conmigo, porque además soy gordito y no tengo coordinación (268).

[Everyone says I’m a DUCK. All of my public school classmates scream at me, call me names and hurt me saying that I am a queer, a faggot, a homo... all of them say I act funny, that I’m a queen, a queer. They ask me if I have a cunt. I they go like this, they move their hands back and forth and say I move funny. That I don’t like girls. I keep quiet. I cannot defend myself because I could get killed in a fight. And since all the other boys are stronger than I am, they could break my head. Also, I am fat, and have no coordination.]

Actual sex plays a very reduced role in the construction of Ángel’s homosexual identity. There are childhood games with Jesús, a neighbor, which stop when the mother finds out Jesús has tried to penetrate Ángel’s younger brother. There is an attempt to play house with a little girlfriend, which is spoiled by Ángel’s insistence on becoming the Bionic Woman. There are fantasies and wet dreams. But the narrative strains the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief by taking the protagonist into early adulthood without a major sexual encounter, particularly in the environment of Mayagüez and the Colegio de Agricultura, both widely regarded in Puerto Rican popular culture as hotbeds of homosexuality.

La patografía’s connection to Puerto Rican national male identity comes at the novel’s most bizarre moment. In the last section, called “El patocidio,” Ángel, having failed to be “cured” by God of his “patosidad,” literally becomes a duck. (I could not but be reminded of Kermit, the Sesame Street star, and his signature song, “It’s not easy being green.”). He starts laying eggs, always in public places, always when aroused by either religion or other men.

In Puerto Rican Spanish, “poner un huevo” signifies to commit a social gaffe, one’s vulnerability in public. In Ángel’s case, it means the involuntary revelation of his “essence,” his “patosidad” [duckness] As part of his cure, he has stopped masturbating. One day he touches himself accidentally in the toilet and comes. Where the semen falls on his finger, there sprouts the first green feather. Soon the grotesque metamorphosis is complete and, as a full duck, he heads for a pond in the middle of Mayagüez’s principal...
park, where he finally accepts and enjoys his “naturaleza patil” [duck nature]. The entire town goes after him: he is beaten up, his feathers plucked, raped with a bottle of Malta India, and left to die tied to a fence (shadows of Matthew Shepard?). As he expires, he asks his aunt to cook his flesh as “Pato a la mayagüezana” and provides the recipe, which is then broadcast on a TV cooking program and brings Mayagüez everlasting fame.

The lynching episode is described as a battle for Puerto Rican gender and national identity, in which even Ángel’s mother participates: “La isla de Puerto Rico era la isla del Cordero y, por lo tanto, había que defenderla del Pato sodomita que en aquellos momentos se estaba bañando frescamente en el parque de los Próceres” [The island of Puerto Rico was the Lamb’s island, and it had to be defended from that sodomite that at that very moment was rashly taking a dip in Los Próceres Park] (306). The lamb makes its appearance both as a sign of Puerto Rican identity and as Divine protection of that identity. Lozada does not explore the possibility that the lamb and the duck may be but two faces of the same coin, since the lamb’s sacrificial submissiveness points to a passive national identity. In his desire to expose what he considers the bottomless pit of Puerto Rican homophobia, Lozada dispenses with subtlety:

Celebraremos… para que la isla completa y el planeta completo y todo el mundo se entere de que la isla de Puerto Rico es la isla del Cordero, y no permitiremos la intrusión de un Satanás y sus demonios, y combatiremos con uñas y dientes a todo el que nazca Pato, a todo aquel que ponga huevos, a todo aquel al que le salga plumas, y pasaremos una ordenanza, una ley: que a los Patos no los queremos, que a los Patos los mataremos, porque queremos esta isla limpia de lo animal, sin Patos: en Puerto Rico no los queremos, en Puerto Rico los mataremos porque aquí no es un crimen matar a un animal. (317–8).

[We will celebrate… so that the whole island and the whole planet and the whole world knows that Puerto Rico is the Lamb’s island, and we will not allow Satan and his demons to intrude, we will fight tooth and nail against anyone born a Duck, anyone laying eggs, anyone growing feathers, and we will pass an order, a law: that we do not want Ducks, we will kill them, because we want this island free from animals, birds bothering us. That’s why from now on we tell Ducks: we don’t want you in Puerto Rico, we will kill you in Puerto Rico, because here killing animals is not a crime.]

Lozada’s heavy-handed satire is, however, undermined or “deconstructed” by his exaltation of Ángel as a victim: “…y toda aquella ciudad patofóbica, aquella ciudad criminal, aquel pueblo sin escrúpulos, sin miseria, sí, sin miseria, abrieron fuego por primera vez en la historia de aquella isla, como machos, valientemente, contra aquel niño inocente que nunca les había hecho nada malo, contra aquel futuro evangelista que nunca les había hecho nada malo, contra aquel futuro evangelista a quien nadie tenía miedo. (312).
This passage abruptly changes the focus from the protagonist to Puerto Rican national identity and the localization of “la loca” as a marker of difference within a Puerto Rican “imagined community.” I propose that “la loca” is an integral component to such an Imaginary, whose purpose is to preserve a certain degree of collective maleness, the “virilidad” inevitably lost to the colonial condition. On the other hand, there is the pathological inflation of the protagonist’s presumed victim status, since by this time he neither a child nor an innocent.

Lozada makes it explicit that the Pato’s murder acts as a compensatory performance for the lack of political aggressiveness against a much more powerful foe, and ironically stresses its positive results: it unifies Puerto Ricans against a common enemy and allows them to act like men, as protectors of the motherland and dutiful sons of the fatherland. In order to prove and assert their collective virility, according to Lozada, Puerto Ricans kill Patos instead of gringos: “…todos quedaron sumamente satisfechos, porque aquel patocidio fue el único y más alto acto de heroísmo, la única obra de valentía, la más alta defensa de los valores de la Isla del Cordero, y el más sublime acto de hombría que aquel pueblo mayagüezano cometió jamás” […] all of them were very satisfied, since the duckcide was the only and highest act of heroism, the work of courage, the highest defense of the Island of the Lamb’s values, and the most sublime act of manliness that the Mayaguezan people ever committed.

However, a statement by the protagonist at the end of the section called “El arrebato” calls the very nature of this violence into question. Ángel has been unable to stop his own body from betraying him: “Jesucristo está claro, el que desea a la mujer de su hermano comete adulterio. A mí me gustan las espaldas, las nalgas, y los muslos de los nenes, así que ya he cometido EL PECADO. Desde que dejé de masturbarme, todas las noches sueño que Jesús me está penetrando por el culito, y me levanto todas las mañanas con los calzoncillos mojados” [Jesus Christ is clear, whoever desires his brother’s wife has committed the SIN. Since I stopped masturbating, every night I dream that Jesus is plugging my little asshole and wake up every morning with wet underwear.] (281).

The language employed affects a childish tone, emphasized by the (irritating) use of diminutives: nenes, pipí, culito, nalguitas, patito. Desperate, Ángel exclaims: “¡Y o no soy Pato! ¡Soy un siervo de Dios!” [I’m not a Duck! I am God’s servant!] (284). A moment later he declares: “¡Si me quedo en la Gran Tribulación cometeré PATOCIDIO!” [If I am trapped in the Great Tribulation I will commit DUCKCIDE!] (285). This declaration is followed by two pages and a half of the word Pato, once more drawing attention to the fetishistic nature of the protagonist’s obsession with the sign itself. Thus, the “patocidio” is both an act of violence committed by the protagonist against himself—a suicide—and a communal act of violence—a lynching.

It is also a textual murder, that is, a conscious decision by the author/protagonist to kill off the character. The text is grounded in a stream of autobiographical allusions bringing together the author and the protagonist; the protagonist's
Other revisions: 1862, 1909, and 1960. The whole quote is taken verbatim from the Bible and appears on the Internet. Casiodoro de Reinas was the first to translate the Bible into Spanish, after his conversion to Lutheranism. The Inquisition pronounced him “Master of heretics” and he spent most of his life fleeing Philip II's agents.

This Protestant version of the Bible, widely used by Evangelicals, offers “daily readings” for spiritual instruction. I suspected a hidden autobiographical allusion and checked the “Daily Reading” for Losada’s own birthday, October 10th.

I found four daily readings, two of which impact directly on the novel. The reading from Apocalypse 10 is titled: “El ángel con el libro” [The angel with the book].

The passage from Jeremiah 22.11–23 describes the punishment of Salum and both sons of the king of Judah, who were cursed by Jehovah and expelled from the Kingdom for loving men. Ángel (the author? the protagonist?) writes that he wants to finish a text called Patografía before he reaches el Arrebato (266). He gives the target publication date as before 1999 because that is the year of both El Arrebato and the Gran Tribulación, and he does not know what is going to happen after that (283). Thus, at the end of the novel, autobiography separates from fiction. One Ángel turns into a green duck, is killed and cooked. The other Ángel finishes his novel—he is “the angel with the book” of the sacred text.

What struck me as a gay reader was the coincidence of themes and focuses between La mirada, La patografía, and, to an extent, Luis Rafael Sánchez’s “¡Jum!”: the violence, the obsessive use of religious symbols, the internalized homophobia, the characterization of the homosexual as effeminate or “Loca” and his eventual destruction at the hands of the community, the closet as the safest place, homoeroticism as a pathology of maleness, and, finally, the conflation of individual male identity—both homo and hetero—and the problematics of a genderized national identity under colonialism. This reader will not cease his questioning of Puerto Rican literary and cultural productions until Puerto Rican critics and writers decide to confront the gender issues imbedded in them.
NOTES
1 I included this material in my article “(Homo)sexualidad y periferia en la novelística de Marta Brunet y Silvina Bullrich.” V Simposio Internacional de Literatura, Instituto Literario y Cultural Hispánico (1991): 79–94. Because I consider Theory to be an ideological construct of the new hegemonic discourse coming from Europe and entrenched in American academia and Queer Studies, I do not utilize it in this essay.
5 This story appeared for the first time in the fourth edition of En una ciudad llamada San Juan and was included in subsequent editions. It also appears in Inmersos en el silencio (San Juan: Editorial Antillana, 1976).

REFERENCES