

The Homoerotic Diaspora in Latin America

by
David William Foster

The diaspora experience is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of “identity” which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.

—Stuart Hall

Although “diaspora” in its original meaning refers to the forced dispersion of Jews throughout their history and, by extension, to the forced dispersion of any group, it has in postcolonial studies acquired a resonance that covers any type of exile imposed on a subaltern group by the structures of repression. In this sense, there may be a fundamental problem in attempting to apply it to individuals allied or associated with homoeroticism. This is so because it is difficult to sustain that such individuals constitute a subaltern identity, no matter how much they may constitute clandestine underworlds, particularly in urban centers, in many societies. Thus, their exile tends to occur in terms of the flight of individuals rather than as the sort of mass deportation or exile that we customarily associate with the concept of diaspora.

Secondly, although one could argue for the legitimacy of a homoerotic identity (by contrast to individual involvement in homoerotic practices), it is still for many a far cry from the ethnic, linguistic, and religious subalternities that have provided the basis for the great persecutions associated with the concept of diaspora. Gay women and men have undoubtedly been historic victims of such phenomena but almost always as lone individuals who have come to the attention of the law and, once detained, received harsher treatment rather than as discrete segments of the population.¹ This treatment as an isolated agent is characteristic of homophobia in general, but it is even greater in contexts in which homosexuality is judged to be a willfully outrageous individual act—a sinful or socially rebellious choice. Certainly, gays were victims of the Nazi holocaust and of the Argentine “dirty war,” but only in

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ways that were circumstantial to the specific demographic groups of concern to the former and the specific political positions of importance to the latter. (The extent to which men sought by the Argentine dirty war may have been routinely “feminized” to the point of automatically being considered queers suggests the way in which the definition of the victim may have worked: political prisoners were secondarily identified as queers much as political opponents to the Soviet system were by extension reputed to be insane. By contrast, individuals who were identified by the Argentine police as queer were subject to brutal harassment, including possible torture and death. Yet they were routinely identified not as political enemies but only as manifest tokens of the breakdown of the social fabric occasioned by the political activists.)

At the same time as one would propose to validate the extension of the concept of diaspora to cover the fortunes of homosexuals as a persecuted minority, it is important to limit the concrete circumstances it covers in order to reject or, at least, call into question its validity with respect to a generalized circumstance of the social subject. The existential proposal that every individual suffers to one degree or another the condition of the stranger and that all persons are subject to the scrutiny of their sexual conduct and to marginalization if not opprobrium for perceived deviations in behavior totalizes society in such a way that it becomes impossible to speak of an identifiable minority that would be the victim of a specific persecution. This is the sense in which Sinfield (1996: 286-287) has extended models of ethnic diaspora to questions of homoerotic identity:

The argument thus far: lesbians and gay men have understood themselves on the model of ethnicity, but this provides only a doubtful political opportunity and, anyway, ethnic identities are hybrid. . . .

Hybridity may or may not disconcert the system. My case is that being always-already tangled up with it makes it hard for lesbians and gay men to clear a space where we may talk among ourselves. We used to say that we were silenced, invisible, secret. Now, though our subcultures are still censored, there is intense mainstream investment in everything we do, or are imagined as doing. We are spoken of, written of, and filmed everywhere, but rarely in terms that we can entirely welcome. . . .

Yet it is necessary also to draw back from the concept of internal exile not only because it overlaps with the existential proposition regarding global marginalization in society but also because it tends to be the universal experience of every marginalized individual, no matter what the reasons may be (this sort of psychological exile, with or without literal exile, is explored by Knapp [1991]). Undoubtedly, so-called homosexuals, whether identified

because of the way in which they construct themselves sexually or because of the way in which they comport themselves as a projection of their (mis)identity as regards sexual gender or because of their affiliation with determined erotic practices, end up marginalized to one degree or another in accordance with the visibility of their dissidence and the degree of tolerance of the society in question. There can be little doubt that the majority of gays—a term that will hence forth be used here with exclusive reference to males²—live a marginalization and internal exile that is very extensive in Latin American society, to the extent that what is almost universally perceived as a transgression of the frontiers separating being a “woman” from being a “man” is considered profoundly repugnant and therefore vigorously chastised.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that such repugnance has basically to do with visibility. Latin America is dominated by the Napoleonic code that guarantees the privacy of the body, and therefore its homophobia tends to be limited to public manifestations of dissidence and transgression. This is why the public exhibition of homoerotic culture in spectacles and public spaces has become a crucial imperative in gay rights political activism. Governments, whether *de facto* or constitutional, have only infrequently concerned themselves with private acts, although it would be legitimate to suppose that they operate on the premise that those who sin in private will bear immediately recognizable marks of their perversion (a concept that is easily extended to the matter of AIDS). Moreover, it is more efficient to combat perversion in terms of its explicit face, which means that a privileging of the sanctity of the bedroom is not at issue. (For a discussion of the Hispanic/Mediterranean definitions of homosexuality, see Carrier, 1995; Murray, 1995; Almaguer, 1991; and Foster, 1995a; for excellent characterizations of the ideologies of homosexuality/heterosexuality in the United States, see Katz, 1995; Chauncy, 1994.)

In any case, the aspect of gay history in Latin America that I wish to explore here involves the cultural production that derives from the imposition of flight and exile. For reasons of repression, oppression, and persecution, one of the factors in the extensive migration of Latin Americans to the United States and Europe has been sexual identity.³ Sometimes political activism is accompanied by a personal agenda, but in other cases exile is merely the quest for a new life space, far from hearth and home and the family nucleus, to pursue a life considered deviant by that nucleus—the fundamental motive for this internal migration toward the big city that we have witnessed so dramatically in the United States. Although less explicit in its public dimensions, for the aforementioned reasons, Latin American cities like Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and, once again, Havana

function as centers of attraction for the internal exile (and may, of course, also attract exiles who move from one Latin American country to another).

Focusing on exile as an aspect of homoeroticism in Latin America entails an interest in the opportunities it provides for the restructuring of definitions of sexuality and homoeroticism. There are crucial differences between the prevalent Mediterranean view of homosexuality (in which the condition of being penetrated is the establishing condition) and the dominant view in Anglo-American culture since the juridico-medicalization of homosexuality in the past century that any homoerotic experience, no matter how insignificant, is enough to jeopardize a man's masculine status. In this case, as part of the dynamic of what Sedgwick (1990) has called the "epistemology of the closet," all persons are suspect, ever and always, of being sexually deviant. By contrast, in the traditional Mediterranean formulation, the highly specialized nature of the category of queerness provides for a more pronounced categorization than does the juridico-medical one. In the case of the United States, it is appropriate to inquire into the extent to which Hispanics are caught between the two definitions of homosexuality, one more publicly official and the other more popular in nature, and, indeed, it is probable that large segments of American society, with so many immigrant subcultures underlying its dominant discourse, equally subscribe to these basically contradictory formulations. By contrast, although juridico-medicalization also exists in Latin America, it is not essentially driven by the universal sexual suspicion that has come to characterize the Anglo-American model. Thus there is more convergence of official and popular formulations. This means that there is an enormous potential for a shift in sexual ideology as the individual in exile becomes exposed to alternative formulations, which must now include the ways in which Anglo-American queer theory interacts with both the Mediterranean and the standard juridico-medical formulation.

The very forces that have brought about homoerotic exile have always functioned to impede the penetration and divulgence of "alien" discourses at issue here. Tyrannies, unless markedly despotic (and despotic absolutism appears not to have been the driving force behind recent neofascist dictatorships in Latin America), can little prevail against the insistent onslaught of modern communications. The evidence is that during the military dictatorships in Latin America between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s there was a flourishing underground network of information that in real measure successfully defied official attempts at censorship, which in the end mostly affected large-scale public manifestations of culture (movies, newspapers, books) and was only really effective for those whose involvement in culture was largely superficial. The advent of effortless copying in the form of video reproduction and photocopying allowed for an underground distribution of

culture that simply circumvented the public forums the government could control.

However, there can be little denying the significance of direct exposure to foreign culture for the codes of cultural production of the period. It is true that the so-called boom writers, prominent in the cultural production of the 1960s and 1970s, wrote and published their books mostly in exile and partook deeply of international literary trends. It is also true that this was the case with the beginnings of homoerotic writing in Latin America, as is particularly evident in the novels of Manuel Puig. Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) came to be fabled as much for its extensive apparatus of footnotes referring to non-Hispanic theorizing about homosexuality as for its deft conjunction of political and sexual agendas in the context of military repression. Furthermore, Puig was notable for his rejection of what was often called the homosexual matrix, which he viewed as an essentialization of an invariable gay identity. In his counterproposals he became one of the first Latin American writers to speak from what would now be called a queer perspective, in that he underscored a flexible and mutable sexuality that included, among other dimensions, the homoerotic. Puig had considerable influence on Latin American writers with respect to the necessary project of complementing a gay rights movement with a revision of dominant sexual ideologies through the examination of foreign models (see Tucker, 1991: 554-556; Muñoz, 1995).

This article examines a number of Latin American novelists whose writing bears the stamp of exile (if only because of the foreign residence of the author, perhaps accompanied by publication abroad)⁴ by presenting views on homoeroticism that complement or significantly revise the pervasive Mediterranean model.

HÉCTOR BIANCIOTTI

Héctor Bianciotti (born in 1930) has lived and worked since 1961 in France, where he is a literary critic for *Le Monde*; he was recently inducted into the French Royal Academy, a major honor for someone for whom French is not his native language. Although he has published novels in Spanish, he chose to write his memoir, *Ce que la nuit raconte au jour* (published in English as *What the Night Tells the Day* [1995]), in French, and Octavio Paz in his introduction places him in a long line of individuals who have assimilated themselves to the hegemonic literary traditions of the English and French languages.

Although one at first might excusably wish to hear the bedrock sounds of the author's native Argentine Spanish behind this very fluent English

translation, the Proustian quality of his evocation of key details and events that he invests with profound emotional meaning serves to naturalize the intermediary linguistic expression of academic literary French: it is as though, had the text been written in the regional Latin American Spanish of a native speaker, there would have been insufficient poetic room to evoke the emotional meaning of what is related in its 60 mostly short vignettes. Undoubtedly, the decision to write in French is an important form of cultural exile. Bianciotti speaks repeatedly of how language creates and orders reality, thus offering indirect legitimation of his use of an acquired literary norm rather than a native colloquial one.

Paris and the 35 years of his life in France appear only obliquely. What Bianciotti is interested in chronicling is his move from the nearly idyllic cradle of the pampa to a disconcerting Buenos Aires during the chaotic years of Perón's second, post-Evita, administration (1952-1955). Unlike much Latin American narrative (e.g., Manuel Puig's early novels), in which access to the metropolis is a process of identity formation that overcomes the stultifying oppression of the hinterlands, Bianciotti's text makes it clear that this access leaves profound psychological scars and makes exile inevitable. At the same time, the pampa is not quite an idyllic space. Dominated by his unbending and authoritarian Piedmontese father, his childhood is also the context of the discovery of a homoerotic sexuality that must always be postponed, and any idyllic sense of the past is brutally disrupted when, as he sets out for Europe, the narrator visits his parents and is solemnly reminded by his father of the unpaid debt he is still carrying for his son on the ledger books.

One might wish to believe that the Kafkian shadows of Buenos Aires are portrayed as the result of the crumbling of the Peronist enterprise, but Bianciotti seems to mean to evoke the nightmare of a draconian enforced compulsory heterosexuality of which Perón was only one token (1995: 209-210):

My Buenos Aires is still colored . . . with the fear that reigned there upon my arrival (and even more four years later, when I left the country), a fear that adapts so well, in memory, to a world of shadows.

Whether you were a foreigner or fresh from the provinces, you soon learned not to recognize the countless, anonymous, interchangeable faces of those who constantly insinuated themselves everywhere, but you suspected what they were up to, because they always traveled in pairs, while their felt hats and trench coats—which they wore as late as the season would allow—stamped them as belonging to the servile organization of the unofficial police. . . .

Melting by day into a crowd where the slightest deviation from the norms of fashion created a stir (causing passersby to stop in sudden solidarity to register their disapproval), they could be spotted from far off at night, in those hours

when you can hear each passing car and every solitary footstep, as they strolled like hunters confidently watching and waiting for their prey.⁵

A motif in this passage that occurs elsewhere in the text concerns the rigors of male dress in the city. For Bianciotti this is not merely a powerful metaphor but a literal detail of Argentine social history, a synecdoche of homophobic repression that lasted well into the late 1980s and of which there are still traces today. Any deviation from strict sartorial codes is taken as an infallible sign of homosexuality and can therefore have acutely unpleasant consequences at the hands of the ever-vigilant guardians of public decency. The police thugs that Bianciotti recalls from the early 1950s were only one extraofficial embodiment of an almost seamless homophobia that has historically dominated public life in Buenos Aires. This is, unfortunately, not just so much expressionistic allegory. It has only been since the democratic reinstitutionalization beginning in 1983 that sexual dissidence and its overt markers have had some liberty of expression in Buenos Aires and the rest of Argentina, although police persecution of anything that is considered a public display of sexual scandal (i.e., anything interpreted as transvestism) is still formally validated by the legal code. It is exemplary of the subtlety of Bianciotti's characterization of social reality that, despite quite overt references to persecution, he never really sketches in the sexual underworld of Buenos Aires in the 1950s or documents the details of his painful incursion into a heterosexual relationship. Rather, both biographical clusters are represented by meditations on metonymic reflexes. Perhaps more than would a more explicitly sociohistorical approach, this gives a particularly appalling quality to his description of (homo)eroticism in the Argentine capital. One is of course left wondering to what extent he was able to satisfy his sexual agenda in Paris after 1961, but, then, that is another story. What the night tells the day in this memoir is a chilling story of heterosexuality triumphant.

REINALDO ARENAS

Reinaldo Arenas committed suicide in December 1990 after completing the manuscript of *Antes de que anochezca*, which was published in that year; the English translation, *Before Night Falls*, was published in 1993. Arenas had come to the United States some ten years before with the *marielitos*, and his memoir describes a long series of harassments, persecutions, and imprisonment in Cuba for his homosexuality before he was able to join the *marielito* exodus. One of the most significant dimensions of the memoir is his juxtaposition of sexuality in Cuba and his experiences in the United States.

Grounding himself in an explicit commitment to a voracious paneroticism, Arenas provides a veritable Pantagruelian enumeration of thousands of sexual encounters in Cuba (see Soto, 1995; Tucker, 1991: 75-77).

The multifaceted nature of these experiences, the range of places in which they take place, the variegated nature of his sexual partners, the spontaneity—if not always carefree, at least determined—of the execution of sexual couplings, and the interpretation of those couplings as an integral part of human commerce establish an Edenic world of bodily sensuality that is brutally intersected by the authoritarianism of the revolution and its commitment to the oppression of sexuality. Arenas sets out to chronicle the pathos of his run-ins with revolutionary morality as a morality tale of the disruption of an Edenic erotic nature by Thanatos-like forces intent on destroying the dignity of the individual.

There is not much point in questioning the extent of Arenas's alleged sexual activity or the conditions under which it took place, and there is also little to be gained from attempting to place the moral severity of the revolution in the context of its opposition to practices it considered extensions of bourgeois decadence that required energetic uprooting. Arenas's memoir is not a text of cultural anthropological analysis. Rather, like the bulk of his fiction, it is yet another entry in his depiction of the social oppression of the individual, the mark of whose humanity is to be found in the flowering of his erotic imagination. Arenas might be accused of having a simplistic commitment to the disjunctive binary Eros versus Civilization, but the placement of most of his writing in the context of the very material persecution of sexual dissidents in Castro's Cuba provides it with a wealth of historical detail that counterbalances any such simplism.

Arenas describes a near-fatal experience with a soldier, and in his description the sexual attraction between two men (which, we are meant to understand, in pre-Castro Cuba would have led to sexual fulfillment) is intersected and disrupted by the homophobia incarnate in the military persona (1993: 97):⁶

Once I went into the Barret Woods in Miramar with a soldier. We were open with each other from the beginning. He was aroused and so was I. When we found a convenient place he said, "Kneel down and touch me here," and pointed to his belly. I tried to touch his penis, which he had taken out of his pants, but he moved my hand farther up to his waist, and what I touched was a pistol. He took the pistol out and said, "I'm going to kill you, you faggot." I bolted, heard some shots, yelled out and threw myself into the bushes. I stayed there the whole day. I heard patrol cars; the police were looking for me. Evidently the soldier, once his sexual arousal was under control, was trying to hunt me down, fortunately to no avail.

The most eloquent aspect of Arenas's memoir is his interpretations of sexual life in the United States. Bitterly disappointed with the rigidity of the gay movement he found to be dominant in New York in the 1980s, Arenas makes it clear that the politics of sexual identity have nothing to do with the Edenic paneroticism he describes as having been lost in Cuba with the revolution. An unspoken dimension of Arenas's account is his infection with the AIDS virus in the United States and his ensuing illness, the principal cause of his suicide—circumstances that necessarily color, if only obliquely, his bleak view of the United States as an alternative to revolutionary Cuba.

However, Arenas wishes to make it clear in his suicide note (appended to his text) that his death is due not to the trials of his life in the United States but to the Castro government. In this fashion, he links exile to a specific interpretation of the culture of homoeroticism in Cuban culture. Of course, it is not correct to say that Arenas's exile provides him with a reformulation of sexual ideology, except in that the movement from a binary (prerevolutionary Cuba/Castro's Cuba) to a triangulation (prerevolutionary Cuba/Castro's Cuba/U.S. gay subculture) entails a different semantic status for the two terms to which a third has been added. In this case, what it means is an almost despairing reconfirmation of the utter irretrievability of the erotic license that had characterized his formation as a sexual subject, whether in terms of the rural life to which he was exposed as a child (in which he perceives a continuity between nature and the individual) or in terms of the urban bohemia of his young manhood (in which there was easy movement between the realm of men marked by their participation in a homoerotized universe and that of men, homosexual or straight, who in other contexts were available to him as sexual partners).

A theme that runs through Arenas's memoir is that even in Castro's Cuba, with its monstrous apparatus of oppression, fragments of prerevolutionary sexuality remain. He sees them as constituting a form of resistance that bespeaks the fact that fulfillment of the needs of the body (certainly a basic principle in Marxist materialism) cannot really ever be denied. While in Cuba, Arenas was able to participate in this resistance. In New York, however, the bases for such participation were gone forever, all the more so because of the impending death that the title of the book announces. Furthermore, Arenas seems to sense that both his memoirs are pale substitutes for the direct resistance provided by the body engaged in illicit, clandestine sexual activities.

DANIEL TORRES

Puerto Rico provides a special case of exile. Since Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth, the abandonment of the island for the mainland is not exile in the same sense as it is for the Cuban in the United States or the Argentine in France. Nevertheless, to the extent that Puerto Rico views itself as a separate nation, for many Puerto Ricans, especially artists and intellectuals who identify with the goal (or ideal) of an independent Puerto Rican state, travel to the mainland is tantamount to foreign travel and residence in the United States is a form of foreign exile. This may be especially true for the artist or intellectual who finds greater opportunities on the mainland—greater variety of employment or more forums for the free expression of opinion. Censorship *sensu strictu* may not exist in Puerto Rico, where the guarantees of the U.S. Constitution are presumably enforced, but the markedly conservative nature of Puerto Rican society and the demand for public decency (driven, no doubt, in large measure by a sense of respect for middle-class mainland tourism) are viewed by many as a form of de facto censorship that they are able to escape only by living and/or producing and publishing abroad. The situation may not be as acute today as it was in the years of Puerto Rico as a U.S. dependency and in the early years of Puerto Rico as a free associated state (a status accorded it in 1952), but the fact is that much of Puerto Rican culture is produced and distributed outside Puerto Rico.

Daniel Torres studied in the United States and is a professor at Ohio University; *Cabronerías o Historias de tres cuerpos* (1995), while formally published in Puerto Rico, was actually printed in the Dominican Republic, and one wonders to what extent it has actually been sold openly in the Puerto Rican market. In any event, *Cabronerías* is easily one of the most audacious propositions concerning erotic attraction to have been published by a Puerto Rican writer.⁷ One of the many principles of the queering of the ideology of sexuality as sustained by bourgeois compulsory heterosexuality has been a questioning of the concept of sexual pairing: heterosexual pairing, of course, but also the concept of “pair” and the taboos relating to the identities of its members. While it may be true that significant segments of society now accept the possibility of homoerotic desire and the modification of social arrangements to accommodate it, repudiating the obligation for pairings to be immutable continues to be viewed as beyond the pale.

The psychological principle that a pairing always involves a third party—an Other that is a second order of difference above the difference of the members of the couple itself—is the organizing principle of the six texts that make up *Cabronerías* (a title that refers to the indecently transgressive: “dirty

tricks,” “bastardlinesses”). This second-order Other mediates the sexual desire operant between the members of the couple and their separate sexual histories. Moreover, it is a point of reference for the construction of the sexual desire of each of the paired individuals. The difference of the Other defines my sexuality and my partner’s. Finally, to the extent that no pairing can ever adequately complete the sexual narrative of the participants, the second-order Other is the adjacent site in which what remains incomplete in my sexual narrative can be idealized to provide completion. One is never satisfied with what one has, and the Other provides the illusion that with him or her one will attain what is necessary to complete one’s fantasies. Should one achieve a relationship with an actual embodiment of the Other, there will always be yet Another proffering an additional allure, a further extension of the always unfulfilled sexual narrative. The warning of compulsory heterosexuality against giving in to such shifting erotic aspirations is, from this point of view, quite simply the gross denial of an inalterable psychological reality. In turn, this reality is not without its brutal dimensions, as it struggles against putatively rigid sexual identities (Torres, 1995: 52-53, my translation):⁸

I hope the two can forgive me because killing them meant a complete liberation from the constraining boundaries of the great limbo that is the lack of love. Rather than an act of jealousy, killing them was the theory of dismantling the binarisms Carlos/Miguel and the recognition of myself in the center of control as an alternative to the fulfillment and the pleasure of the centers that were collapsing on top of me. Having the two of them became the practice of the other. I belonged to them just as they had in turn belonged to me, and I became both of them without being both of them. They disappeared dismembered, with a leg on this side and an arm on the other side of the room. The act of killing them was not in itself violent. It was an act of love to dismember them and to make of their respective pricks a single one, long and hard, which I slowly sucked. . . . It was an act of love to break their joints like cutting a roast chicken into parts (it wasn’t easy). It was an act of love to destroy the evidence and to cleanse every trace of blood from the snow and even to burn both of them and disperse their ashes. It was an act of purification in which this revolver, as in a movie, signifies my imminent death.

Torres’s stories, of course, involve much more than facile narrative embodiments of theoretical principles. For example, the first three form a unit in which a husband’s philandering is portrayed in terms that appear to justify the standards of compulsory heterosexuality. However, this arrangement of bodies is disrupted by the information that the man’s wife is accustomed to having affairs with other women but does not consider them cheating on her husband. At the end of the story, she leaves him for a “real” man, but in this narrative universe of shifting and unstable identities it is question-

able what this announcement entails. The narrator's sharp irony, complemented by Javier Rosas's comic-book-style drawings, renders virtually meaningless his references to marital fidelity and exposes their essential nonfunctionality. The queer content of this story involves less the wife's bisexuality than the questioning of the imperative of heterosexual pairing.

"Que me perdonen los dos" is more of a "gay" text in that specific instances of homoerotic pairing are involved. However, the narrative point of the story is not homoerotic desire as such, which is only vaguely alluded to, but rather the lived-reality complications arising not just from the third Other but from the way in which the three parties to an erotic triangle continually reconjugate themselves. This relativization of the conjugation of bodies undermines the discrete boundaries between bodies that is another crucial element of compulsory heterosexuality.

These stories are excellent examples of attempts at a queering of the dominant sexual ideology, and it is clear that Torres has a solid grasp of the theoretical literature, mostly published in English in the United States. Of course, this is not so much a question of having access to the literature on the U.S. mainland as one of having the opportunity to participate in artistic and intellectual circles in which these issues are being energetically explored. While there is an emergent feminist cultural community in Puerto Rico, gay life in that country is not yet matched by the sort of academic theorizing to which Torres is exposed in the United States, something that is amply evident in the queer perspectives he skillfully develops in *Cabronerías*.

LUIS RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ

There is something of the symbolically synecdochic about the fact that Luis Rafael Sánchez is a professor of literature at the University of Puerto Rico and the majority of his major works have been published outside the island. Although Sánchez has had a distinguished career as a dramatist, his international reputation as one of the most creative of contemporary Puerto Rican writers rests on his fiction, especially *La guaracha de Macho Camacho*, which was originally published in Argentina by Ediciones de la Flor in 1976, where it was a best-seller; recent editions have appeared under the imprint of Seix Barral in Barcelona, and to the best of my knowledge it has never been published in Puerto Rico. Sánchez promotes what he calls a *poético de lo soez*, a "poetics of the filthy" that defies the norms of bourgeois decency in Puerto Rican society, which by mainland standards can almost be considered Victorian.

Sánchez's poetics, however, does not constitute a defense of anything that could be called the pornographic or the obscene, undoubtedly essential ingredients in contemporary Latin American contestatorial writing in general and most notably in the explicit sexuality that marks so much of recent gay writing. Rather, what Sánchez means to advocate, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Foster, 1995b), is a strategy for an irreparable rupture in the prevailing Puerto Rican imaginary of an ordered society based on an asexual/anosexual decency. Sánchez positions himself ideologically in two ways. In the first place, he speaks of the need to recover Puerto Rican popular culture in all of its unseemly and indelicate dimensions as a complex of registers resistant to a hegemonic official culture combining Hispanic traditionalism and U.S. commercialism. In the second place, he seeks to unpack the pretensions of the powerful spokespersons of the island's tourist industry and other financial ventures who have a vested interest in maintaining the image of the "docile" Puerto Rican as a means of containing intractable social realities.

La guaracha is both parodic and satiric. It parodies dimensions of mass culture that, while they may have their roots in an authentic popular culture, have been neutralized and degraded by their participation in the context of Puerto Rico's contemporary hybridism, which Sánchez appears to view as diametrically opposed to an authentic transculturation. And it is satiric in the multiple perspectives that he uses to call attention to the vacuousness of national life in a country with a divided identity. Organized around a *guaracha*, a tropical beat built on trite commonplaces of glorious libidinous abandon, the novel subverts the running refrain of the song's title: "Life Is a Phenomenal Thing." Class conflict, social marginalization, the corruption and the lawlessness of the privileged, and the hypocrisies of those who see themselves as the champions of decency and Puerto Rican national identity are all aspects of Sánchez's mosaic of a society seemingly adrift, in which alienation and deadened emotions are not the consequences of any universal existentialism but reflexes of the country's ambiguous historical circumstances.

Sánchez's highly successful play *Quintuples* (1985) revisits many of these issues in the form of a series of dramatic monologues by two actors representing the father and five children of a putative Puerto Rican acting family named Morrison. Here the question of patriarchal tyranny in the context of enacted identity is particularly evident. Sánchez, who does not self-identify as a gay man, is nevertheless particularly attuned in his writing to what one can call a gay or, more precisely, queer sensibility. As his characters violate patriarchal norms they point toward alternative social and sexual arrangements that are part of the general cultural and political project of queering the

patriarchy. One of the five children in *Quintuples* is a stereotypic *maricón* (faggot), who serves as a stark contrast to the Morrisons' sternly virile patriarch.

The other side of Sánchez's pursuit of a poetics of the filthy is exemplified by *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* (1988), a fascinating fictional portrayal of a Puerto Rican bolero singer. Here the panerotic dimensions of the bolero, which shares with the Argentine tango homosocial if not homoerotic origins, and the all-engulfing sensuality of Santos's artistic persona lend themselves to a queer stance on the part of the narrator that constitutes a thread running through the novel. For example, his sardonic dithyramb to Santos as macho ends up slyly suggesting the intense erotic investment other men have in Santos precisely because of his paradigmatic stature (1988: 124):⁹

From he-man to swaggering male, from swaggering male to machismo. Do I have to turn a finer point on what makes Daniel Santos a public dream? On what makes Daniel Santos a ready-made myth for the people and in the flesh? I've already described the dangerous feeling that, for bitter America, for bare-foot America, was awakened by America in Spanish. It is a dangerous feeling maintained by the sensationalism, arising from the mere mention of his name, that Daniel Santos is a macho among machos. Daniel Santos is an 86 percent proof macho, like the searing rums of his native Cuba, as the rumor goes. . . . Daniel Santos's machismo is that of the harem, which seems able only to recognize the readily punctual erections as its due responsibility. It is a ready-made machismo for the people and in the flesh that millions of Latin American machos plagiarize.

Sánchez revalidates an authentic Latin American and Puerto Rican cultural matrix—authentic to the extent that it involves a process of cultural production that has profound meanings for its audience. The bolero in itself is an integral part of the U.S. commercialization of Latin American music, but for its original audiences it captured both the dreamy romanticism of one macho version of heterosexual love while at the same time tapping into something like a sexually undifferentiated eroticism with undeniable homoerotic dimensions. It is no accident that boleros figure prominently in Latin American gay culture in a way that, say, the tango does not. Therefore, an important dimension of Sánchez's novel is a sort of fictionalized reader-response theory relating to how a figure like Daniel Santos and his music could eroticize a marginalized popular cultural consciousness. Sánchez provides a revalidation of popular cultural materials as part of a productive process of social identity, self-awareness, and projective well-being, and the Santos mystique provides him with ample opportunity to challenge a hegemonic

Puerto Rican decorum in which cultural models reaffirm and reduplicate rather than question compulsory heterosexuality.

This challenge is carried out through affirmations of unseemly dimensions of the popular-culture modalities that can never really be controlled by a criterion of decency and decorum, modalities marked by the “filth” but also nevertheless by the vital and life-affirming bolero and its related cultural manifestations. Sánchez’s novel makes clear that, as much as the bolero might be converted into a cultural monument as an artistic phenomenon in and of itself, it belongs to specific sociohistorical institutions and has its own cultural resonances. By relating Santos, the content of his music, and the context of his performances to lived reality, one dimension of which includes homoerotic sentiments and the queering of the patriarchal, *La importancia* points toward the more reasonable record of sexual histories in Latin America that an institutionalized, ahistorical bolero can never provide (1988: 135, my translation):¹⁰ “Transgressions and happiness, degradation and ideality: the seductive damnedness of Daniel Santos reverberates in these lexical surfaces. Which explain the roof and the basement of his myth, his transparency and convulsion as a public dream, and the obsequious hypnosis of women, the vassalage of a legion of men, the magnetized multitude.”

VIRGILIO PIÑERA

When speaking about Cuba’s Virgilio Piñera, it is difficult to ignore the circumstances of his life, which is almost a paradigm of Latin America’s homosexual diaspora. Born in 1912, Piñera lived his early adulthood in the Havana that was one of Latin America’s principal bohemian centers at a time when it was becoming a playground for Americans seeking an array of sin that they were dedicated to repressing back home. Indeed, the moral severity of the Castro revolution, aside from its Soviet-inspired grimness, was designed to combat the U.S. image of licentious Latin lovers—an image that “decent” Americans needed as an escape valve and one that they were willing to pay generously to promote, thereby only confirming another complex American racial stereotype.

Piñera’s active homosexuality was facilitated by the erotic openness of the old Havana from the 1920s to the revolution. The sexual ideology of the Castro government—which called for not only the repression of prostitution and homosexuality but also the exchange of all “nonproductive” libidinal energy for the demanding work of the revolution (the Cuban New Man was to be

essentially asexual)—turned him into a nonperson. He lived in constant fear of being sent to one of the camps for social misfits (he was detained once briefly during the early years of the revolution) and, because of the antisocial and antisocialist identity attributed to him, died in 1979 without being able to publish the bulk of his later texts. (Arenas gives a delightfully detailed account of the sexual misadventures of Piñera, “un hombre desdichado en amores,” with the likely intent of contrasting them with his own insouciant and voracious escapades.)

However, Piñera was not just a victim of sexual persecution by Castro’s society. He had earlier “fulfilled” the destiny of so many Latin Americans of having to abandon his country (this time during one of its more traditional right-wing tyrannies, the Batista regime that was ousted by the revolution in 1959) to live in exile, principally in Buenos Aires, where he saw his first books published. *Cuentos fríos* (1956), for example, contains some of his most explicit gay texts, although they are cloaked in a surrealist and absurdist narrative language. That he ended up in Buenos Aires is not without its irony, for that city was engaged in an intense homophobia that derived in part from the second Peronist presidency and in part from the 1955 takeover by the military, which in its recurring expropriations of the government always felt constrained to address the moral decay of Argentine society by addressing what it alleged to be the customary visible tokens.

It was in Buenos Aires that Piñera’s first novels and short stories appeared, and, indeed, the U.S. Library of Congress long classified his works with Argentine literature. Exiled by the right and scorned by the left, Piñera died having received little systematic attention at a time when Cuban literature, because of the creative impulse of the revolution, was attracting an impressive amount of international appreciation. Although one may find his stories in anthologies in Spanish and some of his dramas (especially the absurdist *Dos viejos pánicos*) have come to be considered standard midcentury texts, Piñera remains an important “lost” Cuban writer—lost to the Cuban culture of the revolution, which can only see in him an example of bourgeois decadence (the “foul faggot” of Che Guevara’s summary judgment), lost to the dominant ultraconservatism of the exile establishment, which can find nothing in his writing that either denounces socialism or defends the ancien régime (moreover, the Cuban right, predominantly Catholic, has no use for foul faggots either), and lost even to a reasoned academic stance that attempts to rise above the fray, largely because of the fragmentary nature of his bibliography.

Cuentos fríos is made up of texts written in the 1940s and 1950s. As Piñera explains in his brief preface, the title refers to the clinical tone of the narrative, although the subject matter of the stories—the violence of social intercourse

and the terror of everyday life—is, in his words, unquestionably “hot.” His work belongs to a sort of late expressionism in Latin America, one that undoubtedly arose as a consequence of the enormous turmoil of the early decades of the century, when it became evident that the institutionalizing project of the high bourgeoisie had been a monumental failure. Latin America could not become a cluster of neo-European societies, and even the more limited goal of a Europeanized oligarchy could not withstand the strains of its status on the periphery of the more consolidated international capitalistic enterprise. The result was the dreary cycle of sleazy dictatorships that followed various economic readjustments and, in the case of Cuba, the inevitable emergence of something like the Castro revolution.

Thus, even though Piñera’s stories appear to be clinical proposals, abstract narrative formulas that pursue an *ars cominatoria* of absurd or outrageous or scandalous postulates, it is possible to read them as attempts to rewrite in fictional form the many faces of terror to which the individual is exposed in a universe that functions quite without heed to moral and ethical principles. Piñera’s narrative universe is full of a violence that the righteous call gratuitous without ever attempting to unravel the interpersonal relations that generate, reproduce, and disseminate it as the necessary consequence of the conditions for survival in a given social dynamic. Piñera wrote many of these texts when so-called vulgar Marxism was prevalent in Latin America as a way of describing the failures of the social contract. It is not enough to attribute his eschewal of the conventions of social realism to persecution by the homophobes of the Castro establishment; to the best of my knowledge, these conventions were never intelligently applied to the matter of sexual outcasts and the way in which their persecution correlated with social class (except to attribute to the leisure class the sexual corruption of members of the working class). Rather, it was the alternative strand of grotesque expressionism in Latin America (which, in turn, can be correlated with what Piñera’s fellow Cuban Severo Sarduy calls the Latin American baroque) that led him to cast his analyses of social intercourse in terms that rigorously avoid easy identifications with one or another documentary sociohistorical circumstance. As Chichester has pointed out, Piñera’s grotesque representation of homosexuals and of the body is, rather than a condemnation of homosexuality, an attempt to render the violent distortion of homoerotic desire that takes place in societies dominated by homophobia (1995: 324). The result is a generalized characterization of a horror of life that is overwhelming in its implications for membership in this society, gay or otherwise. These stories are, as Cabrera Infante notes with his usual precision in his introduction to a collection of Piñera in English, a kick in the groin (1987: xiv) (for an earlier, less generous characterization by Cabrera Infante of Piñera’s writing, see Barreto

[1995: 26]; Barreto manages very nicely, especially in a strategic quote from Arenas, to elide any reference to Piñera's homoeroticism).

In the context of the need many writers and their critics feel to go beyond the charming folklorizations of Latin American culture promoted by the veritable mania for magical realism, attention to Piñera is absolutely necessary as part of the recovery of the equally and perhaps even more dominant strain of grotesque expressionism in Latin America. The homoerotic subtext of Piñera's writing may now be recoverable via a reading that takes into account questions of gender construction and sexual dissidence more than was possible in the fairly fissureless homoerotic environment of the 1950s. Yet what is most interesting about his writing is not the glimmers one can now detect of same-sex desire or the eroticization of homosocial situations. Rather, it is the way in which the grotesque is available to him for the representation of the terrifying universe of homophobic violence for sexual outcasts and the monstrous lives they are obliged to live, as is suggested in texts such as "Affairs of Amputees" (1989: 13):¹¹

Amputees, in spite of their handicap, come and go through the streets. There are amputees with one crutch and others with two, but neither very often catches the eye of the absent-minded public. They'd manage to get more attention if they decided to march in groups, demanding that their lost legs be returned. But no: no one sees that amputees avoid the company of other amputees—unlike the blind, who are accustomed to accompanying each other making noise with their canes.

Exile must have provided Piñera with added examples of the frighteningly precarious nature of the life of the outcast, since by the mid-1950s there was barely any glimmer of gay life, in contrast to the greater visibility, if not greater safety, of gay life in Havana at the time.

FERNANDO VALLEJO

Fernando Vallejo is a writer who has been particularly skillful at sticking a finger in the eye of Colombian social hegemonies. Part of an autobiographical series of texts with the overall title *El río del tiempo*, his *Los caminos a Roma* (1988) is an unstintingly ironic investigation into Colombian social values and the tribulations of assuming a conscious stance toward those values (see DuPouy [1995] for a general characterization of Vallejo's writing). To be Colombian, according to Vallejo, is to be heir to a constellation of myths about culture and, more than anything else, to find written on one's

body the dense discourse of private and public morals that circumscribes the individual at every step in his attempt to develop a personal identity.

The first-person narrator of *Caminos* details the odyssey of a Colombian who undertakes in Rome, with a fellowship from the Italian government, a course of study in experimental film. Recalling that he comes from a family whose matriarch refused to see movies because she had to pray the rosary and insisting that there was no reason in the world for her to see people in scandalous poses, the protagonist details the realization of the dream of every Latin American who lays claim to being an intellectual of studying in one of the cradles of European culture. The narrative, however, ends up divided between the details of the discovery of the ancient city and its delights—cultural transcendency on the one hand, abandoned erotic pleasure on the other—and a process of ironic recapitulation of a modest personal culture that can, in the final analysis, never be overcome. When the narrator comes to the realization that he is irremediably condemned to being not only from Colombia but also from Antioquia (one of that country's most traditional and conservative regions), he leaves Rome to return to his native country (1988: 70, my translation):¹²

Colombia! I had spent months living, so to speak, in Rome, and not for a single minute had I ceased to be living in Colombia, in its cafés, in its mountains, in its streets, in its rivers, in its failure, in its splendor, in its misery, Colombia. . . . It had come with me without my knowing it. Now I knew it, and no matter where I went, it would come with me, joined to me by unbreakable chains, as though it were the center of my soul, of the Universe, it alone and all else shadows, like a curse.

Rome thus provides for a double movement. First, it is the seat of the morality that the narrator sees Colombia as repressively affirming, and he understands that it can never provide him with an escape from the horizons that circumscribe his identity. Second, Rome, as the seat of a sophisticated, urbane, and worldly European culture that is metonymized via the motif of filmmaking, also stands for him as a sign of the impossibility for a Latin American of assimilating that culture as his own or merging with it as a way of transcending his personal formation: going to Rome is reduced, in the end, to just another of the many erroneous roads open for the narrator to travel.

Yet, while meditating on this road chosen in error and the consequences of that choice, the narrator undertakes a process of defamiliarization of Colombia—a reassessment (in reality, an ironic devaluation) of it with reference to the European model for poor, provincial Latin America. The result is that the bulk of the novel consists of what the narrator sees or decides to see and how

he interprets it in accordance with the cultural discourses he has internalized: “A la que regresé en cambio fue a Colombia, que no es un país sino una condena” (Instead, I returned to Colombia, which is not a country but a prison sentence) (1988: 107).

One of the recurring details in the novel is the narrator’s homoeroticism, an identity against which he necessarily assesses his national identity. Vallejo had already published a novel in which he analyzed homosexuality in detail against the background of the Colombian moral system, *El fuego secreto* (1987). The naturalization of his sexuality in *Caminos*, with Rome as the cradle of repressive Catholic morality and at the same time one of the many European centers that has been able to overcome the homophobic hysteria that Latin American inherits and in many cases reinforces, is a major axis in the movement in the novel of identity-incorporation-assimilation-transcendence-reinscription. Although *Caminos* is written in a minor key and is never quite able to take on fully the dimensions of the mad personal adventure it sets up, it is an excellent example of a narrative of gay diaspora and of the difficulty for individuals of escaping the horizons of primary social and cultural formation. One’s sexual formation, like a native language, inevitably remains as an indelible imprint.

Vallejo’s recent writing has taken the form of highly documented and discursively convoluted narratives concerning two major figures in Colombian literature, the late-nineteenth-century poet José Asunción Silva, in *Chapolas negras* (1995), and the early-twentieth-century poet Porfirio Barba Jacob, in *El mensajero* (1991). Barba Jacob, who lived most his life in exile, was widely known for his homoerotic sexual preferences, while the possibility that Silva may have had same-sex relations is acknowledged only in a limited way (see, however, the case provided by Villanueva-Collado [1991]). In both novels, Vallejo works around the themes of internal and actual exile, and in both cases he is interested in queering official literary history via a form of narrative desacralization.

JAIME BAYLY

The narrative texts examined up to this point concern the consequences of diaspora for the revision of sexual ideology. The bulk of these texts enhance the record of homoerotic desire and the understanding of its workings and ideological projections; in the case of Piñera’s writing, displacement would appear to augment the grotesque resonances of his examination of the experience of homophobia. I would, however, like to conclude with a discussion of a text that imagines exile as simply an extension of the horrors of social life in

a manner that is essentially homophobic, homoeroticism being presented as simply one more aspect of a life of meaningless dissipation.

The most pathetic figure in *No se lo digas a nadie*, Jaime Bayly's novel of moral misery, is the mother, struggling fiercely to remain the unifying force of a contemporary upper-middle-class family in Lima beset by drugs, alcoholism, infidelity, and homosexuality. Miami should perhaps be added to this list of horrors, but it is in reality only part of a displaced Peruvian imaginary that throws the etiology of Lima into rhetorical relief.

Touted in some quarters as a gay novel, *No se lo digas a nadie* does little for a revision of the patriarchy. The reason the Opus Dei devotee of a mother is so pathetic is that she is trapped between her rejection of the male imperative and continual reaffirmation of it by her slavish devotion to the church, her masochistic forgiveness of her husband's sins, and her willful blindness to her son's deviant sexuality. Homosexuality here (the explanation of which is grounded in an immutable nature, which in its singlemindedness is a perverse reaffirmation of patriarchal order) is used alternatively as a repudiation of machismo and as part of a panoply of nasty social behavior. Joaquín, in addition to being queer, is a dooper, a boozer, a wastrel, a vengeful schemer, and a cad. Whether his nastiness is a dimension of his homosexuality or whether society's homophobia forces him to be nasty as a form of self-defense and a strategy for survival is never much explained in the novel, which is decidedly more interested in chronicling unpleasantness than in interpreting it.

What is clear is that gayness is never given anything other than token representation—never viewed as anything other than a dimension of being a social outsider (not even in Miami, where there is something like a gay culture)—and Joaquín's liaisons never amount to anything other than a bad attitude with respect to the patriarchy. Indeed, the novel concludes with the main character's throwing into the sea the torn pieces of a credit card given him by his father in one of the latter's visits to Miami. If there is anything (re)constructive about being queer, anything joyful in being gay, anything transcendent about repudiating the patriarchy, anything useful about the connection between being gay in Lima and being gay in Miami, Bayly has managed to keep it out of his novel. One wonders exactly what it is that should not be told—perhaps that being gay is not just a bad attitude with respect to the moral hypocrisy of the Lima bourgeoisie that is so prodigiously portrayed (1994: 140, my translation):¹³ “There are certain things in this country that cannot be discussed, and our weakness for men is one of those things. In Perú you can be a coke-head, a thief, or a womanizer, but you cannot allow yourself the luxury of being a faggot.”

Indeed, Joaquín finds no respite in Miami, no release from hypocrisy, no urge to find something positive about his life. In this sense, Bayly's novel

may be a first in Latin America, as it is a novel neither about the curse of life in the United States for the Latin American exile nor about the opportunities for a radical redefinition of one's life free from the grip of the past. Miami is little more than another setting for repeating the past.

CONCLUSION

One could argue that, from the colonial period on, Latin American literature has been a cultural production of exile. One could go on to argue that, given the persistence of homophobia in Latin America, internal and external exile is, unfortunately, the expected lot of the lesbian woman or the gay man, and the openings that have come with liberation movements and neoliberal marketing (e.g., the latter is able to turn anything into a commodity, including images of sexual dissidence) have yet to represent more than noise for the overwhelming message of compulsory heterosexuality and its corollaries. It is for this reason that I have avoided hypostatizing exile as a special condition for either the writer or the sexual dissident.

There are many ways in which gay writers might wish to open up the sociohistorical horizons of their characters and their narrators, and dimensions of class, race, and ethnicity might reasonably be found to provide complementary/contradictory systems that may give resonance to the specific positioning of a fictional individual. One recalls the importance that class transgression has traditionally had for the British gay novel (cf. E. M. Forster's paradigmatic *Maurice*), and this is an element that is present in, for example, the Argentine Juan María Borghello's (1986) *La plaza de los lirios*. Racial transgression is at the heart of Latin America's first explicitly homoerotic novel, Adolfo Caminha's *Bom-Crioulo* (1969 [1895]), while ethnic transgression (Hispanic versus Oriental) occurs in several of Severo Sarduy's novels (examples of Hispanic/mestizo/indigenous transgression do not come immediately to mind).

The novels I have examined here are not simply novels that have been written and published abroad. Rather, my interest has been in texts in which the dimension of foreign culture, whether another Hispanic society or a U.S. or European one, has provided a meaningful foil for the construction of a narrative semiosis. This contrast may be very vivid and tied to wrenching conditions of exile (Arenas and Bianciotti); it may be displaced and given symbolic representation (Vallejo); it may serve to internationalize a point of reference (the broad sweep of homophobia in Piñera; the paneroticism in Sánchez of the figure of Daniel Santos, who is not just a Puerto Rican icon; the queer configuration in Torres that, I would maintain, can only have come from

extensive theoretical readings not widely available in Spanish); or it may serve only to demonstrate a null hypothesis (Bayly). This is not a particularly coherent inventory, but it does have the value of underscoring the way in which writing today about sexual dissidence in Latin America has found it necessary to reach out to external models not to explain local social history in terms of them but as one meaningful strategy for countering the impenetrable silence surrounding the homoerotic in Latin America. I do not by this mean to identify or defend a renewed form of cultural dependency for Latin America, one in which the long tradition of seeking support in bourgeois paradigms abroad has now been exchanged for something like an international gay community. This is not likely to be what is going on in these novels, because one would fail in the attempt to describe something like an international gay model that could be profitably imported into Latin American culture. Rather, what I am suggesting is that the record of an abiding homophobia in Latin America, one that is surely no worse than elsewhere in the West or other parts of the world, often combined with tyranny, has produced a homoerotic diaspora that I have attempted to characterize here.

NOTES

1. Graziano (1992), in his “psychosexual” study of the Argentine “dirty war,” regrettably does not address the military’s imaginary as it relates to Jews and homosexuals. Foster (1995: 98-114) discusses the intersection of lesbianism and absolute power, understood as a model for the tyranny of the Argentine military, in Alejandra Pizarnik’s *La condesa sangrienta* (1971).

2. The extension of this study to include women could begin with the Argentines Alejandra Pizarnik, Sylvia Molloy, and Reina Roffé; the Puerto Ricans Luz María (Luzma) Umpierre and Frances Negrón-Muntaner; the Cubans Mireya Robles, Magalia Alabau, and Archy Obejas; and the Uruguayan Cristina Peri Rossi.

3. As María-Inés Lagos-Pope (1988: 121) asserts, “Exile is not a new condition in Spanish American letters. On the contrary, taken in a broad sense, it has been an experience common to a large number of writers and intellectuals throughout history.” She records a series of essays published in 1978 in the journal *Nueva Sociedad* dealing with the political exile of the period. See also the papers by and interviews with exiled writers in *Exilio: Nostalgia y creación* (Garrido, 1987). Latin American literature is mentioned as a “model of an ‘émigré’ tradition” in Garrido’s (1990: x) preface to *Literature in Exile*.

4. Sections of this article began as review notes in *World Literature Today*, *The American Book Review*, and *Chasqui: Revista de Literatura Latinoamericana*.

5. “Buenos Aires garde en moi cette couleur de la peur qui y régnait à mon arrivée—et davantage quatre ans plus tard, lors de mon départ du pays—que s’accommode si bien, dans la mémoire, des complexités de la pénombre.

“S’insinuant partout et à toute heure, des êtres traversaient notre champ de vision, dont, provincial ou étranger, vous appreniez vite non pas à reconnaître le visage, innombrable, anonyme, interchangeable, mais à soupçonner la fonction, car ils allaient par deux, un chapeau de feutre et,

aussi loin que le permît la saison, un imperméable dénonçant leur appartenance à la organisation, ramifiée, asservissante de la police parallèle. . . .

“Fondus le jour dans une foule où le moindre écart à la norme vestimentaire suffisait à créer des remous, des promeneurs tout d’un coup solidaires s’arrêtant por vous blâmer, on les distinguait de loin la nuit, à l’heure où l’on entend chaque voiture et les pas du noctamble, tels les chasseurs qui guettent, sans se lasser, le gibier dont ils se promettent une fête.”

6. “Una vez me interné en el Monte Barreto en Miramar con un soldado. Desde un principio hablamos claro; él iba excitado y yo también. Cuando llegamos al sitio en cuestión, él me dijo: ‘Arrodíllate y tócame aquí.’ Y me señaló hacia el vientre. Yo fui a tocarle el miembro, que ya se lo había sacado del pantalón, pero él me llevó la mano más arriba, hacia el cinto y lo que toqué fue una pistola. Sacó la pistola y me dijo: ‘Te voy a matar, maricón.’ Yo eché a correr, sentí unos disparos, di un grito y me tiré entre los matorrales. Allí estuve un día completo; sentí carros de policía buscándome. Seguramente, el militar ya desertizado, me perseguía pero, por suerte, no me encontró.”

7. Also of interest is Torres’s novel *Morirás si da una primavera (una novelista azul)* (1993), whose main narrative axis is the pilgrimage to the mainland of a young Puerto Rican gay man (see Manzotti, 1994).

8. “Que me perdonen los dos porque matarlos significó toda una liberación de fronteras constreñidas en el gran limbo que siempre fue el desamor. Matándolos no sucumbí a los celos sino a toda la teoría de desmantelar los binarismos Carlos/Miguel y reconocirme en el centro de los dominios como alternativa de despliegue y de regodeo de los centros que se me desmoronaban. Tenerlos a los dos se erigió en la práctica del otro. Fui de ellos como ellos a su vez fueron míos y yo me convertí en los dos sin serlo. Ellos desaparecen desmembrados con una pierna por aquí y un brazo por el otro lado de la habitación. El acto de matarlos en sí no fue violento. Fue un acto de amor deshuesarlos y hacer de sus dos bichos uno solo largo y tenso que me fui mamando despacio. Fue un acto de amor quebrarles las articulaciones como descuartizar o trizar un pollo asado (no fue fácil). Fue un acto de amor desaparecer la evidencia y limpiar cada rastro de su sangre en la nieve hasta quemarlos y dispersarlos a ambos en cenizas. Fue un acto de purificación mediante el cual este revólver, como en una película, da el indicio para mi muerte inminente.”

9. “*Del macho a la machería, de la machería al machismo. ¿Más bisturí a lo que hace a Daniel Santos un sueño público? ¿Más bisturí a lo que hace a Daniel Santos un mito raso y sato, populachero y al natural? Esbozada ya está la simpatía peligrosa que, por la América amarga, la América descalza, la América en español despertó; simpatía peligrosa apuntalada por el sensacionalismo de que Daniel Santos es un macho entre los machos prosiguiendo a la mención solitaria de su nombre. Macho ochentiséis grados pruebas es Daniel Santos como los rones abrasantes de su Caribe natal, dice el rumor. . . . Machismo harénico de Daniel Santos que sólo parece reconocer como deber y responsabilidad la erección puntualísima. Machismo raso y sato, populachero y al natural de Daniel Santos que plagian millones de machos latinoamericanos.”*

10. “Transgresión y felicidad, degradación e idealidad: el malditismo seductor de Daniel Santos reverbera en dichas superficies léxicas. Que explican el techo y el subsuelo de su mito, su transparencia y convulsión como sueño público. Y la hipnosis servicial de las mujeres, el vasajalle de una legión de hombres, la multitud magnetizada.”

11. “Los cojos, a pesar de su cojera, van y vienen por las calles. Hay cojos de una muleta y cojos de dos muletas, pero unos y otros apenas si obtienen que el público repare distraídamente en su cojera. Podrían despertar mayor interés si se decidieran a marchar en bandas exigiendo que se les devolviera la pierna perdida. Pero no, está visto que un cojo evita la compañía de otro cojo; no así los ciegos, que acostumbran a acompañarse y meten ruido con sus bastones. . . .”

12. "¡Colombia! Llevaba meses dizque viviendo en Roma y ni un solo instante había dejado de vivir en ella, en sus cafés, en sus montañas, en sus calles, en sus ríos, en su fracaso, en su esplendor, en su miseria, Colombia. . . . Se había venido conmigo sin yo saberlo; ahora ya lo sabía y que adondequiera que fuera vendría siguiéndome unida a mí por irrompibles cadenas, como si ella fuera el centro de mi alma, del Universo, ella sola la luz y el resto sombras, como una condena."

13. "En este país hay ciertas cosas que no se deben hablar, y nuestra debilidad por los hombres es una de esas cosas. En el Perú puedes ser coquero, ladrón o mujeriego, pero no te puedes dar el lujo de ser maricón."

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