GENDER AND REPRESENTATION:
THE WRITINGS OF PUERTO RICAN AUTHORS
IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY (1870-1900)

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines literary strategies for the representation of gender and its intersections with class and race in selected writings by four Puerto Rican authors, namely, Alejandro Tapia, Salvador Brau, Manuel Zeno Gandía, and Ana Roqué. It focuses on the period between the 1870s and 1890s—before the 1898 United States military occupation—because of the crucial socio-political and economic changes that marked the threshold of a distinct Hispanic Creole literary tradition.

I propose an interdisciplinary approach that combines social history, cultural studies, social feminism, and literary theory to provide historical depth and enable contextualization of the material conditions in which late nineteenth-century writings were produced. Moreover, there is a lack of literary analyses that examine and compare the narratives of both men and women writers from the late nineteenth century against the backdrop of the island’s social history.

This research pays attention to the interplay among different kinds of writings at this particular moment in the history of Puerto Rico where a specific discursive formation took shape. Through close readings I demonstrate how these four authors employed literary strategies to represent their respective political and sexual agendas. Liberal men wrote proposals for the moral reform of women of all classes as they believed it was the best way to control reproduction, adultery, concubinage and interracial sex, thus guaranteeing the “whitening” of society and of the labour force. The discourses about moral reforms for women show the gender ideologies prevalent at the time that were inscribed in the national narratives.
Tapia’s cosmopolitanism and supernatural topics represent the fragmented identity of the colonized subject striving for representation in Spain, and the gender crisis of the late nineteenth century. Brau and Zeno Gandía portray the peasantry as a sick body that represents the social stagnation in which the colony was mired. Roqué’s fiction proclaims her political ideas regarding the role of women in the cultural nation and attacks extramarital affairs, interracial relations, and women’s financial vulnerability. The analysis of gender representation and its interrelations with colonialism, patriarchy, class, and race offers innovative perspectives to interpret the past, and to better understand the dynamics of gender power relations that persist to the present day.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation proposes a socio-historical approach to the analysis of literary strategies for the representation of gender in selected writings by four Puerto Rican authors, namely, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1826-1882), Salvador Brau y Asencio (1842-1912), Manuel Zeno Gandía (1855-1930), and Ana Roqué y Géigel de Duprey (1853-1933).

Nineteenth-century Puerto Rican histories of literature and criticism have paid little or no attention to the participation and contributions of women writers to the island’s intellectual history. In particular, Ana Roqué’s literary work has been overlooked, despite her seminal role in the island’s cultural development. In order to re-evaluate her literary work, this study contextualizes her writing and compares it to that of her contemporaries who also played leading roles in the intellectual growth of the island.

Even though Puerto Rican women’s fiction has been studied from a wide variety of perspectives since the late 1970s, there is a lack of comparative studies that analyze literary strategies for gender representation in works written by both men and women from the late nineteenth century. Moreover, there are no specific analyses of this type that would examine the interrelations between gender, class, and race against the backdrop of the island’s social history. The writings of Roqué, Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía are thus placed here within their rightful socio-historical contexts, which attest to the unique spaces and conditions from which a national Puerto Rican literary tradition emerged.

The selected writings analyzed here date from the period between 1870 and 1900, years of central importance in the formation and consolidation of Puerto Rican national literature. This period was a time of crucial sociopolitical and economic changes that included the abolition of slavery, the foundation of the first official political parties, and the
displacement of the *hacendado* oligarchy by United States’ agrarian capitalism. The Spanish-American War of 1898 and the subsequent military occupation of Puerto Rico by the United States shifted the island’s political situation from 300 years of Spanish domination to a neocolonial condition. This dissertation shows that by the time of the United States’ occupation, Puerto Rico had already defined itself as culturally Hispanic and had developed a national literary tradition. Therefore, in the light of its socio-cultural history and a close reading of selected foundational narratives from the late nineteenth century, this study also offers an understanding of the Hispanic cultural heritage that connects Puerto Rico with Spain and the rest of the Spanish American nations.

In order to show the manner in which the aforementioned authors articulated literary strategies for gender representation within their particular socio-historical context, political positions, and literary traditions, I propose a close reading to describe and examine their foundational narratives. My reading attempts to answer the following questions, as they pertain to issues of gender: What is being represented by men and women authors in Puerto Rican fiction between the 1870s and the 1900s? How were these representations articulated? What did these representations mean in terms of political power relations? What did they say about race and class hierarchies? In order to answer these questions, this study provides a substantial literary context for the different approaches to gender representations assumed by both men and women intellectuals and, consequently, their social and racial implications. Furthermore, my study seeks to contribute to the appreciation of the cultural complexities of Puerto Rican society through the interpretation of its early literary expressions and how they show the fluidity of the ever-changing notions of gender, class, and race in the island’s colonial context.
Most of the texts analyzed in this dissertation have been out of print since they were first published in the late 1800s. The required archival research was carried out chiefly at the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños in New York City, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Since these texts are largely unknown to modern readers, it has been necessary to include a large degree of plot description and summaries of ideas in order to facilitate the comprehension of my analysis. In addition, there is a limited number of critical studies of the late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican fiction with which my own analysis can establish a critical dialogue. One of the strengths of my study, consequently, rests on its being solidly grounded in archival research, which guarantees originality of material and approach, hence its contribution to our knowledge of the overall achievement of Puerto Rican literature.

The sociopolitical instability of Puerto Rico in the late nineteenth century brought about competing concepts of the role of women at all levels of society. Both Liberal and Conservative men believed that in order to improve the foundations of their society and to ensure their political power, there was an urgent need to educate women. The moral education of women from all social classes became the centre of a public debate in the local press and in pamphlets that circulated among the reading public. These publications voiced the concerns of both men and women of the elite, namely, equal opportunities to higher education, access to the professions, an improvement in the social conditions of peasant women, the end of concubinage practices and miscegenation, women’s suffrage, and other issues. These concerns constituted a significant challenge to traditionally assumed female

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1 For example, the essays studied in Chapter 3 (with the exception of Tapia’s) and most of Roqué’s fiction are available only in microfiche.
roles such as those of the obedient daughter, the faithful wife, and the nurturing mother, since women were regarded as the guardians of the moral basis of society; in their hands rested the education of the future citizens of the Puerto Rican nation. Thus, the fiction of this period is ideally suited for identifying literary strategies for the representation of gender, race, and class that impacted upon Puerto Rican colonial society in contradictory ways, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the island’s intellectual history from 1800 to 1900, focusing on the main currents of cultural and sociopolitical thought. This chapter pays attention to the cultural connections between Puerto Rican, North American, and European—especially Spanish—literary models and the ways in which they were assimilated and “creolized” by the island’s writers. This chapter’s main objective is to provide the reader with a substantial historical background for an understanding of how the prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions, together with Spain’s unstable political situation, impacted upon the island’s creative writing and the role that women played therein. Moreover, this historical overview seeks to clarify why my study privileges the period from 1870 to 1900 for the analysis and interpretation of the representation of gender in a group of scarcely studied texts. Thus, this review sets the background for the methodology employed and the literary corpus analyzed.

Chapter 2 explains the terminology, and the theoretical tenets employed in the analysis, and presents a concise review of relevant scholarly literature. In order to analyze

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2 In this study I use the term “Creole” as a translation of the Spanish “criollo” which means a person of Spanish ancestry, and in this specific case, born in the Hispanic Caribbean. “Creolized” is intended to signify the cultural process by which creative writing adapted foreign models and blended them with local elements from which an autochthonous literature emerged.
how Puerto Rican authors articulated literary strategies for gender representation, I propose a close reading that combines socio-historical approaches with social feminism, literary theory, and cultural studies. Such a close reading and interdisciplinary approach allows the analysis more flexibility to describe and examine the authors' foundational narratives. I seek to demonstrate how Puerto Rican fiction in the late nineteenth century responded to racially charged notions of gender and supported a political agenda that attempted to place sexual roles within certain codes of behaviour and morality prevalent in the Creole elite's cultural imaginary.

Chapter 3 examines influential essays by Liberal and Conservative men mostly concerned with moral reforms for the education of women. These publications were quite inexpensive and sometimes circulated free of charge; they had a broad circulation throughout the island and were very popular. In the first place I comment on Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's article "El aprecio a la mujer es barómetro de civilización" (1862), which is perhaps the earliest attempt that dared to claim women's rights to better education and emancipation. This essay was a revolutionary text that called into question the traditional role of elite women, creating controversy amid the conservative sector. It took more than ten years before other Liberals would develop the arguments raised by Tapia. Mainly motivated by the aftermath of the abolition of slavery and the need to restructure the basis of society, during the 1880s and the 1890s Creole men articulated heated discourses regarding the need for moral reforms and the elementary education of the island's women.

One of these men was Gabriel Ferrer Hernández (1848-1901) who, like Manuel Zeno Gandía, was a physician and a political activist of the Partido Autonomista. In 1880 Ferrer submitted to a national contest a suggestive study bearing the long title of La mujer en Puerto
Rico: sus necesidades presentes y los medios más fáciles y adecuados para mejorar su porvenir. Ferrer’s essay won first prize and was published in 1881 in the form of a booklet, having a great impact on the public opinion of the time. Ferrer’s ambitious project dictated norms of decorum and behaviour not only for girls of the Creole elite, but also for the lower urban-class mulattas and poorer white girls (las hijas del pueblo), thus breaking the fine line between class and race, a step no one had taken before. In contrast, Salvador Brau switched his interests to the rural areas. In an answer to an alarming statement made by the island’s governor, General Despujol, on the lack of schools and instruction for rural girls, Brau wrote his sociological essay La campesina (1886). This chapter ends with some observations on Fernando López Tuero’s La mujer (1893), a book that overtly attacked the proposals for the education of women and their eventual emancipation. In the following chapters I show how these ideas are reflected in selected novels by the authors at the core of this study, whose gender representations reveal the social fantasies that prescribed for the Creole elite norms of behaviour to follow or discard.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Creolized Romantic aesthetics of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera. Regarded as the “Father of Puerto Rican Literature,” Tapia stands out for his constant struggle to promote literature and the arts, and for his significant contribution to, and participation in, the development of Puerto Rican literature. His novel Póstumo el transmigrado o historia de un hombre que resucitó en el cuerpo de su enemigo (1872) and later its controversial sequel Póstumo el envirginiado o historia de un hombre que se coló en el cuerpo de una mujer (1882) are seminal to the understanding of fictional representations of gender in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico. I argue that Tapia is a key intellectual because of
his most unusual proto-feminist agenda, which paved the way for much of the feminist
discourse that developed in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 5 examines the eclectic nature of Puerto Rican literature, in which
Romanticism, Realism and Naturalism converged with Criollismo. It focuses on the analysis
of two influential novels that convey nationalist values and gender and race ideologies:
Salvador Brau’s ¿Pecadora? (1890), and Manuel Zeno Gandía’s La charca (1894). This
chapter also expands on the discourse about cultural nationalism that intellectual Creoles
articulated in their writings. It establishes the contextual background for a discussion of
Roqué’s literary strategies for the insertion of women into the mainstream discourse of the
nation. La charca is regarded as the first Puerto Rican novel in the island’s literary canon and
as a salient text in the development of a nationalist discourse beginning earlier with Miguel
Cabrera’s Las coplas del gíbaro (1820), and the Cancionero de Borinquén (1846) and
Miguel Alonso’s El gíbaro (1849), that dominated Puerto Rican fiction until the middle of
the twentieth century.³ The literary representation of the jíbaro became the embodiment of
puertorriqueñidad as the Creole intellectuals closed their eyes to the island’s African
heritage. The reasons behind this neglect, previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, will
assume a greater clarity in the context of this chapter.

Chapter 6 introduces the literary work of Ana Roqué de Duprey. It analyzes her two
collections of short stories, Pasatiempos: colección de novelas (1894), and Novelas y cuentos
o Sara la obrera y otros cuentos (1895), and her novel Luz y sombra (1903). Sara la obrera

³ I have kept the original nineteenth-century orthography in the titles of Cabrera’s Las coplas
del gíbaro and Alonso’s El gíbaro. In modern Puerto Rican Spanish usage, the consonant /g/
changed to /j/. I use /jíbaro/ when I refer to the white mountain peasant and not to the former
literary works.
is of particular interest since it was published separately in novella form. Contrary to Puerto Rican mainstream writing, Roqué’s short stories acknowledged the African presence, albeit in negative ways. Her fiction exalted the white Hispanic heritage and values in the same way as did ¿Pecadora? and La charca. Sara la obrera can be seen as an alternative text that poses feminine claims on gender, class, and race power relations and that stands as both a counterpoint and a complement to Tapia’s, Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s fiction. Luz y sombra, a novel written in a combination of literary styles and genres, including the epistolary novel, melodrama, comedy of cuckoldry, and Spanish cuadros de costumbres, is situated at the intersection of Romanticism and Realism. The plot, very unusual from a woman’s pen, is compared and contrasted to certain aspects of the novels by Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía. These works are analyzed to show how the literary strategies for gender representation that Puerto Rican authors displayed in their fiction include or exclude each other in this period of cultural identity and literary formation.

The Conclusion elaborates on the results of the analysis that brings together the voices of men and women writers from the late nineteenth century. It identifies the points of convergence and the discrepancies within the themes and concerns that these Puerto Rican authors enunciate in their fiction and essays. Puerto Rican authors articulated writing strategies to represent a modern subject, male and female, within the restraints of a colonial system, before the consolidation of the transformations generated by the process of industrialization brought about by the United States Occupation in 1898. In addition, the writings of Ana Roqué, as well as other women writers, present irrefutable proof of a Puerto Rican literary tradition that speaks to the existence of a foundational feminine discourse in the late nineteenth century.
CHAPTER 1

PUERTO RICAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW (1800-1900)

¿Quién habita esa costa? Una raza que prueba que los hombres no tienen color en el espíritu; que hay una chispa igual en todos, que de todo los hace capaces; los negros han fundado un imperio en este sitio. ¡Misteriosa justicia! Tú estás en todas partes. Al infeliz africano, arrancado de sus selvas, y hecho esclavo por la fuerza, le das fuerzas: rompe con ellas sus cadenas; el hierro le da armas; las armas, un imperio.

(Eugenio María de Hostos, La peregrinación de Bayoán 31)

This quotation from Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903) reveals the paradox and contradictions in which Puerto Rican intellectuals were mired in the nineteenth century. While Hostos’ words seem to show an admiration for blacks, the white Creoles actually feared them and, even more tragically, despised them. When Hostos published La peregrinación de Bayoán in Spain in 1863, it was immediately banned because its content offended the sensibility of the Spaniards, for the Hostos’ novel attempted to narrate the truth of colonial domination. As a result, La peregrinación de Bayoán could not circulate among the reading public until ten years later, when it was published in Santiago de Chile.¹

In order to understand the reasons behind the many contradictions of the Puerto Rican intellectuals, such as their overt racism, their preference for reforms instead of independence, but most important, the emergence of a national literature, this chapter offers a historical overview of Puerto Rico’s intellectual development in the nineteenth century. Its primary objective is to place the writings of Ana Roqué (1853-1933), and of the authors at the core of this study, namely, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1821-1882), Salvador Brau y Asencio (1842-

¹ I gathered this information from Hostos’ Introduction to the 1873 publication of La Peregrinación de Bayoán in Santiago de Chile.
1912), and Manuel Zeno Gandía (1855-1930), within their rightful sociopolitical, economic, and cultural context. As I stated in the Introduction, the literary work of nineteenth-century women writers, such as that of Ana Roqué, has received almost no attention from critics until recently. To alleviate this void, my study attempts a re-evaluation of the literary contributions of Roqué to the development of Puerto Rican literature, which anticipated what came to be an outstanding tradition of women writers.

Puerto Rican scholars emphasize the importance of establishing the proper historical context when considering any aspect of the national literature, especially that of the nineteenth century. Indeed, there is a close relationship between Puerto Rico’s historical and literary development insofar as the literature reflects the historical events that have structured and shaped national identity. Whereas establishing the relationship between history and literature is not unique as an approach to the study of Puerto Rican literature, it is the most appropriate one to familiarize the reader with events that are little known, neglected or forgotten, and which help us make sense of the past for a more thorough interpretation of the writings from late nineteenth-century literary texts.

The main trends of thought that permeated the Puerto Rican intelligentsia throughout the nineteenth century followed the model of the liberal ideals proposed by thinkers and philosophers from the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, Adam Smith and

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2 For example, in *The Puerto Ricans: Their History, Culture, and Society*, Edna Acosta-Belén and Sandra Messinger Cypess underscore the importance of laying out the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts of Puerto Rico’s historical development in order to gain a full perspective on the emergence of literature. José Luis González in *Literatura y sociedad en Puerto Rico* also emphasizes a socio-historical overview for a better understanding of the origins of Puerto Rican literary tradition.
Bentham, Locke and Beccaria, Turgot and Jovellanos. These imported ideas from the European metropolitan centres, particularly from Paris and Madrid, were reinterpreted by the Creole intelligentsia in their own terms, adding their experience as a colonized society whose economic growth was based on agrarian exploitation and the trade of basic goods.

**Colonial Oppression and the Growth of Cultural Nationalism**

The acute stagnation in which the island of Puerto Rico was mired during the first half of the nineteenth century inspired the Liberal Galician poet Jacinto de Salas y Quiroga (1813-1880) to write a now lost booklet entitled *Un entreacto de mi vida en Puerto Rico*, which, according to Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, depicted Puerto Rican life in 1839. Tapia, a great admirer of the Galician poet, lamented the loss of the text which contained a memorable sentence that summarized Salas y Quiroga’s thoughts regarding the island’s state of intellectual backwardness: “Puerto Rico es el cadáver de una sociedad que no ha nacido” (qtd. in Tapia, *Mis Memorias* 16). This bitter metaphor was for Tapia the most precise way to

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3 Gordon Lewis (1983) points out that the general ideas of these authors (who are mentioned in Lidio Cruz Monclova *Historia de Puerto Rico*) “had become part of the mental climate of the age, and were, so to speak, in the air, and that by 1810 they had made their presence felt in San Juan” (Lewis 266).

4 Alejandro Tapia y Rivera’s unfinished autobiography, posthumously published in 1927, *Mis Memorias o Puerto Rico como lo encontré y como lo dejó*, has left testimony of Salas y Quiroga’s lost essay, part of the literary work written by the Galician poet during his short period of residence in Puerto Rico (16). Jacinto Salas y Quiroga is recognized by historians of Puerto Rican literature for his contribution to the development of the island’s creative writing. According to Manrique Cabrera, the presence of this romantic poet was decisive in the awakening of Puerto Rican literature, and many of his poems remain dispersed, awaiting to be rescued from the late 1830s issues of the island’s newspaper *Boletín Instructivo y Mercantil* (Manrique Cabrera 75).
describe the suffocating intellectual atmosphere that prevailed in the island during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In fact, scholars who study any aspect of the nineteenth century in Puerto Rico explain that it is a period characterized by severe forms of repression and exploitation under the absolutist colonial government, a state of affairs that José Luis González has called “El desgobierno español” (Literatura y sociedad 71).

The Spanish governors—military men with no vision other than their own financial well-being and the most narrowly-defined goals of the Spanish Crown—administered the island for brief terms of office and were seldom committed to improving the social, economic, and educational local conditions. More often than not, they treated Puerto Ricans indistinctly as a mere mass of colonized and enslaved peoples. For example, in Mis Memorias, Tapia recorded that Captain General José María Marchessi y Oleaga (1865-1867) used to have free men whipped at his whim, indifferent to the protests of the Audiencia. His acts of impunity went so far that he once threatened to whip a respectable Creole hacendado who came to him voicing the peoples’ protests and disgust with his illegal punishments.⁵ Salvador Brau, in his Historia de Puerto Rico, documents that Marchessi re-instituted the infamous “Código Negro” which gave permission to punish any free men, particularly

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⁵ This particular anecdote of Marchessi’s ruthlessness forms part of the many accounts that Tapia recorded in Mis memorias. Tapia keenly criticizes the Spanish governors’ abuse of power and the atrocities of the institution of slavery (73-81).
blacks. According to Brau, the “regente de la Audiencia don Joaquin Calbetón” fought against Marchessi’s abuses and he was soon replaced in 1867 by General Julián Pavia, who ruled for just one year (233). With rare exceptions, Spanish governors neither understood the needs of Puerto Rico as a nascent country nor estimated its potential as an ally of the Crown.

Tapia y Rivera, a Liberal Reformist like the majority of the intellectuals of his time, particularly resented the governors’ practice of assuming the attitudes and prerogatives of former Viceroyos: “Están en tierra de conquista, donde hay que mantener muy alto el principio de autoridad, gobernar mucho y muy fuerte, o mejor diría: no gobernar sino mandar, lo que entienden mejor como soldados” (Mis memorias 108). Most liberal intellectuals agreed that the arbitrary ruling of despots contributed greatly to the thwarted development of the island’s educational institutions and political infrastructure.

The persistence of slavery, illiteracy, and limited educational opportunities suffocated any attempt at higher education or social justice that the intellectual elite proposed for the Puerto Rican people. Almost without exception, most of the Creole intellectuals who sought to improve the educational system and to better the social conditions faced either exile or incarceration, sometimes even torture and death. A well-known example is that of the prominent educator and sociologist Eugenio María de Hostos, forced to live in exile most of his life, dying in Chile after a disappointing return to the island. Ironies abound, like that of

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6 Brau explains that “El Codigo Negro” was institutionalized in 1848 under the pressures of a slave rebellion in St. Croix. General Primm, the governor in turn, was afraid that the rebellion would spread to Puerto Rico, so he decreed a new law. It was the “Código Negro” which authorized masters of slaves and military men to severely punish or execute immediately people of color, be they free or slaves, who were reported to commit any kind of misconduct (220).
the prominent poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843-1924) who suffered exile three times, in Caracas, Havana, and New York. Rodríguez de Tió and Hostos met, not in their home island, but while they were both in exile in Venezuela. Román Baldorioty de Castro (1822-1889), an educator and politician who designed the “Plan de Ponce”—the model for the ideal of autonomous government—, was accused of sedition and confined to the dungeons of the fortress of El Morro. Baldorioty, extremely ill and weakened from the torture and bad conditions of his imprisonment, died a year after he was released. These and other renowned Liberals were spokespersons for growing nationalist sentiments, seeking from Spain either administrative autonomy or independence for Puerto Rico. Their views clashed with the ubiquitous Spanish censorship and with the slow development of institutions and infrastructure imposed by the colonial state and the Catholic Church.7

These oppressive circumstances affected the Creole elite in distinctive ways. They began to feel themselves “different” from their European counterparts, possibly an indication of growing nationalist sentiment or national awareness. Gordon K. Lewis, in Main Currents in Caribbean Thought, explains that in the Caribbean, as elsewhere, the development of nationalism and of nationalist sentiment is a closely interrelated “twin process” that moves from cultural nationalism to political nationalism. According to Lewis, the growth of a cultural nationalism, understood as “congeries of feelings, beliefs, sentiments, in a given body of people that gives them a sense of distinctiveness” (239) comes first, and will

7 The Catholic faith was the official religion in the island since the very beginnings of the colonization until 1898 when, under the United States annexation, freedom of religion was bestowed. During the Spanish rule, though, there was no separation of church and state and the Catholic authorities exercised fairly comprehensive power over every aspect of Puerto Rican life.
eventually generate a second process of political nationalism, that is, the emergence of the independent nation-state. Lewis argues that nation-states, organized under the infrastructure of a government which exercises sovereign power, adopt symbols or what he calls "nationalistic paraphernalia" like a flag, an anthem, certain colours, and so forth, to give the people a unique sense of self-identity:

The history of the Caribbean up to 1900 is in large measure the history of those twin developments [cultural nationalism and political nationalism]. Yet they were both made more complicated and more difficult by the manner in which they were interfered with by the twin epiphenomena of slavery and colonialism; so that there is little in their story of the straightforward, linear character of, say, European nationalism. Colonialism generated in the Caribbean mentality a divisive loyalty to the metropolitan culture that explains the historical tardiness of the final arrival of national independence. (239)

In Puerto Rico, those "twin developments" did not take the same direction as they did in Europe or in the other American colonies. It was a unilateral process of cultural nationalism, which did not move towards a consensus for independence. There was a series of distinctive factors at play before and during the nineteenth century, which moved this process in a different direction. Colonialism generated a divisive loyalty toward Spain which was accentuated by waves of loyal immigrants and the indiscriminate exploitation of human labour. These discordant divisions between native-born Puerto Ricans, immigrants, and Spaniards generated internal conflicts regarding allegiance or anti-colonial positions that produced a social hierarchy strongly guided by class and race biases.
From abroad, Puerto Rico was viewed as a potential land for investment that attracted large numbers of both poor and wealthy people from around the globe. Waves of immigrants flooded into the island, causing a collision of cultures, but they soon became accommodated in intermediate places within the commercial trade or in the smuggling of goods, as well as in the administration of farms owned by the powerful Spanish landowners. This created a racial and social hierarchy within the plantation regime and in the urban areas that came to define the two main cultural impulses in the island: the Creole elite and the popular working class. Hence, economic factors were decisive during this period and directly affected the decisions of the Spanish and Creole elite. The economy of Puerto Rico, mainly agrarian, provided a wealthy and stable source of income for Spain. In 1869, the Spanish politician Segismundo Moret Prendergast declared at the Cortes de Cádiz: “Si las cuarenta y nueve provincias de España pagasen en la misma proporción que Puerto Rico, todavía tendrían que pagar más de los 3,000 millones de reales que pagan.”

Thus, Puerto Rico was not only considered loyal but also extremely profitable to the Spanish Crown. However this prosperity was not enjoyed by the local people, composed mostly of jornaleros and enslaved peoples who lived in extreme poverty. Those who benefited from the riches produced by the coffee, sugar, and tobacco plantations were the Spanish hacendados and merchants, always in a

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8 González remarks that during the second half of the nineteenth century the Treasury of Puerto Rico received the highest income ever reached by any colony. The funds were used to finance the Spanish war against the Moroccan Empire in 1860; the war to regain Santo Domingo from France in 1864; and in 1866 the government of Madrid decreed that the public debt of Spain could be paid from the Cuban and Puerto Rican Treasuries (Literatura y sociedad 72-73).
position of advantage above Creole landowners and other immigrants who, in general, were gravely indebted to the Spaniards (Bergad 142-44).

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez in *Women in 1820-1868 San Juan* offers a detailed description of the vertical socioeconomic division that existed on the island. Positioned at the top of the hierarchy were the Spanish officials, the military forces, and the higher clergy. Next on the scale were Spanish landowners and merchants, including a few Creoles and new immigrants. The nascent professional and intellectual class followed, mostly the sons of the merchant and landed countrymen who were able to study in Europe or the United States. In the growing urban centres there emerged a lower middle-class composed of peddlers, small retail merchants, teachers, clerks, couturiers, seamstresses, and a wide range of tradesmen, such as carpenters, bricklayers, shoemakers, and the like. At the base of this pyramid were the rural free population and the enslaved masses.

The role women played within this social hierarchy is noteworthy. Matos Rodríguez points out that a significant number of upper- and middle-class women owned commercial stores and/or real estate in urban centres, inherited through widowhood or received as dowries. Despite the fact that women were not allowed by law to own and/or manage businesses, women owners were represented before the law by male relatives or were included as silent capitalist partners.⁹ There was also an expanding lower-middle class of working women who occupied jobs as teachers, clerks, and couturiers. At the lower end of

⁹ For a historical analysis of the participation of elite women in the economic life of San Juan, see Matos Rodríguez “Elite and Middle-Class Women in San Juan’s Economic Life” (59-83).
this urban group, the ever-increasing need for domestic help created a growing working class of free men and women of colour who worked in the cities as laundresses, servants, cooks, gardeners, and street vendors of food. The growing cities of San Juan and Ponce also contributed to the increase in prostitution, either through women working individually or managed in bordellos. Although not officially recorded, prostitution became a main source of income for women in the urban centres.

At the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy remained the large rural peasantry and the small enslaved population forced by the circumstances to live in extreme poverty, illiterate, and exploited. This latter sector of society was notably apathetic to the political status of the island, since a change in the nature of their “masters” would not change an existence marked by misery and exploitation. However, the political apathy of the lower classes is misleading, since they were the first to develop nationalist sentiments well before the nineteenth century.

**Creole Blacks, Mulattoes, and Mountain People**

In spite of their rapid and fairly comprehensive extermination, the original indigenous population, the Taínos, left their cultural imprint on Borinquén (the indigenous name of Puerto Rico) and participated in the process of miscegenation with both Spanish and African peoples. This sector of the population, called *jibaros*, comprised a free independent rural

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10 In *Imposing Decency*, Eileen Findlay provides detailed information on the history of prostitution in the late nineteenth century in Ponce, the second most important city and port after San Juan (77-109).
class who lived in the mountains and developed an economy of self-subsistence. They had a reputation for being very jealous of their freedom and independence. Because of their free spirit and attachment to the wild lands, but above all because they were perceived as racially white, the *jibaro* was adopted as the national symbol of “puertorriqueñidad” in late nineteenth-century Creole literature.

The large, free peasantry outnumbered African slaves, and the landowners were faced with a lack of labour force, particularly in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1838, the administration of Governor Miguel López de Baños (1838-1841) revised the instituted “matrícula de los jornaleros”—which included all men who did not own lands—to ensure that the free peasant class that was dispersed throughout the country entered into the labour force of the hacienda economy (Picó, *Al filo del poder* 48). López de Baños took additional measures to better control the dispersed *jornaleros*. To supplement “la matrícula” the Governor instituted the *Juntas de Vagos y Amancebados* as a means of close surveillance of landless men. The *Juntas* stated that any man who failed to comply with his *jornalero’s* responsibilities was prone to be accused of “ocioso y mal entretenido” by the *Juntas*, and run the risk of being sentenced to forced labour in the correctional facility of “La Puntilla” in San

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11 The word /jibaro/ comes from the Taino /jiba/ which means “forest” (Messinger Cypess, *The Unveiling*... 283).

12 Regarding the terms *jornalero, jibaro,* and *agregado*, Laird W. Bergad comments on the confusion generated by the classification of nineteenth-century rural social types in Puerto Rico. Commonly, the *jibaro* represents the independent peasant, the *agregados* are resident peons, and the *jornaleros* are landless day labourers. However, as Bergad points out, these three categories are not static but dynamic and often overlap, for example, *jibaro* could include the other two (60-62).
Juan (Picó 48-49).

Later, in 1849, Governor Juan de la Pezuela (1848-1851) officially instituted the Libreta regime in order to make the labour control system more effective than it was. The jornalero’s Libreta contained annotations, observations, and the signature of the employer-landlord regarding the jornalero’s behaviour. The Libreta also registered the jornalero’s debts and record of payment. The jornalero was obliged to carry with him his Libreta at all times, and to submit it regularly for inspection to the authorities.\(^{13}\) Basically, the Libreta regime, which favoured the hacendado class, was a strategic way of replacing the slavery system and to control the labour and behaviour of landless men. In nineteenth-century Puerto Rican fiction, allusions to the Libreta system echoed this unfair method of forced labour and control, as it is illustrated in Salvador Brau’s novel ¿Pecadora? (see Chapter 5).

The omission of the African element in the nineteenth-century national cultural discourse (as in the novels of Manuel Zeno Gandia and Salvador Brau) has become a commonplace discussion in history, cultural studies, and literary criticism since the late 1970s. One of the first Puerto Rican scholars to examine and emphasize the importance of the African component in Puerto Rican culture was José Luis González in his influential and highly debated essay El país de cuatro pisos. The relevant point of González’s essay was to acknowledge the value of the African cultural component in the growth of nationalist sentiments in the island.

\(^{13}\) See Adalberto López’s “Birth of a Nation: Puerto Rico in the Nineteenth Century” 70-71; and Angel G. Quintero Rivera’s “Background to the Emergence of Imperialist Capitalism in Puerto Rico” 105.
According to González, many of the Spaniards who came to live in the island under the advantages provided by the “Real Cédula de Gracias” of 1815, were themselves discriminated minorities in Spain, for example, gallegos, catalanes or mallorquies. As a general rule, poor white immigrants were endowed with lands, slaves, and agregados by the Spanish government and soon adopted the air of aristocrats and became impious landowners (González, El pais 23-24). Most of the Spanish population who immigrated to the island before the nineteenth century did not see it as their permanent home, but rather as a springboard to the mainland in their search for riches. Many Spanish immigrants were in constant flux and moved by ambition and profit rather than a presumed love for the island. Often, the Spaniards remained loyal to Spain, to which they wanted to return wealthy and successful. As a result, they did not develop national sentiments toward the island. On the contrary, the population of African descent—blacks and mulattoes—did not have the opportunity to go back to Africa nor to emigrate from Puerto Rico, so they were forced to remain on the island and saw it as their permanent home. That is why for González the “first genuine Puerto Ricans” to develop nationalist sentiments toward the island were the Creole blacks and mulattoes.¹⁴ Perhaps because González imagined the jibaro not only as of white

¹⁴ Scholars who either felt offended by his emphatic recognition of the African cultural heritage or by his Marxist approach fiercely contested González’s conclusions. For example, Juan Manuel Carrión in his article “Etnia, raza y la nacionalidad puertorriqueña” examines the relevance of the Hispanic conceptions in the nationalist imaginary of Pedro Albizu Campos—a political leader who played a key role during the complex political process of the 1930s-1950s. Carrión believes that González exaggerates the importance of the African cultural legacy to the detriment of the Hispanic heritage, which for many is the marrow of Puerto Rican culture. Carrión, however, appears to underplay González’s recognition of the important role that Creole Hispanics, such as Alejandro Tapia y Rivera and Salvador Brau, played in the cultural and national formation of Puerto Rico.
Hispanic-Taino mix, as the nineteenth-century intellectual elite insisted, but as of black
descent, in his analysis he sidesteps the fact that the peasant population of Taino descent was
ever-present in the island.

The peasantry formed a free, independent rural class that lived fairly isolated in the
remote central mountain range, seeing Borinquén as their only and genuine home. Their
independent spirit and their connection to the land—in addition to their identification with
whiteness in the minds of the Creole Hispanic elite—made the jibaro, and not the black, the
national symbol of Puerto Rican Creole literature. Nowadays the Afro-Antillian contribution
to the culture of Puerto Rico, and of the Caribbean in general, is acknowledged as one of the
most influential components of Caribbean cultural heterogeneity. The African cultural
heritage, though, remained for centuries marginalized by the Spanish and white Creole elite.
Despite the fact that Puerto Rican blacks comprised the majority of the population, their
presence was overtly omitted or despised in most nineteenth-century writing.

Why did Puerto Rican intellectuals fix their gaze on the mountain peasant population
and tightly close it to the African majority? Isabelo Zenón Cruz in his critical essay Narciso
descubre su trasero demonstrates, with an extensive historical body of citations, the roots of
the discrimination against the African heritage and of its eventual vindication in the official
history. The “black stain” was a shameful insult that haunted Puerto Ricans’ racial heritage
for centuries. Having black blood was immediately associated with the institutionalized
system of slavery and its consequent moral degradation. The powerful methods of
domination and control exercised by the white dominant class contributed to develop strong
racial prejudices of white superiority. The rhetoric used by slave-traders sustained the notion
that blacks were primitive savages devoid of a Christian soul. In this way they justified the
slave-trade and its inhuman methods and practices. This rhetoric was ingrained in the psyche
of slave-states all over the Americas, and Puerto Rico was not an exception. A significant
excerpt from the first History of Puerto Rico, written in the eighteenth century by Fray Iñigo
Abbad y Lasierra, states:

Los mulatos, de que se compone la mayor parte de la población de esta Isla, son los
hijos de blanco y negra. Su color es obscuro desagradable, sus ojos turbios, son altos y
bien formados, más fuertes y acostumbrados al trabajo que los blancos criollos,
quienes los tratan con desprecio. Entre esta clase de gente hay muchos expeditos y
liberales para discurrir y obrar, se han distinguido en todos los tiempos por sus
acciones y son ambiciosos de honor.

Los negros que hay en esta Isla, unos son traídos de las costas de Africa, otros son
criollos, descendientes de aquellos, sin mezcla de otra casta: los primeros son todos
vendidos por esclavos; de los segundos hay muchos libres; con todo no hay cosa más
afrentosa en esta Isla que el ser negro o descendiente de ellos.15

Abbad y Lasierra indicates that the majority of the population were free mulattoes, strong and
hard-working, as opposed to the whites who were not, and despite the Africans’ noble
qualities, the whites disdained them. Blacks and mulattoes, free or enslaved, distinguished
themselves by their actions, good discernment, and great “ambition of honor.” However, in
the words of Abbad y Lasierra, there is nothing more shameful in the island than being black

15 See Abbad y Lasierra, *Historia, geografía civil y natural de esta isla de San Juan Bautista
de Puerto Rico* 182-83, qtd. in Zenón Cruz 24.
or of black descent. This Negro-phobia prevailed throughout the nineteenth century, and it was aggravated by the fear of black insurrection. In addition, the black population did not have the means nor the spare time to meditate, reflect, or to write about their own situation.

On the contrary, the white Hispanic Creole elite was privileged, and although repressed by colonial control and censorship, it was their point of view that prevailed as representative of Puerto Rican nationalist sentiment and culture. The failure in recognizing blacks and mulattoes as genuinely Puerto Ricans was a generalized cultural rejection generated in part by a European colonial bias based on notions of racial superiority. The upper-classes did not want to have any connection with, or relation to, the shame of slavery.

These radical class and racial perceptions must be taken into serious account when studying the discourse of the Creole elite, in order to contextualize their writings and to understand their political position with respect to the black and mulatto majority. This does not mean that my study intends to be partisan to any racist implications, but rather to illuminate the reasons behind the Creole elite's deliberate omission of the population of African descent. The neglected presence of blacks and mulattoes in the fiction of the period under study obliged me to search for the possible reasons behind the ideological obliteration of a large part of the population that played a crucial role in the growth of nationalist sentiments in the island.

The Creole Elite and the Revolutions for Independence

Even though during the nineteenth century in Puerto Rico the spirit of the time was in favour of revolution and independence, historians have pointed out the fear felt by the
island’s Creole elite of the eventual empowerment of the lower peasant class and slaves.

Arturo Santana, for example, in his article “Puerto Rico in a Revolutionary World” observes that the revolution for independence in Venezuela in 1810-1811 was closely watched by the Puerto Rican Creole elite, who maintained correspondence with Venezuelan revolutionary leaders:

However, the revolutionary, separatist spirit was not shared by the majority of the island’s inhabitants at this time, and thus, as in the case of Cuba it would not be the decisive historical force at this stage. A liberal reformist tendency was to emerge, instead, to oppose the conservatives who were unconditionally loyal to Spain . . .

Throughout this period Puerto Rico was Spain’s principal counter-revolutionary bastion in the eastern Caribbean for the struggle in northern South America, especially Venezuela. (72)

Years later, after the war of Carabobo in 1821, hundreds of loyalist Venezuelan families arrived in Puerto Rico: “preciso fue apelar a los sentimientos populares, recogiéndose 12,000 pesos en suscripción voluntaria para socorrer a aquellas atribuladas gentes” (Brau, Historia... 204-05). The Liberal Reformist tendency was the safest anti-colonial standpoint that the moneyed elite adopted, particularly in the aftermath of the 1804 Haitian Revolution.

Haiti’s declaration of independence was seen as a threat to an economy based on slavery. It is well known that Haiti was the most prosperous emporium of the plantation system and the richest colony in the 1700s. The bloody slave revolt against white landowners caused the surviving white families to flee in terror from Haiti to neighbouring islands, and Puerto Rico hosted many of these families. For example, Adalberto López (1980) notes, that
French planters who escaped from Haiti immigrated with their families to Puerto Rico, as did many Spanish families from the Latin American mainland after the wars of independence began in 1810. These families were extremely conservative, and as soon as they established themselves in the local hierarchy they sought to protect their social status and privileges at all cost:

The French royalists and the vigilant authorities in Puerto Rico were joined after 1810 by thousands of Spaniards fleeing from the wars of independence on the mainland colonies. These royalist exiles also brought with them tales of horror about what happened when the masses were involved in political struggles, and once settled in the island, they, too, made every effort to see that Puerto Rico remained a colony of Spain. (López 52)

Other Caribbean islands where the plantation—mainly of coffee, sugar cane, and tobacco—was the main source of profit throughout the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth, shared this fear of the rebellions of the lower class and the enslaved masses. The immigration of planters and Spanish loyalist exiles from St. Domingue (Haiti) and the fear of slave revolts were part of the reason why there was not a unanimous desire for total independence in Puerto Rico during and after the mainland revolutions of 1810. Unlike the rest of the Latin American countries, engaged in consolidating newly-born nation-states, Puerto Rico and Cuba remained under the strict control of the Spanish Crown. Spanish citizens and their sympathizers both in the Peninsula and the Antilles regarded Cuba and Puerto Rico as the most loyal colonies, “remaining faithful while the other mainland territories undertook their wars of anticolonial liberation” (Lewis 265). This unconditional
loyalty was extremely important for the Spanish administration, since Spain’s own political instability in Europe jeopardized its control over what remained of its overseas empire. Spain’s domestic political unsteadiness had been decisive in the series of events that unfolded in the Spanish American colonies in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

In 1809, during the devastating war between France and Spain, Ferdinand VII was imprisoned and the deputies of the Junta Central de las Cortes de Cádiz decided to write a new constitution which resulted in the constitutional period of 1812-1814. The Junta invited representatives from all of the American colonies to the Cortes de Cádiz. At this time, the Spanish colonies on the Latin American mainland were involved in wars for independence, and the Junta believed that this call for a new constitution would appease the revolutionaries. For their part, the Puerto Rican Creole elite engaged in the process opened by the new Spanish constitution with vigour and optimism. This led to the first official election in the island; despite the fact that voting was restricted to literate upper class men, nonetheless it was a legitimate exercise in proto-democracy. Don Ramón Power y Giralt, born in San Juan, was elected the Puerto Rican representative for the Cortes de Cádiz. In 1810, Power y Giralt presented Las Instrucciones al Diputado Don Ramón Power y Giralt which were proposals for reforms that “point to the existence of a gathering protonationalist feeling in the Puerto Rico of the time ... they were the sentiments of a small-town professional elite” (Lewis 265).

The proposals put forth the social, political, and economic petitions for reforms demanded by the Creole elite which, in turn, were based on a 1782 document written by Fray Lázaro de Abad y Lasierra which criticized the despotism of the absolutist colonial system. The brief constitutional period from 1812 to 1814, known as the Constitution of Cadiz, reinforced
in Puerto Rico what Lewis calls “a sort of embryonic political national consciousness,” that is, a growing nationalist sentiment among the Creole elite (267). The Constitution of Cadiz, although short-lived, allowed freedom of speech for the first time and as a result reinforced this initial national sentiment. The sense of freedom experienced during this couple of years awoke in the people a claim to their right to openly criticize the political regime and to express their feelings in the arts.

In 1814 the Spanish conservatives overthrew the Constitution of Cadiz and restored the absolute power of the monarchy. Six years later a second constitutional period was decreed which also lasted a few years (1820-1823). The restitution of Ferdinand VII to the Spanish throne in 1824 put an immediate end to the constitution, and restored the absolutist regime over the island. The third constitutional period in 1834-1836 again awoke in the people the spirit of freedom of speech and an ever-increasing thirst for the arts.

The Constitutional periods promoted the few cultural and educational institutions that survived during the nineteenth century, such as “La Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País” (1812), “La Academia Real de Buenas Letras” (1850), and the “Instituto Civil de Segunda Enseñanza” (1873). To a greater or lesser degree, these few institutions contributed to the incipient education system and the limited dissemination of literature and the arts. In Mis memorias, Tapia tells yet another anecdote of his ongoing struggle for establishing a cultural centre which he envisaged as “El Ateneo Puertorriqueño.” He recalls that by 1855 he tried to found such an institution. He already had a building, furniture, and subscribers only needing the governmental permission; but censorship banned a first attempt at publishing a simple statement of encouragement for the Ateneo, an act that deeply disappointed Tapia:
"Desisti, pues, de su fundación juzgándolo imposible. Estaba visto, con aquella administración tan estrecha, era incompatible toda ilustración y todo progreso" (88). It was not until 1876 that a group of intellectuals headed by Manuel Elzaburu founded the "Ateneo Puertorriqueño," also called "la docta casa," which has been the home of literary and scientific matters until the present day (Quintero Rivera 221; González, *Literatura y sociedad* 74). The need for a university was an argument constantly brought up by nineteenth-century Creole intellectuals, but never heeded by the Spanish authorities, and the University of Puerto Rico had to wait until 1903 to be founded.

The island’s most important technology for the dissemination of information, creative writing and ideas throughout the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was the printing press. The freedom of the press in Puerto Rico was in a constant flux in the nineteenth century, subjected to the ups and downs of the Spanish Cortes and the arbitrary whims of the Spanish governing officials. Historians of literature have pointed out that the late introduction of the printing press (1806) delayed the development of a literary tradition in the island. Despite restrictive censorship, these three brief constitutional periods afforded Puerto Ricans the experience of expressing themselves in politics, the arts, and literature.

The Printing Press: Birth of a Puerto Rican Literary Tradition

In her study *La novela en Puerto Rico: apuntes para su historia*, Carmen Gómez Tejera emphasizes that the rudimentary state of, and limited access to, the printing press in the nineteenth century was aggravated by the governors’ and officials’ constant harassment,
their arbitrary policies and censorship, and the high cost of printing.\textsuperscript{16} These were all fundamental factors that affected negatively the development of both journalism and creative writing in Puerto Rico. Nonetheless, ever since the printing press was introduced in 1806,\textsuperscript{17} the seeds of freedom of speech and of the right to express opinions in writing were growing among the literate Creoles in the ever-expanding urban centres.

The first and only newspaper authorized in the island was the biweekly governmental \textit{Gaceta Oficial}, which began circulation in December 1807. Thanks to the Constitution of Cadiz of 1812-14, freedom of the press was declared and literate Puerto Ricans were able to voice their political concerns and artistic inclinations for the first time. The popular newspaper \textit{El Cigarrón} appeared for a brief period in 1814 and was characterized by its keen sense of humor and political satire. Unfortunately, there are no surviving copies of \textit{El Cigarrón}, as many scholars have lamented.\textsuperscript{18} This publication would offer much valuable information on the early thought and nationalist sentiments of the nascent middle class.

During this period, another governmental periodical began circulation, \textit{El Diario Económico}

\textsuperscript{16} Gómez Tejera’s \textit{La novela en Puerto Rico} is the first Master’s thesis of the Department of Estudios Hispánicos at Universidad de Puerto Rico that compiled a thorough study on the development of the Puerto Rican novel from the Conquest to 1929. It was published in book form in 1947.

\textsuperscript{17} The first printing press was introduced in 1806 under the rule of Captain General don Toribio Montes (1804-1809).

\textsuperscript{18} Josefina Rivera de Alvarez in her \textit{Diccionario de literatura puertorriqueña} documents sources that speak to these first newspapers, such as Manuel Fernández Juncos “Literatura y elocuencia;” Antonio S. Pedreira \textit{El periodismo en Puerto Rico}; and Otto Olivera \textit{La literatura en periódicos y revistas de Puerto Rico} (Rivera de Alvarez 90). I also found references to \textit{El Cigarrón} and the other newspapers I cite here in Francisco Manrique Cabrera’s \textit{Historia de la literatura Puertorriqueña}, and in José Luis González’s \textit{Literatura y sociedad en Puerto Rico}.  

As its name indicates, it dealt chiefly with economic issues that concerned the elite. During the second constitutional period of 1821-1823 several papers were founded for the enjoyment of the urban literate class, namely El Eco, El Investigador Puertorriqueño, and El Diario Liberal y de Variedades de Puerto Rico.

In 1839, El Boletín Instructivo y Mercantil began circulation under the care of the Creole civilian Florentino Gimbernat, and was one of the few papers that survived throughout the 1800s. Even though El Boletín was a governmental publication, it did not necessarily represent official opinion, yielding its views and scope to the fluctuations of the governors in office. By 1843, under the direction of the Liberal Creole Ignacio Guasp, El Boletín served all the different opinions and literary expressions of the time until 1845. Then it became the voice of the “Capitanes Generales,” the official organ of the “españoles sin condiciones.” From this time on, other publications abounded on a diversity of topics, such as education, economics, social life, and political satire, but censorship was still exercised and priority was given to the governmental press. Terms such as “independence,” “abolition of slavery,” “freedom,” “tyranny,” and “despotism” were banned from the journalist’s vocabulary. High fines were applied for the violation of censorship, and again, the ever-changing stream of governors imposed their capricious ruthlessness on the popular press. For example, Governor Mariscal de Campos Juan Primm (1847-1848) suppressed the circulation of El ponerño, the most important vehicle for the dissemination of popular Liberal thought in the city of Ponce. Primm also closed another popular newspaper in Mayagüez, El Imparcial, simply because “a don Juan Primm no le hizo gracia su imparcialidad,” as Salvador Brau ironically stated in Historia de Puerto Rico (228). Tragically, these few examples illustrate how these short-term
governors—most of whom did not hold power for more than two years—played at will with the dispositions and laws that affected Puerto Rican freedom of speech.

In 1856, as Gómez Tejera notes, Ignacio Guasp founded other newspapers, *El Ramillete*, and *La Guirnalda Puertorriqueña*, that are important to mention for their literary orientation. These “voceros,” as Manrique Cabrera calls these few newspapers that saw the light during the brief constitutional periods, provided invaluable venues for early literary manifestations and showcased people’s increasing interest for poetry: “En las columnas del *Diario Económico* y *El Cigarrón*, 1814; de *El Diario Liberal*, 1821, y de *El Eco*, 1822, están grabadas las iniciales de nuestros comienzos” wrote Antonio S. Pedreira referring to those first popular publications, most of which have not survived.¹⁹

Despite the many restrictions, Brau documented that by 1865 there were eight local newspapers in circulation (*Historia* 229). After Primm, it took exactly ten more governors and two interims before Governor General Gabriel Baldrich (1870-1871) decreed the freedom of the press in 1870. Between 1871 and 1874, five different governors ruled the island, clearly showing the inconsistency through which it was politically administered by Spain. In 1874, at the end of the term of General Rafael Primo de Rivera, freedom of the press was suppressed yet again as a consequence of the fall of the Spanish Republic, since the opinions published in the island represented a threat to “la integridad nacional” (Gómez Tejera 10-11).

¹⁹ See Antonio S. Pedreira *El periodismo en Puerto Rico, bosquejo histórico desde su iniciación hasta 1930* (Habana, 1941), qtd. in Manrique Cabrera 71.
This brief review of the early nineteenth-century Puerto Rican periodicals illustrates that from the outset Puerto Ricans had a strong inclination for creative writing, especially poetry and drama. According to Manrique Cabrera, the first literary publication in the island was a book of poems, written by the outcast Spaniard Juan Rodríguez Calderón, simply entitled Poesias, followed by a second work Ocios de juventud (both circa 1806). These books are important in our context because of their singularity, but especially because their themes are focused on Puerto Rico, as in the poem “Ida al campo de Puerto Rico” by Rodríguez Calderón:

Sitio feliz en que por tantos años
Después que desenganos
De la vida pasada
Me ofreció la fortuna.

... 
Albergue venturoso
Adonde encontró suelo el forastero
Un asilo dichoso
Y a donde con esmero
Al extraño se acoge (qtd. in Manrique Cabrera 68)

These verses offer tangible evidence of the way in which the island provided shelter and refuge to Spanish exiles as well as to other immigrants. Ironically, while Puerto Rico was a good place for asylum, its own people suffered exile and had to flee to other countries. Most of the Puerto Rican exiles were intellectuals who belonged to the pro-independence faction and who were forced to leave the island, never to return, as happened to the patriots Eugenio María de Hostos, Ramón Emeterio Betances, Lola Rodríguez de Tió, and Segundo Ruiz Belvis, among others.
The Awakening of Theatre

Cultural studies concerning the first half of the nineteenth century reveal that Puerto Ricans had a special inclination for theatre. In *Mis memorias*, Tapia recalls that there was only one theatre in existence before the 1820s, a wooden building that he describes as a “verdadero corral de comedias” (89). It was probably built during the constitutional period of 1812-1814, but since it was destroyed there remains no concrete evidence of its origin. Tapia indicates that in 1824, under the initiative of the Spanish army, construction began on the first *coliseo* (a large auditorium or coliseum), which was opened circa 1830 (*Mis memorias* 90). Many theatre companies from Spain, México, and other countries were invited to perform in the island, with tremendous success. Tapia, Pasarell, and Manrique Cabrera have documented that the Puerto Rican audience particularly enjoyed plays by Leandro de Moratin (1760-1828) and Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza (1789-1851), as well as many *sainetes* by Ramón de la Cruz (1731-1794). In *Mis memorias*, Tapia mentions that some local *sainetes* were also included, along with those by Ramón de la Cruz. With his usual sense of humour, Tapia refers to the title of one such local *sainete* for which “podrá juzgarse la estética de nuestro público en aquel tiempo. Denominábase así: ‘Velorio en Bayajá / y pendencia en Culo Prieto’” (90). Despite its vocabulary, as Tapia hilariously remarks, the quotation shows that a Puerto Rican dramaturgy was gradually emerging.

Of special interest is Emilio J. Pasarell’s discovery of an anonymous fragment of what he identified as part of a drama written and published in Puerto Rico by 1811.20 The fragment

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20 See Pasarell’s *Orígenes de la afición teatral en Puerto Rico* (1951) qtd. in Manrique Cabrera 1971, 69-70; and qtd. in González 1976, 84.
might be the first Puerto Rican play whose action is situated in the island, probably between 1795 and 1805. According to Pasarell, the plot is a case of adultery and bigamy: Fulgencio, a Spaniard who married again in Puerto Rico, is followed by his first wife, who comes to find out her husband’s infidelity. These early explorations of theatre, coupled with the literary texts available through the popular press, demonstrate how in Puerto Rico there was an audience eager and ready for the dissemination of the arts and culture.

In 1848, when Puerto Rico was under the rule of one of the island’s notorious despots, Governor de la Pezuela (1848-1851), Tapia wrote his first Romantic drama Roberto d’ Evreux. In Mis memorias, Tapia confesses that at the time he was a devotee of the romantic historical drama, his favourite readings in particular were Cristina de Suecia by Dumas, and María de Tudor by Victor Hugo. In both dramas each of the queens, in a jealous rage, have their lovers killed. Tapia recalls that his young and highly romantic imagination was carried away with the idea of a queen who, after punishing her lover, mourns him inconsolably. He found in Queen Elizabeth Tudor’s affair with the Count of Essex the ideal subject matter for his drama Roberto d’ Evreux. Tapia recounts in detail this anecdote and how the censor banned his play:

Olvidé que era hijo de una colonia española en la España monárquica de 1848, con aquella literatura dramática que aún solía pensar, o decir de los reyes, algo menos que Sancho Ortiz de las Roelas: “El rey no puede mentir; no, que es imagen de Dios” . . . El censor hubo de prohibir no sólo que se diese al teatro, pero ni siquiera a la estampa, so pretexto, como me dijo aquel funcionario, de que en estas provincias de América no debía permitirse la impresión ni representación de obras en que, como
pasaba con la mía, se humanizase a los reyes; y que yo pintaba a una reina frenéticamente enamorada, hasta el punto de hacer morir por celos a su amante . . .

Necesitaba yo tener pocos años (contaba 21) para suponer que en Puerto Rico pudiese escribirse lo que en Francia. (125-26)

Humorously, Tapia declares that the national literature did not lose anything of importance with the prohibition of his drama, since it was partly inspired by his passion for a certain sophisticated girl of Franco-English descent. The play, he indicates, was the result of his inexperienced youth, and consequently it had many flaws: “la candidez del adolescente se revelaba en esto, como el poco valor de la obra literaria” (125). Notwithstanding, Tapia managed to bring to the stage with tremendous success a revised version of *Roberto d’ Evreux* in 1856 and published it that same year (García Díaz 132). For this, Tapia is recognized as the first Puerto Rican playwright whose plays formally initiated the national theatrical tradition.

Tapia continued writing dramas and promoting theatre locally. The themes that Tapia and other Puerto Rican playwrights used were inspired by events of recent foreign history, such as *Roberto d’ Evreux*. Tales of honour, unrequited love, and the adventures of pirates figured among this first romantic impulse. Tapia wrote several historical dramas, namely *Bernardo de Palissy* (1857), *Camoens* (1868), and *Vasco Nuñez de Balboa* (1872). In these romantic and sentimental plays, Tapia dealt with the lives and love affairs of men such as the Count of Essex, the French *alfarero* Palissy, the Portuguese poet Camoens, and the Spanish conquistador Nuñez de Balboa. There are two interesting pieces which are not historical, *La cuarterona* (1867) and *La parte del león* (1880). Both dramas are set in Tapia’s own day, but
the only one that presents a Caribbean setting is *La cuarterona*. The action takes place in Havana, and explores the taboo subject of interracial relations. *La parte del león*, even though it is set in Madrid, has a transatlantic connection, for the heroine, Catalina, had a boyfriend in America, Enrique, but she marries another man in Spain. Enrique goes to Spain to confront Catalina, and her husband Fernando believes that Catalina has been unfaithful. Fernando kills Enrique in a duel and abandons his wife. According to García Díaz, *La parte del león* was not welcomed by the Puerto Rican public, perhaps because Tapia used it to convey his message of moral and social equality between spouses (García Díaz 146-47).

Salvador Brau also wrote plays which were performed on the island and were received with enthusiasm by the public. Brau treated historical as well as local topics in his plays. *Héroe y mártir* (1870) is an historical drama about the struggles of the *comuneros* against Carlos V in Castile. It was followed by the comic piece *De la superficie al fondo* (1874), and his last play, *La vuelta al hogar* (1877), which revolves around the adventures of pirates on the Puerto Rican coast at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In spite of the prohibition and scarcity of creative texts, they were still found in the private libraries of the Creole elite. Alejandro Tapia, for example, whose family did not have the means to send him to study abroad, had access to the private library of the wealthy Acosta family. Tapia records in *Mis memorias* that he fed his insatiable hunger for literature by reading English and German authors: Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, Goethe and Schiller, the Spanish and French romantics Larra and Espronceda, and Chateaubriand and Lamartine, among others. The same applies to Salvador Brau, who was not able to study abroad but had free access to the extensive private library of the wealthy brothers Félix and José García de la
Torre (Manrique Cabrera 150). In his Introduction to Brau’s drama *La vuelta al hogar*, Cesáreo Rosa-Nieves indicates that Brau was chiefly self-taught and that “en sus ratos de ocio leía a Quintana, Lamartine, Hartzenbusch, García Gutiérrez, Nuñez de Arce, Zapata y José Echegaray. Así se fue haciendo aquel carácter recio” (Rosa-Nieves 6). Despite the imposed censorship, European authors were being read simultaneously on the island and abroad, and slowly the nascent Puerto Rican narratives were gestating.

While in Puerto Rico the Romantic trend in theatre was the norm by the middle of the nineteenth century in Spain it was declining, and French Realism was in vogue. As Angel M. Aguirre indicates, the Puerto Rican reading public delighted themselves mainly with Spanish novels, in particular those by Fernán Caballero (Cecilia Böhl de Faber, 1796-1877),23 Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920), José María de Pereda (1833-1906), Emilia Pardo Bazán (1852-1921) and Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833-1891). The intellectuals who had the economic means to study in France, such as Ramón Emeterio Betances and Manuel Zeno Gandía, read Realist and Naturalist authors firsthand, namely Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), and Emile Zola (1840-1902) (Aguirre 16-18). These authors figured among the literary models that early Puerto Rican writers adopted and interpreted in their own ways.

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23 Cecilia Böhl de Faber’s novel *La gaviota*, became favourite reading among the elite. According to Aguirre, the novel is an example of the mixing of styles, such as *Costumbrismo*, Romantic, and Realist (Aguirre 18).
The First Creole Writings

Poetry and drama were the first literary expressions found in the local press and in lost pieces—such as the anonymous fragment found by Pasarell—from as early as 1811. Puerto Rican histories of literature agree that the publication of the *Aguinaldo Puertorriqueño* in 1843 marks the formal beginning of Puerto Rican literature. The *Aguinaldo* was an anthology of prose and verse which was put together by a group of enthusiastic Spanish and Creoles. They published it at the same press where the newspaper *El Boletín Mercantil* was printed (Rivera de Alvarez 16). The Anthology contained the work of three Spaniards, two Venezuelans, and seven Puerto Ricans, among them two women, Alejandrina Benítez and Benicia Aguayo. The *Aguinaldo* attempted to be “un libro enteramente indígena” as it states its foreword (qtd. in Rivera de Alvarez 16).

The success of this first national creative publication moved a group of Puerto Rican students at the University of Barcelona to write a second anthology. The next year (1844) another anthology was published in Spain entitled *Album Puertorriqueño*. It was welcomed with enthusiasm by the Puerto Rican reading public. There followed the second *Aguinaldo Puertorriqueño* and *El Cancionero de Borinquén* (both in 1846), published in San Juan and Barcelona respectively. In these anthologies are found for the first time the names of poets and novelists who will continue to publish. Among them stand out José Julián Acosta, Francisco Vasallo, and, in particular, Manuel A. Alonso. Alonso wrote a compilation of “cuadros de costumbres” entitled *El gibaro* (1849) which years later would be consecrated as the cornerstone of the *Criollista* literary movement. The work of the notable poet Alejandrina Benítez also marks this initial literary stage.
Rivera de Alvarez notes that these anthologies maintain the form and style of the Romantic Movement that was already out of fashion in Spain (16). González adds that the first *Aguinaldo* of 1843, despite lacking literary merits “tiene en cambio la importancia innegable de haber iniciado toda una serie de publicaciones similares en las que empieza a hallar expresión cada vez más segura la novísima literatura nacional” (*Literatura y sociedad* 95-96). In the cultural history of the island these anthologies represent the first locally based and published attempts at creative writing and stand as the precursors of what is considered the birth of an autochthonous literature. There are some discrepancies, however, in regard to the pioneering value of some of these early creative works. In this section I will discuss some controversial aspects in order to provide more contextual grounds for the subsequent analysis.

Before continuing this succinct overview of early Puerto Rican creative writing, it will be useful to examine the relationship between European literary schools and the Puerto Rican literary tradition. Historians of Puerto Rican literature, such as Josefina Rivera de Alvarez and Cesareo Rosa-Nieves, classify the island’s literary production strictly following the aesthetic norms and trends of the European schools. Contrary to that fixed view, I attempt a more flexible taxonomy, for which I am indebted to Francisco Manrique Cabrera’s comments in his *Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña*. Manrique Cabrera argues that his attempt to avoid assigning names of European schools or literary movements to the different stages of Puerto Rican literary development responds to the fact that those trends—Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism—are strictly defined conceptualizations of European literary criticism, and that they would hardly do justice to, or describe with fidelity, the literary phenomena of Latin America:
En lo que a Puerto Rico atañe, son con mucho, inciertos, cuando no injustos, o en cierta medida, erróneos. Tales conceptos tienen en la Europa literaria unos contenidos bastante precisos porque sus respectivos deslindes no son mera invención conceptual de críticos y pensadores, sino que también corresponden a unas determinadas experiencias culturales-históricas que en sucesivas oleadas de sensibilidades han ido plasmando los climas de espíritus germanos a tales expresiones estéticas. Las evoluciones históricas de la vieja Europa ofrecen con cierta claridad las fronteras de esas oleadas. En la América nuestra, por recién nacida, no podemos hablar hasta el próximo ayer de esa marcha acompasada y ello con gran cautela. (110)

For this reason, analyses that seek to fit Puerto Rican literature into fixed European trends seem forced. However it is difficult to escape from following the models of the European canon because they marked the pace of Western literature. Latin American and Caribbean narratives were unavoidably influenced by the literary models from the other side of the Atlantic. For this reason, I take Manrique Cabrera’s advice with caution, concerning the literary analysis of Puerto Rican literature, since we cannot measure the Creole narratvie against the strict categories of the European trends but nor can we avoid all comparisons. My study tries, however, to avoid thinking of Creole creative writings as “delayed development” or as “copies.” Puerto Rico, like other countries, developed its own cultural nuances, spaces, and particularities that contributed to the emergence of a local literary tradition.

I will refer, however, to the traditional nomenclature of European literary movements, because they define the Western literary canon. Perhaps the only exception is Modernismo, whose literary, philosophical and religious connotations go beyond the Latin American
expression of French Symbolism. In “Carnaval/Antropofagia/Parodia,” Emir Rodríguez Monegal suggests that the European aesthetic models were accepted in Latin America, but they were immediately parodied (in the sense of “parody” coined by Bakhtin): “Ya hay en Darío un tono de autoparodia en el juego de ambigüedades con que imita y desacraliza los modelos del simbolismo francés . . . resultó evidente que sólo las distorsiones de la parodia y la violencia de la antropofagia podían hacer justicia al ‘espiritu’ de la literatura latinoamericana” (407). It is perhaps in the concept of parody that we might find a better vehicle for the interpretation of nineteenth-century Puerto Rican fiction, than in the one offered by the European literary genres, trends, and schools.

Manrique Cabrera explains that romanticism persisted throughout the nineteenth century as an “attitude”—a melancholy and bitter reaction of the defeated aboriginal peoples to the Conquest—and not as an echo of the European literary school. The first literary expressions show this romantic attitude as very emotive but absolutely not revolutionary (Manrique Cabrera 111-12). On the other hand, José Luis González remarks in Literatura y sociedad that the Romantic movement did not arrive late in the island, but rather was not initially welcomed:

Este romanticismo inicial, que no llegó tarde, encontró sin embargo un ambiente inhóspito en la isla . . . El romanticismo, aun el de filiación tradicionalista, tropezó en la propia España con la fuerte resistencia de quienes regían la vida intelectual y política del país. El mismo Walter Scott, abanderado del ala reaccionaria del movimiento, fue prohibido en la península. En la colonia, que apenas alcanzó a disfrutar los momentos de triunfo liberal en la metrópoli, la situación tenía que ser
peor. El romanticismo de signo revolucionario, que en España logró expresiones capitales en ciertos períodos de libertad, fue reprimido en la isla con verdadera saña a lo largo de todo el siglo. (91-2)

As I have pointed out, Puerto Rican writers such as Tapia and Brau, and also the writers who contributed to the Aguinaldos, El Album, and El Cancionero, had access to the neo-classical and romantic authors. They sought the expression of a different spirit, or at least they tried to voice something “indígena” which González calls “la primera hazaña criollista de vertiente romántica” (Literatura y sociedad 102). The interest in creating a voice that would sound authentically “boricua” (from the island of Borinquén) was one of the main concerns of this early national literature.

In Imagen del puertorriqueño en la novela, José Juan Beauchamp points out that an interest in the life and social conditions of the mountain folk initiated a ciclo jibaro in Puerto Rican writing. According to Beauchamp, the jibarismo literario is two-dimensional: on the one hand it can be merely picturesque, on the other, it can be used to denounce social conditions (29). This statement shows the confluence of the Romantic with the Realist movements. That is why, during the ciclo jibaro, both dimensions developed simultaneously: “Se caracteriza, pues, este ciclo jibaro por un afán de hacer sociología dentro y fuera de la obra literaria, pero con predominio de lo pintoresquista” (30). Its earliest manifestations are found in the newspapers Diario Liberal y de Variedades and El Investigador.

In 1820, Las coplas del gibaro—an anonymous short manuscript that criticized the recently restored 1812 Spanish Constitution—circulated among the reading public. Even though its political criticism was conservative, Las coplas, written in verse and imitating the
“jibaro’s” speech, provoked controversy. El investigador published the poem, while attacking its political content, a reaction that resulted in a wider diffusion of the poem, which captured more public attention than was originally intended. In order to defend himself, the author of Las coplas, Miguel Cabrera from Arecibo, revealed his identity in La Gaceta, thus creating the first nationalist public debate in the newspapers of Puerto Rico.21

Mire prima Sica,
Múdeme ei lichón
Que yo voy a vei
La Costitución

Isen la an tragío
En un gran papei,
De juro la a embiao
Deje España ei Rei

Me an asegurao
Con grande sijilio,
Que no pagaremos
Ya ningún susilio

Que toos los presos
Se echarán ajuela
Y que ya ca uno
Jará lo que quiera (excerpt qtd. in Manrique Cabrera 71)

Historically, Las coplas is regarded as the first creative literary attempt at appropriating the jibaro’s speech to voice political protest, thus conveying a distinct Puerto Rican expression.

21 According to Manrique Cabrera, the impassioned public debate around Las coplas del gibaro was first documented in 1941 by Antonio S. Pedreira in El periodismo en Puerto Rico (Historia de la Literatura Puertorriqueña 71). After Pedreira’s discovery of Las coplas, numerous Puerto Rican studies have pointed out the text’s foundational value, for instance, Messinger-Cypess’s “Tradition and Innovation…” (76) as well as her “The Unveiling of a Nation…” (283-84), and in González’s Literatura y sociedad (85-86).
For this reason, *Las coplas* is assessed as the foundational text that inspired later writers and helped reinforce a feeling of national culture among the elite.

*Las coplas* is considered the antecedent of the more extensive *El gíbaro* (1849) by Manuel Alonso, expanded and republished in 1882 with an introduction by Salvador Brau. Alonso’s *El gíbaro* is arguably regarded as the first literary expression of Puerto Rican national identity. Its second edition in 1882 marked the moment when the *jibarismo literario* reached its peak (Beauchamp 30). The literary representation of the *jíbaro*, in its romanticized version as the embodiment of Rousseau’s *noble sauvage*, appears as a recurrent leitmotif since the beginning of Puerto Rican creative writing, as can be seen in the first literary anthologies.

Although it is true that the *jíbaro* became the nationalist symbol par excellence in Puerto Rican literature, the validity of the claim that Alonso’s *El gíbaro* marks the beginning of the Puerto Rican national literary tradition is questionable. González, in *El país de cuatro pisos*, argues that the status of first “national” text should be more properly accredited to Alejandro Tapia, whose drama *Roberto D’Evreux* was written two years before *El gíbaro*. Moreover, Tapia was recognized by his contemporaries as the undeniable initiator of a national literature. In the 1930s, however, influential intellectuals such as Antonio S. Pedreira, Manrique Cabrera, and René Marqués (all members of “La Generación del 30”) revised and institutionalized the Puerto Rican literary canon, assuming the position that the first national literary work was Manuel Alonso’s *El gíbaro*, and that the first national novel was Manuel Zeno Gandía’s *La charca*. Without denying the historical and literary relevance of these two national narratives, my own research points to the neglect, almost the
obliteration from the Puerto Rican literary history, of other significant creative works from the nineteenth-century.

According to González, the existence of conflicting views about whether or not Alonso’s *El gíbaro* or Tapia’s *Roberto D’Evreux* constituted the first Puerto Rican literary work has to do, in part, with their themes and styles. The Romantic cosmopolitanism of Tapia’s drama did not fulfil the political agenda of “La Generación del 30,” for they believed it did not convey the nationalist message that *El gíbaro’s* “romanticismo costumbrista” (González, *El país* 59). González explains that the discrepancy between the Puerto Rican intellectuals of the 1880s and the 1930s was mainly “en razón de un desplazamiento del punto de vista ideológico de los intelectuales de la clase dirigente criolla a partir del tránsito del régimen colonial español al norteamericano” (62). It is understandable that the collection of “cuadros de costumbres” that comprises *El gíbaro* would be regarded as more authentically Puerto Rican by the latter group than *Roberto D’Evreux’s* cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, Tapia’s vast literary work includes the novel *Cofresí* (1876), which in both González’s and Beauchamp’s assessment was the first regionalist novel to depict the problems of the *campesinos* in the Puerto Rican countryside. In the 1930s, however, and for political reasons, the works by Alonso and Zeno Gandia were incorporated and accepted into the Puerto Rican literary canon as the point of origin of the national literature.22

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22 The core of this controversy, as González asserts, resides in the 1930s intellectuals’ idealization of Alonso’s *El gíbaro* as the means to advance their nationalist cultural agenda, without acknowledging that the context of Alonso’s poem responded to the “liberalismo regionalista” of 1849 (González *El país*...63).
Ramon Méndez Quiñones (1847-1889) is regarded as “el iniciador de la corriente criollista en el teatro puertorriqueño” (González Literatura y sociedad 158). The jibaro was represented in plays by Méndez Quiñones such as the comic “entremés” Un jibaro como hay pocos (1878), followed by Los jibaros progresistas and La vuelta de la feria (both from 1882). A well-known intellectual, Manuel Fernández Juncos (1846-1928) also wrote short stories and essays inspired by the jibaro, such as Tipos y caracteres (1882) and Costumbres y tradiciones (1883). The latter, as Lewis states, “puts together gently satirical portraits of the social types of the small-town and country life, but at the same time notes the poverty and ignorance of the same types that in turn generate prostitution, emigration, and distorted moral values” (269). Far from recognizing the life-style and cultural complexities of the lower-class mountain folk, this type of literature criticizes the jibaro class and depicts it as the ultimate expression of a primitive, sickly, and retarded population: “el jibarismo literario de la élite no ha sido otra cosa, en el fondo, que la expresión de su propio prejuicio social y racial” (González El país...37). As my research has shown, “jibarismo literario” was only one among the various literary tendencies that were in vogue in the island during the late nineteenth century. For example, the cosmopolitanism of Tapia comprises a voluminous body of work which resists canonical classifications because of its uniqueness in the island’s cultural milieu. The proto-feminist preoccupations of Roqué and her blend of styles also destabilize an orderly taxonomy of literary topics and trends. In the hope of doing justice to

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23 See Antonia Sáez’s El teatro en Puerto Rico: Notas para su historia 69, qtd. in Beauchamp 30.
their work and of interpreting it correctly, this socio-historical overview attempts to identify the intertextuality required for the analysis of some of their foundational narratives.

**Independence, Autonomy, and Unconditional Political Thought**

While Spain's former colonies in the Latin American mainland were defining and consolidating their independent nation-states, in Puerto Rico many factors strengthened anti-independence positions. The reinforcement of the Spanish military garrison with the incorporation of the defeated troops from the Latin American mainland and the immigration of conservative families escaping the wars of independence were crucial. In addition, the actions of the colonial state against the Liberal Creole intellectuals created conflicting perceptions regarding the political status of the island. The Creole elite as a group kept strong psychological attachments to “La Madre Patria” and were unwilling to try to lead an independence movement that would mobilize the masses.

In any case, the Creole Liberal elite and the conservative faction were both more inclined to keep the lower classes under their total control and authority. Although among the Creole elite there was a growing sentiment of awareness of being culturally different from the Spaniards, they still envisaged Puerto Rico as a province of Spain. It is common to find in the writings of the Creoles references to themselves as “los hijos de España” and to white Creole
women as “la mujer española.” Instead of independence, most Liberals sought reforms that would grant them the same rights and privileges that Spanish citizens held both at home and on the island. For the moneyed class, the continued connection with Spain remained a powerful incentive, and European liberal ideas had a specific impact on the development of an anti-colonial ideology towards assimilation with Spain, rather than independence.

It was between 1866 and 1897 that painstaking negotiations were carried out by the Puerto Rican Creole elite to regain the long desired but briefly granted political representation before the Cortes de Cádiz. Not surprisingly, in 1868 the only radical movement for total independence, “El Grito de Lares,” did not succeed. Traditionally, “El Grito de Lares” is said to have been inspired or orchestrated by the independentista leader Ramón Emeterio Betances. In *Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth Century Puerto Rico*, Laird W. Bergad suggests that the central issue overlooked by history has been that “the local economy revolved around coffee production” and that the leaders of the Lares insurrection were all coffee planters (135). Bergad refers in particular to the leader

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24 This strong cultural connection with Spain recurs in many of the texts written in the nineteenth century. Significantly, after Puerto Ricans were granted United States citizenship in March 2, 1917 under the Foraker Act, Hispanic cultural nationalism and identity continued to be very powerful, provoking polemical arguments in the local press: “Porque, digo yo: si no somos españoles ¿qué somos? . . . sería tonto negar que más diferencias raciales y culturales hay entre un catalán y un castellano que entre un castellano y nosotros . . . lo que es bueno en boca de un Benavente, de un Maeztu, de un Unamuno, es malo, es una infamia, es criminal como una puñalada a traición en boca de un español que nació en Puerto Rico como pudo haber nacido en Málaga o Mallorca” (Nemesio Canales “España y nosotros” *Juan Bobo* 11, 11 de marzo de 1917).

25 Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827-1898), educated in France, was a militant Mason and a physician. He is regarded as the initiator of the movement for total independence. It is recorded that he was in Saint Domingue at the time of the rebellion of Lares. He died in exile in Paris (Ribes Tovar 113).
of the rebellion, Manuel Rojas, a Venezuelan immigrant who came to the island ten years before "El Grito de Lares," and was indebted to Spanish merchants (137). In part, Bergad argues that the coffee planters saw independence as a way to get rid not only of the Spanish government but also of their debts. There was a clash of interests among the political leaders in the country who held conflicting agendas, and the different social sectors of the island were not united. In addition, the insurrection of Lares was initiated earlier than planned, so the rest of the country did not know what was happening, a terrible strategic mistake that made of "El Grito de Lares" an isolated revolt, easy for the Spanish authorities and the Incondicionales to suppress immediately.

It was not until the 1870s that Puerto Ricans experienced a relative sense of political freedom. Encouraged in part by Spain's revolution of 1868 and the new Republic of 1873 that promoted the abolition of slavery, the time seemed propitious for the official formation of the island's first political parties: the Liberal Reformist Party (los Reformistas), which favoured socioeconomic reforms and political assimilation with Spain; and the Liberal Conservative Party, which favoured the status-quo and whose members were soon to be called los Incondicionales (González Vales 115). Political parties were allowed or acknowledged to the degree that their platforms addressed a continuing relationship with Spain. By 1887 the Reformistas founded the Partido Autonomista in the city of Ponce, which was grounded on the two most prominent models of political autonomy at the time: The Cuban Party's Platform, and the Canadian model of autonomy.

The Puerto Rican patriots who wanted total independence from Spain were therefore not officially acknowledged. Supporters of independence, such as Bonocio Tió and his wife
Lola Rodríguez de Tió and the revolutionary patriots Segundo Ruiz Belvis, and Emeterio Betances, faced exile, incarceration, and even death. They were called *separatistas*—a term almost insulting at the time—which the *Incondicionales* manipulated as a threat, referring to the liberal autonomists as *separatistas* and * filibusteros*. Even Liberal intellectuals such as Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, despite his opposition to Spanish colonial excesses, manifested his overt disagreement with the pro-independence faction:

> Fue aquel motín [Lares] forjado en plena situación colonial sin esperanzas de reformas en la defectuosa administración de aquel sistema, y que si era precedente de separatismo, debía ser enseñanza para los sostenedores de aquel sistema. Estoy dispuesto a hacer justicia a los conservadores en lo que les corresponde. (*Mis memorías* 65)

This ambivalent position was that of the *Liberales Reformistas*, who wanted sociopolitical and economic reforms in terms of having the same rights as the Spaniards and being recognized as a province of Spain. Until 1898 autonomy remained the dominant

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26 Tapia’s sentiment towards the patriots who organized *El Grito de Lares* was not a sympathetic one; he referred to them as “la excepción de los ilusos de Lares,” and remarked that the rest of the Puerto Ricans— including reformists and autonomists— were actually defending the absolutist colonial system since what they wanted was assimilation, not independence. Basically, they did not want *el separatismo* (in other words, independence), unlike the Puerto Rican Creole Emeterio Betances or immigrants who resided in the island, such as the Venezuelan Manuel Rojas. Tapia’s position was that of “los liberales pacíficos y nunca amotinados” who, according to him, strengthened the trust of the conservatives and lovers of national integrity “con una buena y simpática organización, nunca exclusiva de un solo partido, la defensa de la nacionalidad” (*Mis memorias* 65-66).
political and economic goal of Puerto Rican Liberals, who represented the interests of the white Creole urban professionals, intellectuals, and middle-class landowners.\textsuperscript{27}

The conservatives or \textit{Incondicionales} imposed severe forms of repression against the \textit{Partido Autonomista} a few months after it was organized in 1887. The \textit{Incondicionales} created the organization of the \textit{Compontes} and the secret society known as \textit{La Boicotizadora} (The Boycotter). \textit{La Boicotizadora} represented a conservative reaction to the \textit{Partido Autonomista} and was supposed to defend the interests of the Creole merchants against unfair competition from Peninsular commercial firms; however, its real purpose was to provide an excuse to persecute the \textit{Autonomistas}. The newly appointed governor, Romualdo Palacio González, who was in office for only one year (1887), effected decisive damage with his support for the \textit{Compontes'} brutal regime of terror. The \textit{Compontes} not only unleashed a systematic campaign of repression and torture against anyone who was a sympathizer of independent ideas, but also overtly attacked the \textit{Partido Autonomista} almost to the point of its dissolution.\textsuperscript{28} During the time of the institutionalized regime of the \textit{Compontes}, the \textit{Autonomistas} were accused of seeking ways to attain independence through their plan for administrative autonomy. The irony was that instead of seeking separatism in any form, the

\textsuperscript{27} It is of interest, as a counterpoint, to mention the remarkable exceptions to the noticeable “whiteness” of the Creole elite. They were two liberal autonomists: the black physician José Celso Barbosa, and the mulatto journalist Román Baldorioty de Castro.

\textsuperscript{28} González points out that the regime of terror of the \textit{Compontes} paralyzed the \textit{Partido Autonomista} until 1891, when Luis Muñoz Rivera reintroduced the ideas laid out by the \textit{autonomistas}, especially those of Román Baldorioty de Castro (1887). In Antonio S. Pedreira’s \textit{El año terrible del 87} (1945) some of the atrocities practiced by the \textit{Compontes} are described in detail (\textit{Literatura y sociedad} 80-82).
Puerto Rican Liberal Reformists and Autonomists—stauch anti-colonials as they were—sought ways of alliance with the metropolitan parties that would only result in assimilation. To the dismay of the Creole Liberal elite, the Spaniards neither granted nor seriously considered the heated allegations and platforms for reforms and assimilation proposed by the Liberal Puerto Ricans.

Years later, under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Rivera (1859-1916) the Partido Autonomista sought alliance with Spain’s Liberal Fusionista party of Práxedes Mateo Sagasta. This pact with Spain supported the reformist ideas that would institutionalize political and administrative autonomy at last. This was known as La Carta Autonómica de 1897 (the Autonomous Charter of 1897). The aims of the Autonomous Charter were never realized, however, as its implementation was interrupted by the Spanish-American War the following year.

The Spanish-American War and The United States Occupation: A Brief Overview

The colonial absolutism that ruled Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century was the scenario against which men and women tried to play the roles of educators, writers, and free thinkers but instead suffered disenfranchisement, exile, incarceration or death. These conditions, together with admiration for the United States’ democratic Constitution, explain in part why Puerto Ricans received the North American troops with enthusiasm when they landed in 1898. There was a new hope for social justice and progress which seemed

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29 Luis Muñoz Rivera was Prime Minister at the time of the American occupation: “a man of modest beginnings from the small mountain town of Barranquitas, [he] became at a young age one of the top political leaders of his time” (Trias Monge 31).
disappointing when the parade of military governors continued—with the difference that instead of Spaniards they were now United States' officials.

Curbing of public opinion and press restrictions continued under the United States' official censorship. For example, General Guy V. Henry, the second North American governor (1898-1899), closed the newspaper directed by the political leader Luis Muñoz Rivera because General Henry did not agree with Muñoz's political criticism. In spite of this, the first decade of the twentieth century brought about a new feeling of freedom of speech throughout the island; numerous newspapers, pamphlets, and flyers of all kinds appeared, not only for the upper classes but also for the middle and lower working class.

The United States military and political intervention dislocated the centralized power that the local Hispanic elite had gained by the late nineteenth century. As a result, Puerto Rico was fragmented into various social groups, and for the first time voices from diverse sectors of society found space for self-expression without censorship. The popular sectors, salaried workers and the lower classes, at last found the means to be publicly represented in local papers, syndicates, and unions. After centuries of Spanish political repression, the literate male population was eager to talk politics and exercise its civil right to suffrage:

The political parties had papers which represented their points of view. The parties covered the island, their leaders frequently visiting the towns and many remote villages. Despite the illiteracy rate, political awareness ran very high. During periods of universal male suffrage, men flocked to the polling stations. Puerto Rico has always taken pride in its rate of voter turnout, one of the highest in the world. (Trías Monge 16)
In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Creole elite’s perceptions of moral superiority began to collapse under the rapid proletarianization of the lower classes. Thanks in part to the influence of the United States workers’ unions and Spain’s anarchist workers’ movements, a series of strong pronouncements were made in favour of more radical social changes that sought to blur racial and gender differences. The early twentieth-century working class intended to put an end to the previous rhetoric of the elite on race and sexuality that endorsed the Afro-Puerto Ricans’ supposedly inherent degeneracy and immorality. For a while the lower class was gaining territory in the political and intellectual arena. Nonetheless, strong racist and class prejudices continued to permeate social thought and literary topics well into the twentieth century.

Women Intellectuals and their Contributions

Women played a crucial role throughout this historical process. Their active participation in and contribution to the cultural development of Puerto Rico, however, has only recently been acknowledged and become an object of study. The growth of recent scholarship in feminist theory and cultural studies since the late 1970s has unveiled a constant feminine presence and active participation that cannot be obliterated from Puerto Rican cultural history.

In *Imposing Decency*, Eileen Findlay points out that in the history of Puerto Rico discourses about legitimacy, justice, citizenship, and community have often been produced through debates over racially coded moral values and sexual practices. In the nineteenth century, men from the Liberal elite articulated a language of honour intended not only to
control women’s sexuality, but also to construct a white Hispanic Creole national identity that neglected the Afro-Antillian cultural component. In their turn, patrician women reaffirmed their status of racial and moral superiority over plebeian women, and in particular against women of colour. Thus, race and class were associated with sexual morality, producing an exclusionist, moralistic discourse within the elite. Therefore, it is neither strange nor surprising that the writings of white Creole women such as Ana Roqué celebrated the Hispanic and the Taíno cultural heritage, but despised the African.

The contribution of women to the development of Puerto Rican literature was salient from the very beginning. As I previously mentioned, the first anthology of prose and poetry considered properly “boricua” (that is, from Borinquén) was the Aguinaldo Puertorriqueño (1843), followed by the Album Puertorriqueño (1844), and the second Aguinaldo and the Cancionero de Borinquén of 1846. The anthologies were received with enthusiasm by the reading public in the island and spawned a series of short publications of poetry and prose that were published in broadsheets or in newspapers that today are dispersed or lost (Rivera de Alvarez 292-93). The first Aguinaldo had the particularity of offering a sample of different literary genres by men and women authors, which was not the pattern that the rest of the Hispanic American world followed (Messinger Cypess 284). Alejandrina Benítez (1819-1876) contributed with poetry and Benicia Aguayo (dates unknown) wrote a short essay of religious content. Alejandrina Benítez also collaborated with a collection of eight poems for the second Aguinaldo of 1846 (Rivera de Alvarez 137-144).

30. The Puerto Rican elite adapted terms from Ancient Rome to designate the abyss that separated social classes: the upper-class was called the “patrician class” and the lower-classes were the “plebeian.”
Maria Bibiana Benitez (1785-1873) was one of the first Puerto Ricans to be publicly awarded a mention of honour in literature in 1832 for her poem “La Ninfa de Puerto Rico.” Besides poetry, Benitez wrote the drama La cruz del morro (unknown date). La cruz del morro is set in San Juan and dramatizes the attack by the Dutch in 1625. For this, the play has been regarded as the first drama to explore a national theme (Manrique Cabrera 74; Messiger Cypess 284; Solá 197). Among other women poets from the first half of the nineteenth century, Fidela Matheu de Rodriguez (1852-1927) was a prolific contributor to Fernandez Juncos’ newspaper El Buscapié and Tapia’s La Azucena.

Puerto Rican women writers did not just write poetry. As in the case of Maria Bibiana Benitez, there were also playwrights and novelists. Carmen Hernandez de Araujo (1832-1877) is an interesting case whose work has not been reprinted and is difficult to locate. In Literatura y sociedad, González dedicates a small section to Hernandez de Araujo and calls her a “caso curioso” (131). In González’s account, Hernandez de Araujo cultivated poetry with a neo-classical spirit, for which she was awarded literary prizes. When she was only fifteen years old, she wrote the drama Los deudos rivales (published later in 1863) conforming to the Spanish Romantic aesthetic. Los deudos rivales consists of five acts written in verse, set in “la Esparta de Licurgo” (132). Hernandez de Araujo also wrote another less-known drama, Hacer bien al enemigo es imponerle el mayor castigo, and left two unpublished works: El catecismo Bíblico and the novel Flores o Virtudes y abrojos y pasiones (Manrique Cabrera 146).

Josefa Martinez (dates unknown) also cultivated prose narrative. Martinez was better known by her pen-name of “La Cieguita de la Cantera” and contributed to the island’s
Romantic spirit with her Colección de novelitas y artículos de recreo (1880) (Rivera de Alvarez 287). María Manuela Fernández (1865-1903) wrote the novella La mano de la providencia (1882), which according to Lizabeth Paravisini “es la primera novela publicada por una mujer puertorriqueña.” Set in the woods of Switzerland, the plot involves a girl and a boy abandoned to their fate. They live in constant fear of falling in love because they think they are brother and sister. The struggle between good and evil is at the core of the plot, and the intrigue is solved by exposing the causes of the children’s abandonment: avarice and egotism. They discover they are not blood relatives, and so they can be lovers. The setting in a legendary, exotic place, the children lost in the woods, the struggle between good and evil, the unrequited love out of fear of incest, are all romantic elements which the elite enjoyed. Fernández did not write another novel, or at least there is no evidence of it, and her work turned towards journalism and translation.

Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843-1924) one of the most outstanding Puerto Rican poets of the nineteenth century, distinguished herself by her political activism in favour of independence, which resulted in her exile and that of her husband. Her initiation to literature was achieved under the wing of another woman poet, Ursula Cardona de Quiñones (1836-1875), who, using the pen-name of “Angélica,” published poetry in the local newspapers. Manrique Cabrera has compared Lola Rodríguez’s collection of poems Mis Cantares (1876)

31 In her article “Las novelistas puertorriqueñas inexistentes,” Paravisini notes a lost manuscript of a novel by Carmen Hernández de Araújo pre-dated La mano de la providencia. Paravisini is probably referring to Flores o Virtudes y abrojos y pasiones. Manuela Fernández’s La mano... in my view, however, cannot be properly considered “a novel” in the strict sense of the term, and that is why I use the more appropriate term “novella.”

32 See Angela Negrón Mujeres en Puerto Rico (1935) 38, qtd. in Manrique Cabrera 146.
to José Martí’s *Versos sencillos* (1891) for their preference for singing of the simple things in everyday life. The exalted romantic rhetoric that permeated the literature of the Americas is absent from the verses of *Mis Cantares*, which instead pays more attention to using everyday vocabulary to describe ordinary events. In her second book of poetry, *Claros y nieblas* (1885), Rodríguez reached the maturity of her lyric voice. Her political commitment is solidly conveyed in *Mi libro de Cuba* (1893). Other compositions show her affiliation to the Spanish writer Fray Luis de León, such as *La vuelta del pastor* and *El arpa hebreia* (Marique Cabrera 214).

The revolutionary stanzas of Félix Astol’s version of *La Borinqueña*, are attributed to Lola Rodríguez. This song was the hallmark of “El Grito de Lares” and became the Puerto Rican national anthem (Delgado Votaw 15). During her two-year exile in Venezuela, Rodríguez de Tió continued her political activism and there she was awarded “La Orden del Libertador.” In 1887, when she and her husband came back to Puerto Rico, they were faced with the brutal regime of the *Compontes* and had to flee to New York and later to Havana where she died.

Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo (1871-1961) was born in San Juan but moved in 1898 to Barcelona where she resided for the rest of her life. Eulate Sanjurjo was an accomplished novelist, essayist and translator from Arabic. One of the facts to be gleaned from the scant information about her life is that during her early years in Puerto Rico she was closely connected to Ana Roqué’s circle of friends. She was an enigmatic figure with respect to her private life, and little is known about her. Eulate Sanjurjo’s first novel, *La muñeca*, published in 1894, the same year as *La charca* by Manuel Zeno Gandía, marks an interesting switch in
the gender representation of the Hispanic woman. Eulate Sanjurjo belongs to the elite, and
the action of her novel takes place in Madrid, like Tapia y Rivera’s *Póstumo el transmigrado*
and *Póstumo el envirginiado*. This might be the reason why Zeno Gandía’s novel is deemed
to be the “first Puerto Rican novel,” while Eulate’s—and even Tapia’s—has been overlooked
in the nationalist literary canon until very recently. More interestingly, Paravisini comments
that the prologue to *La muñeca*, written by Zeno Gandia, captured the attention of the critics
because it was considered Zeno’s “Naturalist Manifesto,” while Eulate’s novel was ignored
(Paravisini “Las novelistas...” 94). Eulate Sanjurjo published two more novels in Puerto
Rico, *Marqués y marquesa* (1911), and *Teresa y Maria* (1927). During the twentieth century
she continued publishing in Spain novels such as *Desilusión, La familia Robredo, Bocetos de
novela, Las veleidades de Consuelo, El asombroso doctor Jover, El ingeniero de Quebec,
and Una mano en la sombra*, which are regarded as part of the Spanish Realist tradition
(Rivera de Alvarez 289).

Ana Roqué de Duprey, in addition to being an educator and a novelist, stands out as a
journalist and a businesswoman. Among her many contributions to the island’s intellectual
life, she was the founder of several newspapers. Roqué learned typography skills and trained
young women in a craft that until then had been considered exclusively a man’s job. In
Humacao, in 1894, she founded the journal *La Mujer*, establishing the first national printing
press solely managed by women and for women. *La Mujer* also offered scholarships to
provincial girls of low income who had the aptitude to pursue teaching certificates. The
journal became a major public forum for voicing the concerns of the Hispanic Creole women,
their points of view, and their demands. *La Mujer* published not only articles about social
events for a feminine audience, but also fiction. The fiction demarcated a public space where women authors were able to denounce the unspeakable: cases of rape and sexual abuse, honourable wives having extramarital sexual desires, and the infidelity of white men. Sadly, La Mujer only survived three years, but as Negrón Muñoz remarks, this was a long time, considering the controversial and fiercely-attacked campaign that it supported (5). Roqué had to struggle constantly against negative criticism and financial problems in order to keep up her crusade for the formal education of women.33

Under the pen names of “Aquenora” and “Flora del Valle,” Roqué wrote articles, short stories, and serial novels for Puerto Rico’s most important newspapers, such as El Buscapié, El Imparcial, El Mundo, La Ilustración Puertorriqueña, and La Revista Blanca. Among the journals and newspapers she founded or co-founded are: La Mujer (1894); La Evolución (1902); La Mujer del Siglo XX (1917); and El Album Puertorriqueño (1918) all in Humacao. In San Juan, the journals she established were El Heraldo de la Mujer (1919) and Euterpe (1920).34 Between the 1890s and 1900s Roqué’s newspapers, together with the fiction by women produced at the time, are crucial in the development of a growing collective

33 According to Antonio Ortiz, Roqué was often a victim of scorn and offensive jokes because she defended a feminine movement that at the time was not taken seriously by the majority (11).

34 Helga Serrano indicates that the women journalists of Puerto Rico today are the continuation of a group of women writers from the late nineteenth century. Some of the most outstanding are: Ana Roqué, Mercedes Solá, Isabel Andreu de Aguilar, Beatriz La Salle, and María Luisa de Angelis (who also directed the magazine Pluma de mujer). Serrano also acknowledges tobacco workers, such as Luisa Capetillo y Franca de Armiño, who founded journals and newspapers and published numerous pamphlets and articles for working class women (“El legado de Ana Roqué de Duprey,” El Mundo [San Juan] 3 Oct. 1982: 18-A).
self-definition of the “Puerto Rican woman.” Roqué’s novels and short stories, as well as the literary work of other women writers, contributed immensely to the formation of Puerto Rican literature. These women authors provide concrete evidence their active participation in the island’s intellectual arena.

In the early twentieth century Roqué was involved in a different kind of struggle: the suffragist feminist movement. Roqué founded almost all of the early twentieth-century feminine organizations that represented the interests of the middle- and upper-class white Creole women. In 1917, she founded the Liga Feminea, which was considered the first women’s political organization in Puerto Rico. Roqué was president of the Liga Feminea and later honorary president until 1924. Isabel Andreu de Aguilar wrote the Primer Memorial, which was inspired by Roqué. This text has been called the “El Primer Manifesto Feminista” regarding the rights of women to the vote and to citizenship. In 1924, Roqué founded the Asociación Puertorriqueña de Mujeres Sufragistas, which she oversaw for a year. After the vote for women was granted, it changed its name to the Asociación de Mujeres Votantes (1925), of which Roqué was honorary president until 1927.

Early twentieth-century suffragist feminist movements and workers’ anarchist ideologies were tendencies that prevailed in Europe and in the United States. In Puerto Rico they were manifested in a series of debates regarding feminist ideas, gender roles, literary trends, and workers’ movements. Even though women’s right to vote and the socio-anarchist

35 Although Angela Negrón Muñóz claims that the very first “Manifesto Feminista” addressed to the women of Puerto Rico was indeed written by Roqué in 1917, but it was lost during the terrible hurricane of “San Felipe” circa 1935 (106).
movements developed in the early twentieth century, the question regarding women’s education and their incorporation into national life began to be raised as early as in the mid-1870s.

**Historical Notes on the Practices of Espiritismo in Puerto Rico**

The doctrines and practices of *espiritismo* had a tremendous cultural impact on Puerto Rican society, especially in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This fact has been overlooked in the island’s cultural histories, perhaps because of the sensationalism that has surrounded the practices of *espiritismo* over the years. In the context of my study, it is important to sketch the influence and spread of the practices of *espiritismo* in Puerto Rico, because Alejandro Tapia’s novels *Póstumo el transmigrado* and its sequel, *Póstumo el envirginiado*, which I examine in Chapter 4, use themes and motifs drawn from *espiritismo* as a literary convention. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo in *Historia de la poesía hispanoamericana*, has indicated that Tapia’s tales of transmigration of souls emulated Theophile Gautier’s *Avatar* (1856) (Menéndez y Pelayo 339). Contrary to that assertion, I intend to demonstrate the originality of Tapia’s novels and of his aesthetic preference for themes related to the supernatural.

Néstor Rodríguez Escudero, in *Historia del Espiritismo en Puerto Rico*, argues that modern Spiritism—or what he calls “el verdadero espiritismo”—is a system of beliefs “scientifically” based on the spiritualist philosophies and theories that were in vogue in the United States, England, France, and Spain during the second half of the nineteenth century. Rodríguez Escudero argues that “el verdadero espiritismo” came to Puerto Rico through the
teachings of Allan Kardec and one of his closest disciples, the astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) in the late 1880s. Arguing for the semantic precision of the term "espiritismo" as designating the philosophical practice that Rodriguez Escudero defends, he states:

En resumen el fenómeno síquico caracteriza al espiritismo. Siempre lo ha habido, lo mismo en el cristianismo que entre los brujos de Africa o los indios de Puerto Rico. Por consiguiente, el mundo siempre ha vivido, aunque no lo haya querido, con la presencia de esa fuerza. Por eso, para mayor claridad y comprensión tenemos que limitar el concepto a aquel movimiento moderno que partiendo desde Hydesville, en el estado de Nueva York, a mitad del siglo pasado, penetra arrollador en Europa y de allá al través del crisol de Kardec, vuelve organizado a nuestras playas (Historia del Espiritismo, 17).

The popularity and rapid spread of modern espiritismo in Puerto Rico was due, in part, to a reaction against the absolute control of the Catholic Church which exercised its power in close alliance with the colonial state. The spirit of rebellion against Spain’s blatant social, political, intellectual, and religious repression opened the door to the infiltration of new ideas and forbidden texts. This new and exciting knowledge came to the island as smuggled goods, in the minds and suitcases of the young Creole elite returning from Europe. Hence, espiritismo first spread in Puerto Rico among the patrician class, and for a while it was seen as a fashionable topic of conversation and entertainment for the elite. But most importantly, as Mario A. Nuñez Molina explains in his essay “Community Healing Among Puerto Ricans: Espiritismo as a Therapy for the Soul,” the practices and doctrines of
espiritismo came to satisfy the religious, moral, and medical needs of both upper- and lower-
class Puerto Ricans, through whom it spread to the United States after the massive migrations
of Puerto Ricans in the mid-to-late twentieth century.

In 1872 in Madrid, the doctrines of the German philosopher Karl Krause (1781-1832),
disseminated in Spain by Julián Sanz del Río, and the spiritist doctrine of Allan Kardec were
at their peak of popularity. This is a moment when there was a boom in secret societies,
particularly those associated with Masonry and spiritist associations such as the “Circulo
Espiritista de Barcelona.” Psychology began to be considered a science, and spawned
publications such as the Revista de Estudios Psicológicos of the Vizconde de Torres Solanot.
Madrid’s popular culture was filled with a frenzy of séances, rapping spirits, turning tables,
and spectacles performed by mediums and seers.

Marta Aponte Alsina states that Menéndez y Pelayo, concerned with the explosion of
fiction involving spiritism in Spain, compiled a bibliography of 36 texts published between
1868 and 1878 in Madrid alone, in addition to numerous translations of the works of Allan
Kardec and Camille Flammarion. These texts, classified as “tratado espiritista
ficcionalizado,” were highly didactic and moralistic in content, and were assiduously
cultivated in Spain, especially after the Revolution of September 1868 (Aponte Alsina 43-
44).

Within this line of thought and tradition, two important texts by Puerto Rican authors
were published simultaneously in 1872 in Madrid: Alejandro Tapia y Rivera’s novel Póstumo
el transmigrado o historia de un hombre que resucitó en el cuerpo de su enemigo, and
Manuel Corchado y Juarbe’s collection of short stories, Historias de ultratumba. A Puerto
Rican lawyer, Corchado y Juarbe (1840-1884), stands out as one of the most serious disciples and defenders of “el verdadero espiritismo.” Unlike Tapia, Corchado y Juarbe— who was also a militant Mason— openly claimed to be a follower of the “scientific” doctrine of espiritismo. Corchado was so serious about the importance of espiritismo that he wrote a proposal in 1873 to include a basic course on scientific spiritism in Puerto Rico’s official program of higher education.

The importance of Corchado’s Historias de Ultratumba lies in its forming part of a corpus of fictionalized spiritist treatises. It differs from Tapia’s Póstumo el transmigrado in its moralistic and didactic intention. The tone and effect of Historias de Ultratumba is sombre, and the author adopts a plain, straightforward language that made the stories accessible to a wide range of readers, but at the same time led critics to dismiss them as lacking artistic value. The common thread that links the stories is the spiritist belief that the dead can communicate with the living and vice versa. The stories recount cases of telepathy, materialization of spirits, redemption of souls, descriptions of the afterlife, and musical messages, all geared to exalting the moral virtues of forgiveness, repentance, charity, and hope.

Some short stories written by Tapia fall into this category of fictional moralistic treatises, namely, “El purgatorio de un ególatra,” “El desahuciado,” and “Un alma en pena,” all published in Tapia’s newspaper La Azucena. Other Puerto Rican intellectuals, such as Ana

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36 A most respected figure in the intellectual history of Puerto Rico, Corchado was appointed deputy to the Spanish Cortes in 1871 to represent the Mayagüez district. Among his cultural contributions, Corchado was the co-founder with Manuel A. Alonso, José Julián Acosta, and Gabriel Ferrer of the newspaper El Agente, a pivotal publication that in the late 1800s voiced the ideals of the Liberal Reformists or Autonomistas (Geigel Polanco 1975).
Roqué, were also interested in the serious study of espiritismo, magnetism, and somnambulism. Roqué's experience in this realm resulted in the publication of a series of journal articles in the newspaper *El Buscapié* that traced the history of spiritualist philosophies from Francis Bacon of Verulam to Karl Christian Krause (Babin 1956). Roqué also wrote stories involving supernatural elements such as "Clarividencias," and "El hada del Sorata."

The above overview demonstrates how the sociopolitical history of Puerto Rico shaped its intellectual development and national identity. The literary history of Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century emerged as a result of a combination of elements drawn from Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Spanish *Costumbrismo*, Positivism, and Spiritism: "it is within these European trends that a different literature begins to emerge: a literature that calls for national distinctiveness from the mother country" (Rodríguez de Laguna 2). In the sense suggested by Rodríguez Monegal (407), Puerto Rican creative writing parodied foreign aesthetic models and creolized them in a "mestizaje de estilos," to describe the uniqueness of the Borinquén’s landscape, and the history, social customs, traditions, and problems that Puerto Rican Creoles faced in the urban and rural areas.
-CHAPTER 2-

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY PUERTO RICAN WRITING

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” 19)

Renan’s concept of the nation as the soul or spiritual principle of a community may be applied to the Puerto Rican people’s will to reconstruct their past memories and their persistence in preserving and sharing those memories. The island’s history attests to this enduring struggle for identity and self-recognition that has shaped present-day Puerto Rican national cultural production. One of the paradoxes of Puerto Rico is the question of what constitutes the nation, and Renan’s quotation anticipates this debate.

Puerto Rican literary critics, such as Sandra Messinger Cypess, Edna Acosta Belén, Consuelo López Springfield, and José Luis González, among others, emphasize that to appreciate thoroughly the emergence of Puerto Rican literature it is imperative to place it “within the context of the social, economic, and political conditions and ideologies which were in effect during the time of its Spanish colonial status and which continue to affect the culture of the Island to the present time” (Messinger Cypess 75). The development of nationalist sentiments and of a national literature was shaped by the constant struggle between colonialism and nationhood, as well as by the interplay of social class and racial, and

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1 Arcadio Díaz-Quíñones’s La memoria rota, a vital collection of essays on Puerto Rican cultural history, attempts the rescue of dispersed episodes and personalities that, according to the author, are part of the island’s collective historical memory, deliberately denied or broken by political power, repression, or cultural exclusion (79).
gendered power relations. Consequently, the complexities of nineteenth-century Puerto Rican socio-cultural history must be properly accounted for in our analysis.

From the beginning of Puerto Rico's cultural history, the island's intellectuals have been fascinated by—even obsessed with—their own dilemma: the conflict of Puerto Rico's duality between the colony and the colonizer. The choice between nationhood or colonialism, independence or autonomy, is one with which Puerto Ricans are still wrestling, first with Spain, and after 1898 with the United States. This ongoing effort towards obtaining political agency and representation appears ubiquitously in the writings examined here. Nineteenth-century Puerto Rican intellectuals and politicians incessantly posed the question of national identity and sought for what they believed were coherent ways to construct it.

Thus far, I have indicated the conflicting duality of the island's colonial condition vis-à-vis the Spanish metropolis in the nineteenth century. It is not my intention to reduce literary discussions of gender, race, and representation to the conflict between nationhood and colonialism. Following Aileen Findlay's advice, one must be extremely cautious about fixed assumptions based on binary oppositions or static views, reflected in much of what has been said in Puerto Rican writing on the dichotomy between colonialism and nationalism, and on the strategies of resistance or accommodation (Findlay 4). In the hope that my analysis moves beyond simple binary oppositions, I attempt to contextualize how gender-structured discourses were used to articulate a sense of national identity as well as to ensure the perpetuation of colonial political power. The specific case of Puerto Rico, when compared to the greater context of nineteenth-century Latin American nation-building struggles provides a quite unique example as "a place where secular authorities and institutions attempted to develop without the context of independent nationhood" (Matos Rodriguez 7). To avoid
losing sight of the material conditions within this context, I lean towards a socio-historic perspective, rather than following psychoanalytical models of analysis. As Sarah Mills argues, the centrality given to psychoanalytical concepts in current theories within the field of postcolonial studies makes it difficult to engage in an analysis of the material conditions of colonization without falling into the abstract notions postulated in psychoanalytical theory. Assumptions about colonial psyche, stereotype, and fantasy run the risk of ignoring economic, political, and social conditions: “the specificity of the colonial context is lost—the materiality of invasion, discrimination, murder, rape, expropriation of land and also of resistance are erased” (Mills 126). This does not mean that I do not appreciate the important contributions of psychoanalysis to current critical thought, or that I want to engage in a purely materialist analysis, for that would mean overlooking Findlay’s warnings indicated above.

In view of these problems and limitations, it is advisable to avoid constraining textual analysis within the framework of a single perspective that might be inconsistent with the island’s socio-historical specificities. I propose instead an interdisciplinary approach to explore Puerto Rican discourses on gender and the ways in which gendered power relations are represented in late nineteenth-century narratives. In my analysis of Puerto Rican writing I try to keep in mind that we are dealing with representations of life whose ultimate subjects and objects are the very Puerto Rican women and men who lived and interacted during the period under discussion. Puerto Ricans constructed and articulated political and literary representations that were marked by, and in turn contributed to define, their actual practices in daily life, their gender ideologies, and moral values. It is worth recalling here Gillian Beer’s statement regarding the distance that separates us from past texts. When reading these types of texts we are necessarily affected by our own cultural and historical conditions:
“literary history will always be an expression of now,” hence it is important to detach oneself from one’s immediate present as “the only real place and source of authority” (80). The authors studied here posed their own questions and answers in consonance with the realities of their own time. In my close reading of nineteenth-century writing, my proposed interdisciplinary method is indeed contemporary, but its main objective is to situate the texts within their rightful historical conditions, since “learning the conditions of the past brings them [the texts] to light” (Beer 81-82).

In addition to socio-historical approaches, I draw theoretical notions from social feminism, literary theory, and cultural studies, because they are all critically engaged in issues involving gender, identity, race, class, popular culture, and the problems of representation. To explain why I lean towards such an interdisciplinary analysis, this Chapter expands on the relationship between local history and the emergence of national narratives; the importance of popular culture in the construction of a national identity and of a literary tradition; and how the categories of gender and of representation function in textual analysis. Overall, my study aims at analyzing different kinds of writing that emerged in Puerto Rico between the 1870s to the 1890s and exploring their relationships to certain discourses: discourses about women’s moral education; discourses about gendered power relations; and gendered discourses about class and race.

The terms that formulate the title of this dissertation need a brief explanation. Although the terms “gender” and “representation” are recognized as separated categories, they are intimately related throughout this study, as I shall explain later. I use the term “writings” because I refer to a range of different kinds of writing: not just literary texts, but also newspaper articles, pamphlets, and essays. I approach these writings from the material
and historical conditions of their production and from their relation to other texts, in order to examine strategies for gender representation in fiction and non-fiction. I prefer to use the phrase “Late Nineteenth Century” to indicate a specific period of time (1870-1900), rather than focusing on a literary school or trend. This time frame allows the analysis to focus on the interplay among selected texts during a particular moment in writing in Puerto Rican history.

Hence, I argue that European literary movements such as Romanticism, Realism, and Naturalism converged simultaneously in what Enrique Laguerre has denominated *mestizaje de estilos*, which gave rise to the emergence of an autochthonous Creole writing. Ultimately, my main concern is to grant historical depth to the fiction of the last decades of the nineteenth-century, to show how men and women authors contributed to the formation of a national literature on the island. I also seek to situate this particular production within a larger historical perspective and a broader discursive context than those in which these narratives have been (or have not been) situated so far. In order to describe the corpus of this study, it is necessary to throw fresher light on the problem of a “national” literature in a colonial context.

**Puerto Rico and the Question of National Identity**

In the previous Chapter, following Gordon K. Lewis’s *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought*, I aimed to demonstrate that by the mid-nineteenth century, the Puerto Rican Creole intelligentsia had developed a distinct nationalist sentiment, “reflecting a spirit of felt separate cultural identity” (Lewis 267). The Creole elite indeed felt they were culturally separate cultural identity” (Lewis 267). The Creole elite indeed felt they were culturally

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2 In his prologue to Manuel Zeno Gandia’s *La charca*, Enrique Laguerre argues that in the nineteenth century disparate aesthetic styles blended together, such as Romanticism with Realism and Naturalism, creating a “mestizaje de estilos” (xxiii).
different from the Spaniards. However, the Creoles’ claims for reforms within the colonial administration did not necessarily contribute to the forging of a cultural nationalism that would move forward to a political nationalism, two necessary ingredients in the historical process of nation-building (Lewis 239-40). In other words, the Creole elite identified in terms of both race and class with their Spanish counterparts, but simultaneously both groups developed a keen sense of cultural difference. In addition, the Puerto Rican elite was reluctant to advocate for the island’s independence, a step that would have meant the mobilization of the racially heterogeneous masses and their eventual incorporation into a new national order.

The elite experienced a strong sense of class, characteristic of a rigidly stratified society. Those of European descent occupied the upper echelon, followed by the insular rural class, and the slaves. After the abolition of slavery in 1873, the incorporation of the slave minority into the wage-earning labour-force shook the basis of the plantation economy and of the island’s social structure. Slavery left behind a shameful stigma on those who suffered it, and even worse, it passed it on to their descendants. Despite the fact that the rural population also was racially mixed with black Africans, and that there was a significantly large free black population long before the abolition of slavery, the white Creoles repudiated them. As mentioned earlier, it was the rural class represented by the mountain folk—although also despised—that provided the intellectual elite with the most enduring nationalist symbol of cultural identity, that of the jibaro.

This choice of a national symbol taken from the rural class is not an unheard-of strategy in the wider context of the Western culture. Ernest Renan explains in “What is a nation?” how, in the process of nation-formation in Europe, the ideas of the Enlightenment posed by Rousseau were transformed to fit the values of a specific nationhood. Renan argues
that in Germany, Rousseau’s “people” became the *Volk*, a Romantic representation of the rural man (always a masculine representation) that instilled a sense of cultural distinctiveness in relation to other communities: “Nationalism is an urban movement which identifies with the rural areas as a source of authenticity, finding in the ‘folk’ the attitudes, beliefs, customs and language to create a sense of national unity among people who have other loyalties” (Bruce King *The New English Literatures*, qtd. in Renan 53). According to Renan, nineteenth-century English authors adopted the concepts of German Romanticism and its focus on the people’s idiomatic expressions and “native speech” in literary works (53).

Puerto Rico is not alone, then, in choosing the rural man as a distinctive symbol with which the urban elite could paradoxically identify. In a similar process to the one that in Puerto Rico led to the adoption of the *jibaro* as a nationalist symbol, in Argentina the *gauche*, or cowboy of the grasslands, was also adopted as the representative of *argentinitad*. In consonance with the social Darwinist and positivist European literature about race, psychology, and history that permeated nineteenth-century Latin American thought, the writer and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-188) employed the figure of the *gauche* to construct the civilization/barbarism dichotomy that would become central to the Argentinian history of ideas. In his foundational narrative *Facundo* (1845), Sarmiento represents the *gauche* as backward, immoral, violent, and a barrier to the progress and modernization of the Argentine nation. After *Facundo*, the literary representation of the gaucho was ennobled in the poem *Martin Fierro* (1872) by José Hernández (1834-1886). *Martin Fierro* captured the *gauche*’s speech and customs, representing a noble and ingenious country-man. In the early twentieth century, as a reaction against recent immigration, the *gauche* became the epitome
of Argentinian national identity, in opposition to the immigrant, who was seen as a threat to national values.³

In the case of Puerto Rico, the question still remains: why were the mountain folk regarded as a symbol of the nation and not the Africans? I have offered a partial answer, but a further explanation can also be found in the broader context of Western culture. In Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century, Lyn Pykett shows how, as a consequence of English expansion and the Darwinian model of evolution, the turn-of-the-century gave rise to the imaginary construction of the “dark races,” and of Africa as the “Dark Continent”:

The Dark Continent represented both a challenge and a threat, a space in which the primitive might be civilized, or in which the civilized might regress or degenerate. Africa was figured as the most savage place remaining in the world, a primitive, pre-civilized domain, a darkly mysterious feminine space into which a culture’s fears and fantasies were projected. (Pykett 27)

Colonization brought about fearful and distorted notions of Africa and its people, and, in a similar way, of the Orient, as shown in Edward Said’s Orientalism. The nineteenth-century cultural construction of the “dark races” as primitive, uncivilized, and degenerate served to a great extent to represent “the other”—what I would call the “dark-other”—always as a counterpoint to the white European. In this broader context of racial power relations in the

³ See Manuel Mendelzon’s “Reinventing the Gaucho: Civilization, Barbarism and the Mythic Argentine Cowboy” for a lucid account of the reification of the gaucho, from a symbol of barbarism to the embodiment of the Argentinian national character.
Western world, it is easier to understand the racial attitudes of the Puerto Ricans of European
descent during and after the nineteenth century.

The last decades of the nineteenth century marked the threshold of the growth of
nationalist sentiments in the island, which, in turn, gave rise to a national literature. One must
keep in mind that the discourses about national identity and national literature mirror and
shape one another, creating a literary identity, a necessary concept for defining any further
discussion of what can be properly called a “Puerto Rican national literature.” National
identity and literary identity are both ideological and political, since the term “national”
necessarily implies that there exists a nation or political unit. Benédict Anderson argues in
*Imagined Communities* that the nation “is an imagined political community—and imagined
as both inherently limited and sovereign.”

In Puerto Rico, however, this holds true only partially, because even though the
members of the Creole elite were imagining themselves as a homogeneous group of Hispanic
heritage, the island never reached the autonomous, sovereign status of Anderson’s
conceptualization of the nation. Is it possible to speak, therefore, of a “Puerto Rican national
literature”?

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4 Anderson suggests that the nation addresses a social group whose members—even though
they never will be able to meet one another—have reached a common consensus as to what
constitutes the nation, “imagining” themselves as a homogeneous whole: “the nation is
always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (6-7).

5 Like Lewis, other historians and intellectuals such as José Luis González, José Trias Monge,
Adalberto López, and Fernando Picó explain that by the mid-nineteenth century the Puerto
Rican Creole elite culturally defined themselves as a nation of mainly Hispanic heritage.
Narrating the Puerto Rican Cultural Nation

For the sake of conceptual clarity, it will be useful to discuss briefly the ideas of nation and of national and cultural identity. Since I specifically propose to analyze a group of narratives considered “national,” it is necessary to provide a coherent answer to the question of how a colonized territory can have a “national literature.” I have tried to answer this query using Lewis’s study of the history of Caribbean ideas and culture. Nevertheless, Lewis’s contribution can be complemented by the concept of the nation and its cultural representation that Homi K. Bhabha formulates in Nation and Narration. Bhabha explores his own growing “sense of the nation as one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representations of ‘modernity’” (4). The idea of the nation as an ambivalent and unstable concept contests the static, essentialist aspects of the emergence of the modern nation-state as an autonomous, sovereign form of political rationality “which is never simply horizontal” (293). Viewing the nation as an unstable concept and as a shifting system of cultural signification, conveys a conceptual flexibility suitable for the explanation of the emergence of national narratives in the context of colonized societies.

It becomes apparent that in Puerto Rican society, just as in other societies, the various groups that constitute it developed their own systems of cultural meanings that would eventually be represented in writing. It is the interplay of the social, the linguistic, and the psychological aspects of the idea of the nation that posits an ideological ambivalence, if, according to Bhabha, we see the nation as a cultural construction and a form of social and textual affiliation. This bond between society and text embodies, in my view, the ambivalent tension and conceptual indeterminacy of the nation, for it brings together both the psychological processes and the material practices of the people who talk and write about the
nation, and of those who live in it. Bhabha’s project aims at formulating “the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’ and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives” (292).

What is insightful about the idea of the nation as an ambivalent cultural construct is its applicability not only to independent nation-states but to any group of people (nation-people) who have identified themselves with a common system of cultural signification: “The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference” (Bhabha 300). Owing to its openness and flexibility, this conceptualization is useful for exploring and interpreting Puerto Rican narratives that have constructed the cultural nation, the metaphors used to describe it, and the contradictory ways in which discourses about gender, race, and class were articulated to define it.

In the case of Puerto Rico, the emergence of nationalist sentiments in the nineteenth century reinforced a strong sense of cultural identity that led to the foundation of a national literature. The growing awareness of cultural nationalism among the Puerto Ricans paved the road to the creation of a national literature and, consequently, a literary identity. One of the goals of this study is to explore how the discourses about cultural identity function to represent the Puerto Rican cultural nation, often in ambivalent and contradictory ways.

**Puerto Rican Writing**

My research has shown that, historically, Puerto Rican literature has focused predominantly on the crisis of national identity. Since the literature’s origins, the anthologies
that followed the first Aguinaldo puertorriqueño (1843) and the cuadros de costumbres in Manuel A. Alonso’s El gibaro (1849) sought to characterize native Puerto Ricans. The first novels, such as La peregrinación de Bayoán (1863) by Eugenio María de Hostos, Cofresí (1876) by Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, and La charca (1894) by Manuel Zeno Gandía, show a common preoccupation with Puerto Rico’s colonial condition.

Initially, literary works responded to two important aesthetic impulses, namely, the Romantic movement and the realismo criollista [Creole Realism], which coincided temporally and frequently overlapped. Owing to censorship and the lack of freedom of speech, by the mid-nineteenth century Puerto Rican writers resorted to the exploration of topics related to European history, representing European personalities and events in novels and dramas. A second moment, which is present in the early literary works, but which consolidates itself in the late nineteenth century, shows an increasing interest in the rural peasantry. This trend has been called “jibarismo literario” (Beauchamp 30) and combines elements from Costumbrismo with Naturalism and Positivism. Not only did it address the rural area, but it also spawned novels that focused on urban problems, gender and racial relations, and on women’s concerns about their participation in society.

I believe that early Puerto Rican national narratives may be defined, borrowing from Doris Sommer’s Foundational Fictions, as “irresistible.” According to Sommer, the overt resistance of the Latin American “Boom” writers to the early patriotic novels or romances of the nineteenth century is what made the romances irresistible (3). Early Puerto Rican narratives, especially those written by women, have been strongly resisted by the Latin American literary canon. It is precisely this demotion or neglect that makes them irresistible
sources for the analysis of gender ideologies, racial and class standpoints, and the problems of representation in a colonized nation.

Early Latin American national narratives, as Sommer argues, are indebted to the well-known Venezuelan grammarian Andrés Bello (1781-1865) for having promoted the "narrative method" as a valid means of filling the gaps in the historical record: "When a country's history doesn't exist, except in incomplete, scattered documents, in vague traditions that must be compiled and judged, the narrative method is obligatory." National narratives, then, were deemed necessary for the nation-building process, and had the potential to account for the origin of an authentic local expression (9). In Latin America and the Caribbean, this link between narratives and history has been quite obvious since the emergence of the first patriotic novels. The literary act was endowed with the sublime mission of instilling in the reading public an appreciation for their regional history and a sense of nationalist pride.

Sommer's work uses the term "historical romances" to refer to the specific corpus of national narratives she examines. Her thesis states that the "rhetoric of love" functions in Latin American national allegories as a link between "natural" heterosexual love and nationalist projects, providing enduring examples of domestic happiness and national prosperity (7). Sommer argues that most of Latin American national romances depict a sentimental affair that is devoid of internal antagonisms; instead, the obstacles are outside the lovers' relationship (49). The reader wishes to see the couple overcome the obstacles to their

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7 Sommer conceives of the "romance" in a broad sense that combines contemporary usage with its nineteenth-century adscription to allegorical representations. She claims that "it is the erotic rhetoric that organizes patriotic novels" (2).
love, for their loving union represents the consolidation of the nation. This allegory functions through metonymic associations between erotic love, family, and the state: “the romantic affair needs the nation, and erotic frustrations are challenges to national development” (50 italics in the original). Interestingly enough, Sommer leaves Puerto Rico out of her analysis because the island does not fit her theoretical framework. She refers to Eugenio María de Hostos’s only novel, *La peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863), to illustrate her point. Hostos’s novel posits a problem of conflict in the relationship between Eros, body, and nation. *Bayoán* represents “an intriguing attempt at Pan-Caribbean (amorous) alliance” (50), as it pursues an international project rather than a national one. According to Sommer:

*Bayoán* is rather heavy-handed about announcing distinct allegorical registers, and its contradictory affairs with politics and passion founder in the rather un-American competition between the erotic and duty. Whether or not the conventionally allegorical and puritanical features of Hostos’s sentimental and political peregrinations kept *Bayoán* off the canonical list of romances I take up here, it can hardly have had a similar career. Which country would it celebrate or project? Which existing government could it have supported, when Bayoán’s dream was precisely international, beyond the future institutions that might have required it? (50)

Thus, it can be deduced from this statement that the lack of sovereignty is what eliminates Puerto Rican literature from Sommer’s project and precludes its fitting into certain taxonomies or perspectives such as the one she proposes. Yet in the Puerto Rican narratives

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8 Referring to Sommer’s exclusion of *Bayoán*, Angel A. Rivera asserts that in the work of authors such as Hostos and Tapia there occurs something atypical or anomalous that defies Sommer’s suggestive connection between the erotic and the nation, which Rivera calls “desarticulación erótica” (87). Hostos’s and Tapia’s characters establish a kind of
I analyzed, I find that erotic frustration challenges national development. At the same time, the majority of Puerto Rican intellectuals were striving, not necessarily to achieve independence, but rather to obtain political autonomy under Spanish rule. This intention can be clearly seen in the works of Tapia y Rivera, where unrequited love seems to be a romantic theme but can in fact be interpreted as the impossibility of the Creole subject to attain political agency.

Even though early Puerto Rican narratives present an obvious sexual rhetoric, the corpus I examine (with the exception of Tapia) is inscribed in a literary project of sociological intent based on Realist and Naturalist elements rather than Romantic ones. However, it is important to keep in mind that these European literary trends in Puerto Rico were constantly overlapping, and locally interpreted and reshaped into a criollista style. Nevertheless, following Sommer’s concepts, I regard the writings at the core of my analysis as “foundational narratives” for they mark the emergence of a Puerto Rican national literature.

**Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

Through the examination of literary representations of gender in Puerto Rican national narratives, I hope to reveal the political positions and ideologies that sustain them relationship where the erotic element is not an end in itself, but functions rather as an obstacle or impediment; while in novels such as Isaacs’ *María*, Márquez’s *Amalia*, or Galván’s *El Enriquillo*, the erotic element functions as an end in itself (Rivera, “Alejandro Tapia y Rivera y Eugenio María de Hostos: Avatares de una modernidad” 87).

I emphasize this point because the notion of “romance” is related to Romanticism and traditionally literary theory regards Realism and Naturalism as a reaction against Romanticism.
and to show to what extent certain representations of gender are either perpetuated or challenged in the literature of the time. Although I focus primarily on disclosing literary representations of gender, I cannot overlook the fact that the discourses produced by the Puerto Rican intelligentsia that underlie nineteenth-century writing were also defined by race and class ideologies. Applying an interdisciplinary approach that combines North American, European, Latin American and Caribbean theories and methodologies may prove helpful in analyzing how Puerto Rican writing from the period in question represents gender relations in terms of family, social status, and marital alliances. This type of analysis would show the ways in which the Creole elite projected in their writings a sense of paternalistic morality and superiority vis-à-vis the masses. In sum, my analysis hopes to illuminate how the Creoles' fiction and essays conveyed meanings contradictorily linked to race and class at a time of strong patriarchal gender ideologies.

In this section, I discuss three concepts that are crucial to the theoretical framework of this dissertation, namely, “discourse,” “representation,” and “gender,” and will explain the choice of the corpus and my approach to its study. These notions, which have evolved and changed—and continue to do so—in the history of western ideas, are closely interrelated throughout this work. In particular the concepts “representation” and “gender,” while being distinct categories, are difficult to separate within the context of my study. The same can be said about “discourse” and “representation,” as I shall explain. Rather than posing fixed definitions, I attempt an understanding of how these notions may function in textual analyses.

Postmodern fields of research such as post-structuralism, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, or feminist theory owe much to Michel Foucault’s thought. In particular, Foucault’s
notion of "discourse" is central to contemporary criticism.\textsuperscript{10} In the \textit{Archaeology of Knowledge}, Foucault characterizes discourses as practices obeying certain rules (138). A discourse is constructed by interrelated statements about a distinct topic in a specific historical moment. Discourses are built in part by language and in part by cultural and intellectual practices that define and produce the objects of our knowledge, for example, medical discourse, sociological discourse, literary discourse, and so forth. As Findlay notes, discourses are also produced in public debates, in the pages of newspapers, in social movements, in official laws and proclamations, and even in individuals' daily actions and decisions (Findlay 6). In this sense, discourse also functions as a system of representation and as a social praxis, two interrelated aspects that are present in my analysis in different ways: as literary representation, as political representation, and as gender representation.

The concept of "representation" has a long tradition in western thought. It has evolved from simple notions to very complex ones, and it continues to be problematized today. There are different forms of representation, and contemporary theories have bestowed multiple meanings on this concept: "Representation is an extremely elastic notion which extends all the way from a stone representing a man to a novel representing a day in the life of several Dubliners" (Mitchell 13). The notion of representation has traditionally occupied a fundamental place in the theory of aesthetics, and today it is also a key concept for many disciplines, for instance, semiotics, feminist theory, cultural studies, and political science.

A significant number of contemporary critics who embrace interdisciplinary approaches, such as the conjunction of literary theory with feminist theory and cultural

\textsuperscript{10} See the second part of \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge}, in which Foucault disserts on his conceptualizations of discursive regularities and of discourse formation (\textit{Archaeology} 31-39).
studies, show an increasing interest in examining how “representation” functions in literary texts because of its social and political implications. They have taken a stance on the importance and interrelation of the notions of “representation” and “gender.” For example, Gillian Beer argues in “Representing Women: Re-presenting the Past,” that representation is an ideal category of analysis of literary texts from a feminist point of view because

[i]t sustains a needed distance between experience and formulation. It recognises the fictive in our understanding. It allows a gap between how we see things and how, potentially, they might be. It acknowledges the extent to which ideologies harden into objects and so sustain themselves as real presences in the world. The objects may be books, pictures, films, advertisements, fashion. (77)

The notion of representation suggested by Beer seems viable for the exploration of the political ideologies and systems of power that rest behind fictional representations of gender. Beer’s research examines literary representations of women in eighteenth-century English fiction in order to understand the evolution of social gender roles and gender power relations. Yet it is not enough to concentrate only on representations of women in texts written by women. In order to decode stereotypes of sexuality and representations of gender that would speak to social change, one must analyze both men’s and women’s writing (Beer 78).

In Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women’s Fiction, Sally Robinson explores women’s self-representation as “a process by which subjects produce themselves as women within particular discursive contexts” (11). Turning to representations of the self and to self narrative, Robinson shows the flexibility that

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11 Sally Robinson, Lou Charnon-Deutsch, Judith Butler, Gillian Beer, Lyn Pykett, Jean Franco, Mary Louise Pratt, Francine Massielo, among others.
the category of “representation” entails. Her study, like that of Charnon-Deutsch, is oriented towards psychoanalytical interpretations. Robinson is concerned with the female writer’s subjectivity, and finds in narrative the ideal space in which gender and subjectivity are produced in powerful ways. She draws from Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* and Alice Jardine’s *Gynesis* to build up her standpoint on this issue. Whereas Jardine’s perspective on representation is focused on a radical feminist view of patriarchal violence, Butler offers a more socio-political description. Butler’s view of representation as a twofold notion is worth recalling here:

On the one hand, *representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women . . .

The domains of political and linguistic “representation” set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must be met first before representation can be extended. (Qtd. in Robinson 189; Butler, *Gender Trouble*1-2, italics in the original)

Butler describes representation as a double process in which both the political and linguistic domains function as a vehicle of power by which “invisible subjects” would be legitimizd by inserting their experiences into the mainstream discourse. Representation implies the existence of a legitimate subject that exercises authority, and therefore the struggle of colonized subjects that claim representation vis-à-vis the dominant culture can be inferred.
The notion of gender is inextricably related to that of representation in certain trends within feminist criticism. However, to clarify the use of the notion of gender in this study, it is necessary to point out a series of problems and limitations it entails. Its very meaning is the focus of an ongoing debate in North American and European feminist scholarship, which has not yet reached a definite consensus. This obvious limitation becomes even more apparent in the context of this dissertation because the texts analyzed are written in Spanish and belong to a Hispanic cultural heritage intersected with colonialism, slavery, and miscegenation. Particularly because I refer to the distinct writing strategies and styles employed by Ana Roqué to guarantee her insertion as a woman author into the mainstream culture, I will briefly discuss how the category of gender has become a valid and interesting perspective for cultural and literary analysis.

The explanation of the concept of gender provided by Robinson summarizes much of the debate on the matter, particularly the deconstructionist trend, as she studies contemporary feminist theory and identity discourses in depth. Robinson suggests that gender “can be conceived as a system of meaning, rather than a quality ‘owned’ by individuals. And, as in all systems of meaning, the effects of gender are not always predictable, stable, or unitary” (1). It has been argued that gender is culturally learned and that it does not merely mark “natural” biological differentiations. As a system of meaning, gender comprises a broad spectrum within a given culture at a given time and place. It is a social and cultural construction that encompasses multiple and conflicting representations creating social meanings, relations, and identities among the members of a given social group.
Borrowing a trope from Jorge Luis Borges, Butler refers to the debate on gender as “The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate” (*Gender Trouble* 7), a metaphor that describes the vicious circle into which feminist criticism may fall in discussing a definition for “gender.” As I said at the outset, I do not intend to offer any fixed definitions. Rather I try to show that these notions are complex, debatable, in constant question and subject to change.

For Butler gender is not simply the cultural interpretation of sex. More in line with Foucault, she sees both gender and sex as notions that are constructed and shaped by culture. Perhaps the anthropological and historical position that views gender as a relation among persons in specific contexts is, in my perspective, the most viable explanation: “as a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations” (*Gender Trouble* 10). The notion of gender as a system of meaning, that depends on the social relations in which it is construed, provides a richer and open framework for the interpretation of textual representations of “masculinity” and “femininity” and of “man” and “woman” in narrative.

I will therefore read textual representations of gender by looking at the ways in which they define social relations and convey and produce social meanings. I do not seek to analyze gender as a category of analysis that only marks the confrontation between male/female differences. According to the materialist feminist critic Martha Gimenez, “this mode of thought compels us to think in terms of men versus women, patriarchy, domestic exploitation, and similar dichotomous dynamics” (258). As Gimenez asserts, reflection should not focus on the tension generated by the Manichean phrase “man versus woman” but on the tensions generated by the socio-historical and political specificities that were at play—
in this particular case, the different sets of relations that can be read in late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican narratives.

Gender tensions, present in the social context as well as in writing, promoted social changes that put into question conventionally accepted gender roles, creating a certain degree of gender anxiety, as evidenced by the proliferation of discourses around the question of woman and of women's education. Puerto Rican feminist critics such as Edna Acosta-Belén and Norma Valle Ferrer\(^\text{12}\) have documented that, by the mid-nineteenth century, some Liberal intellectuals (among them Ignacio Guasp, José Pablo Morales, Alejandro Tapia, Salvador Brau, and Gabriel Ferrer) were deeply concerned with the improvement of women's education and wrote proposals for its achievement. Acosta-Belén points out, however, that Liberal men "did not advocate total equality among the sexes (politics, for example, was still seen as the domain of men), they defended the right of women to an education and to practice professions from which they had traditionally been excluded" (275). These apparently well-intended proposals were the result of the socio-economic fractures that the Creole landed elite was facing, particularly after the abolition of slavery in 1873. Educating women from all classes, they thought, was the most viable way to control reproduction, adultery, concubinage, and interracial sex, thus guaranteeing a supposedly "whitened" more productive labour force. By examining selected proposals I hope to unveil the connections between

\(^\text{12}\) Acosta-Belén's essay "Women in Twentieth Century Puerto Rico," points out that the inferior status of women under the Spanish rule was reinforced by juridical inequality. By the mid-nineteenth century, Acosta-Belén assesses, the Liberal Creole elite men who also advocated the abolition of slavery "emphasized in their writings the need to educate women and prepare them to participate in society" (275). By the same token, Valle Ferrer in "Feminism and its Influence on Women's Organizations in Puerto Rico" indicates that educated Liberal men defended the moral and intellectual capacity of women (39).
racial and gender power relations that permeated Puerto Rican discourses in the late
nineteenth century.

It is for this reason that the corpus of this dissertation includes both essays and novels.
I analyze four essays or proposals for the reform of women’s education and their participation
in society by Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, Gabriel Ferrer Hernández, Salvador Brau, and
Manuel López Tuero, respectively. As a counterpoint, I discuss the reaction of Creole women
to the men’s proposals. Ana Roqué, together with other women intellectuals, such as Lola
Rodríguez de Tió, Isabel Andreu, and Mercedes Solá, voiced the bourgeois proto-feminists’
response. These discourses about the need for moral reforms for women set the background
for the development of gender ideologies that are inscribed in the national narratives.

The literary texts I have selected are four novels by three male authors—Alejandro
Tapia y Rivera, Salvador Brau, and Manuel Zeno-Gandía—, because of their prominent
position in the Puerto Rican literary canon. Each novel portrays different literary strategies
for the representation of gender that reveal the political projects that Liberal men sought to
represent in their fiction. In turn, I examine the less well-known fiction of Ana Roqué against
the intertextual background provided by the textual analysis of her contemporary
counterparts.

Tapia’s novels, Póstumo el transmigrado and Póstumo el envirginiado offer an
interesting contrast in the context of this dissertation in as much as they challenge traditional
gender roles and pose questions of self-identity as well as of gender identity. Tapia was an
advocate for women’s rights to citizenship, education, and job opportunities. The unusual
agenda of sexual politics that Tapia proposed in his fiction made him a unique case in the
nineteenth-century’s proto-feminist thought. The novels ¿Pecadora? by Brau, and La charca by Zeno-Gandía, on the other hand, illustrate the Liberal Creoles’ imaginary, which saw the rural area as inhabited by an eminently white peasantry in grave need of moral reform. My corpus includes Roqué’s two collections of short stories, Pasatiempos and Cuentos y novelas, including her novel Luz y sombra. As she was an educator, Roqué’s narratives are didactic, and unusual in approaching rare topics for her time, such as female sexual yearnings, the negative consequences of marriage for social convenience, and the moral disgrace carried by interracial sexual relations.

The grouping and comparison of these authors requires an explanation. Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía represent mainstream Puerto Rican intellectuals whose literary work is recognized as seminal in the development of the island’s national literature. Roqué cultivated a close friendship with these and other intellectuals who used to gather at her house in San Juan for animated cultural exchanges. The friendship among these authors attests to the fact that Roqué was also a public figure and an active member of the island’s exclusive circle of intellectuals and writers. Although Tapia, Brau, Zeno Gandía, and Roqué were contemporaries who exchanged ideas, their literary work has not yet been examined

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13 Ana Roqué was the first woman to be invited to join El Ateneo Puertorriqueño and to enter the Public Library. Her house, where the Puerto Rican intelligentsia often met, became the centre of socio-cultural events. On the roof top Roqué installed a telescope borrowed from the Junta de Obras Públicas, and sources indicate that at her parties she used to entertain her guests with lectures on astronomy, a discipline she studied in depth. Among her guests were renowned intellectuals such as Gabriel Ferrer, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, José Julián Acosta, Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo, Manuel Fernández Juncos, and Manuel Zeno Gandía, among others (Paravisini, “Esquema biográfico de Ana Roqué” 153).
collectively against its socio-historical background, or studied taking into account the perceptions of class, race, and gender that stratified Puerto Rican colonial society. Within this context, Foucault’s analysis of the relation between power and discourse, and the role of disciplinary discourses in the production of power relations, is especially relevant to my study. Foucault claims that the nineteenth century is exemplary for the articulation of discourses: “but neither literature, nor politics, nor philosophy and the sciences articulated the field of discourse, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, as they did in the nineteenth century” (*Archaeology* 22). My dissertation brings together diverse discourses from public debates and fiction produced between the 1870s and 1890s. The literary works chosen, moreover, show the pervasiveness of disciplinary discourse in cultural life. Public men such as Gabriel Ferrer and Manuel Zeno-Gandía who were also physicians, articulated the medical discourse in their narratives, in the same way that Salvador Brau employed sociological discourse.

In the nineteenth-century cultural imaginary, the physician is represented as a powerful—even unquestionable—masculine authority empowered to diagnose, to manipulate bodies, and to moralize upon people’s behaviour, making biological and genetic assumptions on behalf of “science.” Intellectuals such as Tapia and Roqué, however, constructed discourses that were positioned on the fringes of the authoritative medical discourse. Their concerns centred upon gender representation and sexual behaviour, mostly in the urban space. In their narratives they proposed gender categories that challenged traditional views, such as the confirmation of active female sexuality and women’s emancipation.
The fact that Roqué had access to the public sphere through her writing and actively participated in the island's intellectual life—normally considered an odd practice among the women of her time—is directly related to issues involving not only gender representation but also political representation. Roqué carried out an open struggle for women’s rights from 1890 to 1930. This struggle was motivated in part by the influence of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movements for the emancipation of women in Europe and North America, and in part by the particular socio-historical conditions of the island.

These various discourses on gender and authority produced in Puerto Rico at the time created a cacophony, so to speak, among the Puerto Rican intellectual elite since they were frequently in conflict with each other, or within themselves. I am not searching here for the coherence of concepts; rather, following Foucault, I seek to analyze “the interplay of their appearances and dispersion” (Archaeology 35) or the relation between their emergence and separations, their commonalities and discrepancies which would lead to “discursive regularities.” As suggested by Pykett, by focusing on discursive regularities, that is, on the dispersion as well as continuities of different types of discourse in a determined period of time, one can define a regularity, and disclose a particular discursive formation (Pykett 4; Foucault, Archaeology 38). This analytical approach can cast light on the ways in which the Puerto Rican elite constructed contradictory representations of gender, and on the interplay of these representations with assumptions about race and class. Such representations are not static, but dynamic and in constant fluctuation, and by examining them it can be shown how

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14 Yamila Azize Vargas, Edna Acosta-Belen, and Norma Valle Ferrer, for example, have documented the Creole Liberal men’s support for the rights of the women of their class to formal education, to work, and to suffrage. Chapter 3 expands on this issue.
they either produced social change or perpetuated social roles based on fixed gender assumptions. Puerto Rican Creole intellectuals, positioned at the top of the social hierarchy, generated a series of contradictory statements that wove a network of relations among their shared views, their contradictions, and their divergences. It is the interplay between their conflicting statements that will be read in fictional texts, as they constructed discourses and systems of representations that in turn defined models of authority and leadership grounded on gender, class, and racial assumptions.

The studies by Beer, Robinson, Charnon-Deutsch, Franco and other feminist critics who have focused on gender representations are particularly centred on fictional representations of women. This dissertation, however, does not explore solely representations of women, but gender representations in general. Placing texts by men and women authors together helps bring to light a more complete picture of the social and cultural forces that were at play during the specific period under study. In this sense, my study is closer to Lyn Pykett’s methodology in Engendering Fictions. This critic builds on a socio-historical approach to examine the development of early twentieth-century English fiction within the context of Modernity and the fin de siècle gender crisis. Pykett argues that novels by men and women writers in the first decades of the twentieth century directly reflect turn-of-the-century debates about the feminine, and the practice of gendered writing in the context of the crisis of the representation of gender: “This crisis of representation was linked both to a crisis of definition of gender, and to the gendered discourses of degeneration and renovation which pervaded late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture” (2). This observation is insightful in the context of my analysis, taking into consideration the fact that the moneyed
Puerto Ricans sent their sons to study in Europe. Intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic could not only experience, but also read about, the gender crisis to which Pykett refers. It is not surprising, then, that Alejandro Tapia y Rivera focuses on gender crisis in his novel *Póstumo el envirginiado* (1882), portraying the spirit of a man invading a woman's body. It is also significant that part of the action of *El envirginiado* takes place in England, and that the protector of the main character, Virginia, happens to be an Englishman.

Within this context of gender representations in writing, particularly in texts from the past, Pykett informs us in a rather riddle-like way that: "the gender crisis was also a crisis of representation; it was a crisis in both the representation of gender and in the gender of representation" (15). According to Pykett, the series of crises around the issue of gender in the late nineteenth century kept the "question of woman" (in terms of motherhood and of familial and social roles) at the forefront of public attention (15). The "Modern woman," along with her emancipatory agenda (the concepts of free love and of female eroticism), was an important subject of debate. The "New Woman" enters English popular culture in the 1890s, represented as a creature of contradictions at odds with the traditional Victorian representation of the feminine. The English New Woman and her counterpart, the homosexual or decadent, became the two most intriguing representations of the gender crisis. Interestingly enough, it was also in the 1890s that discourses on homosexuality and on female hysteria became the centre of medical discussion about sexual pathology. It is worth making the connection here with Puerto Rico, since it was also in the 1890s that Ana Roqué and a

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15 Pykett informs us that the Hungarian Karoly Benkert invented the term "homosexual" and that Krafft-Ebbing translated the term in *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1892 (Pykett 18). Also in 1895 *Studies on Hysteria* was published by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud.
group of Creole women began to unite around periodical publications to contest patriarchal
discourses about the “question of woman.”

With reference to gender representation studies in Spain, Charnon-Deutsch points out
that in nineteenth-century Spanish fiction the sexual dichotomy and gender codes that
crazed Spain’s social and cultural practices were conspicuously represented, thus rendering
these novels ideal texts for the study of gender representation: “The nineteenth century is one
of the favoured test periods feminism uses to confront patriarchal values because the
ideologies of gender are so heavily inscribed in its discourses” (xii). Nineteenth-century
Spanish novels responded more satisfyingly to the male reader, in the sense that it is nearly
always masculine identity that is being problematized, even when a woman is the subject of
the story. Consequently, the study of the representation of gender in nineteenth-century
fiction will constantly turn the reader towards the crisis of male identity, because such a crisis
“engendered” the century’s prose, as both Charnon-Deutsch and Pykett have pointed out. As
Pykett puts it: “Inevitably, given that femininity is habitually defined as the other of the
masculine in Western Culture, the prolonged nineteenth-century focusing on the ‘Woman
Question’ also put masculinity into question” (Pykett 16).

However, it is not just a matter of searching for and exposing female stereotypes in
male writing, or of finding sites of resistance in women’s writing. There is always a risk of
essentializing men as they have essentialized women. By placing men’s writings side by side
with those of Ana Roqué, I aim at examining the interplay between their discourses on gender
which are part of the greater national discourse about the need to improve women’s moral
education. The main duty of women was seen in terms of motherhood, because well-educated
mothers would effectively lead the new Puerto Rican generations towards the path of progress and modernization. In *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico*, Jean Franco documents how in nineteenth-century Mexico men were also concerned about the education of women: “The intelligentsia set out to educate mothers so that they would instil in the new generation patriotism, the work ethic, and a belief in progress” (81). These discourses on the education of women were a widespread practice at the time of nation formation in the Americas. They confined women to the domestic sphere, and limited their access to elementary education, thus placing them in an ambiguous space simultaneously inside and outside the nation. Women had the moral duty to educate the new generations without themselves having the right to citizenship (Gerassi Naravarro 130; Pratt 54).

There is another variable that must be taken into consideration in this study—that of the authors’ political position within the social structure. In order to analyze and compare texts written by both women and men, it is vital to have a clear configuration of their positions within the social spectrum, which will help to understand the ways in which the authors studied here devised strategies of gender representation within the context of late-nineteenth-century sociopolitical changes.¹⁶ Where does Ana Roqué position herself? Where is she positioned within Puerto Rican discourses? Where are Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía positioned? Roqué’s proto-feminist politics and that of her literary counterparts, Tapia and Brau, necessarily reflect the interests of their social class and status as white, middle-class

¹⁶ Gay and lesbian representations remain outside my analysis because the religious and moral restrictions of the time precluded the publication of texts that would speak explicitly of same-sex preferences and sexual practices. It is precisely this silence that pushes the moral restrictions of the period to the forefront.
Creole intellectuals. Neither Tapia’s nor Brau’s families had the means to send them to study abroad, as most of the moneyed class did. Both were mainly self-taught, as was Roqué, and had to work in administrative jobs in order to support their families. In contrast, Manuel Zeno Gandía belonged to the landed elite, studied medicine in Europe, and became a respected physician on the island. These socio-economic variables speak to the writers’ different positions in society and also explain the political agendas and tendencies reflected in their work. My research has shown that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Puerto Rico there were pronounced ideological differences between upper-, middle-, and working-class proto-feminist discourses. Roqué reproduced those differences in her fiction and essays, as they represented the interests of upper- and middle-class Creole women. A close reading of her texts, however, shows that her rhetorical strategies shared common themes and concerns with Liberal men with regard to moral reform and education for women of all classes.¹⁷

In conclusion, nineteenth-century women writers, such as Roqué, had to reformulate their writing strategies and styles in order to legitimate their insertion as authors into mainstream culture. This conscious act of self-determination and authorship necessarily raises questions related to the concepts of gender and of representation. In the first place, both Tapia’s and Roqué’s proto-feminist fiction deliberately puts into question traditional

¹⁷ In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Puerto Rican working-class women from the garment and tobacco industries articulated a powerful counter-discourse that demanded radical socioeconomic changes, but also advocated the same basic women’s rights that the bourgeois Liberals addressed. To limit the scope of this study, I do not address the early twentieth-century working-class women’s movement and writing; rather, I focus on the 1890s upper- and middle-class discourse of emancipation of which Roqué was a key leader and activist.
assumptions regarding the social status of the Creole woman, thus introducing the problem of gender roles. In the second place, the ways in which Tapia and Roqué represent men and woman in their fiction challenge imposed cultural and social norms, which generates questions of literary representation. In contrast, the works by Brau and Zeno Gandía represent the views of the patriarchal Liberals, who based their rhetoric on contradictory conceptualizations of honour codes and racially charged representations of gender and of moral superiority.

Puerto Rican society during the period under consideration was severely stratified, and the main concerns of the writers responded to specific political agendas. This issue is directly linked to political representation. To a greater or lesser degree, the political positions of Tapia, Roqué, Brau, and Zeno were sympathetic to the Liberal Reformistas, whose tenets promoted a peaceful process towards autonomy from Spain without violence or social revolts. They all articulated in their respective intellectual projects the Liberals’ rhetoric of “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña,” which positioned the Hispanic Creole intellectuals as the morally superior fathers and mothers who were meant to guide and control the racially mixed masses. The contradiction of the Liberal Autonomist Creole elite was that they accused the Incondicionales of exploitative labour practices and a retrograde vision detrimental to progress in the island, while simultaneously, looking upon the lower urban and rural classes—composed of blacks, mulattoes, and jibaros—as dangerously racially mixed, weak, apathetic, and lacking the necessary energy and spirit to attain progress. The Liberal Creoles’ rhetoric of “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña” replaced the blatant exploitation of slavery with
a benevolent and hierarchical paternalism. This is found in much of the writing of the time, as I shall demonstrate.
CHAPTER 3

GENDERED DISCOURSES: THE CREOLE LIBERAL AND THE CONSERVATIVE PATRIARCHAL MORAL PRESCRIPTION

On the good constitution of mothers depends that of the children and the early education of men is in their hands. On women too depend the morals, the passions, the tastes, the pleasures, aye and the happiness of men. For this reason their education must be wholly directed to their relations with men. To give them pleasure, to be useful to them, to win their love and esteem, to train them in their childhood, to care for them when they grow up, to give them counsel and consolation, to make life sweet and agreeable for them: these are the duties of women in all times for which they should be trained from childhood.

(Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* 135)

Rousseau’s *Emile* (1761) provided a model of education for men that was simultaneously social and “natural.” Rousseau characterized Emile as the quintessential man of the Enlightenment, and Sophie as his perfect wife. His dichotomy of sex and politics was categorical: the political realm belongs to the social contract; inequality of the sexes is completely “natural.” Mary Wollstonecraft much admired Rousseau’s work but resented that for him egalitarian rights were reserved just for men, and that women, by natural law, were outside of the social contract. Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* contested Rousseau’s natural masculine hierarchy and claimed that the only reason for women’s state was their lack of education (Valcárcel 58-59). Rousseau’s mode of political philosophy not only triumphed in the nineteenth century but has also been filtered through many discourses up to the present day.

In the context of nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, the intellectual elite on the island and abroad were acquainted with Rousseau’s philosophical thought. Therefore, it is not surprising that the debate on women’s education on the island was based on Rousseau’s ideas about what is “natural.” This Chapter examines Creole men’s discourses about women’s education that interweave statements on the control of female sexuality, racial impurity, and
the limitations and possibilities of an emancipatory agenda. Puerto Rican elite women were not passive recipients of this indoctrination, and created their own responses to the masculine moral prescriptions.

Crucial changes in the social and economic development of Puerto Rico occurred during the 1870s and 1880s. The abolition of slavery in 1873 soon made the practice of the *Libreta* regime obsolete,¹ and rapidly showed its effects as the dominant classes’ authority and control began to crumble. The first political parties also emerged during this time, and the Creole professional elite organized the Liberal Party (later the Autonomist Party) and voiced their concerns officially. The male members of the island’s officialdom and landowning or professional elite saw the urgent need to re-organize the basis of their social infrastructure to ensure their economic, political, and above all moral power over the subjugated masses. The Liberals, who so fervently advocated the abolition of slavery and political autonomy from Spain, believed that “los hijos del país” were in grave need of moral reform. The undisciplined blacks and mulattoes, and the unruly *jibaros*, embodied a moral illness that, according to the Liberals’ rhetoric, kept the country’s large masses corrupt with their vices, laziness, promiscuity, and degeneracy.

Puerto Rican Creole men, like their counterparts in other Latin American nations, insisted that the education of women was the cornerstone that would improve society at large. Numerous pamphlets written by both Liberal and Conservative elite men were placed in circulation during this period specifically addressing the “question of woman.” Their patriarchal rhetoric called for moral reforms for women of all social classes and ethnic backgrounds. Among the many proposals for the improvement of women’s education and

¹ The *Libreta* system was a unjust and cruel instrument of labour control, “a state campaign to force free landless men into labour on large estates” (Findlay 53).
their participation in society, this Chapter examines three of the most disseminated texts by Liberal men in the late 1800s: Alejandro Tapia y Rivera’s “El aprecio a la mujer es barómetro de civilización” (1862), Gabriel Ferrer’s “La mujer en Puerto Rico” (1881), and Salvador Brau’s “La campesina” (1886). There follows a brief description of Fernando López Tuero’s extensive treatise, *La mujer* (1893), that voiced the conservative *Incondicionales*’ attack on the Liberals’ proposals in favour of the [limited] education of women. This section concludes with a discussion of the Creole women’s response to the masculine moral prescription. Furthermore, this Chapter attempts to demonstrate how gendered power relations were at the centre of discursive practices between men and women intellectuals that represented their respective agendas of sexual politics and the politics of location—as conflicting and ambiguous as they were.

While Brau believed that the education of women from the wealthy elite was satisfactory, Tapia and Ferrer thought that it was insufficient. Tapia’s discourse probably held the most progressive ideas regarding gender: these were in consonance with his cosmopolitan view, rather than with the realities of the island. In his writing, Tapia openly demonstrated his solidarity with the early women’s emancipation movements of the nineteenth century from North America and Europe. He firmly believed that the Hispanic Creole women were independent and intelligent human beings who, given a proper education, were perfectly able to debate any subject with men as their equals.

Tapia’s partisan ideas on women’s emancipation did not suit the ideological agenda on women’s education expressed by the Conservative *Incondicionales* who quickly moved to censor the support Liberal Reformist men gave to women’s claims for emancipation. By the 1890s, bourgeois women also began writing their own opinions regarding their education and
access to the public sphere. Ultimately, both Liberal men and bourgeois proto-feminists proclaimed a moral transformation that would "whiten" and reinvigorate Puerto Rican colonial society, "yet the proposed reforms were premised on elements of the dominant honour code; thus their proponents assumed the right to assert racial superiority and consolidation of power over the groups whose lives they hoped to better" (Findlay 54). These groups provided competing definitions of morality, race, and gender. However, as Findlay argues, their ultimate goal was to maintain the professional and landed classes at the top of the social and economic hierarchy.

My intention in reviewing these diverse discourses is not simply to criticize men's proposals, but rather to examine and expose the strong gender ideologies and racially charged rhetoric that both Creole men and women sustained, as they believed that in their hands rested the modernization and progress of their society.

**Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's “El aprecio a la mujer es barómetro de civilización”**

Tapia y Rivera, as well as other Liberal men (among them, Ignacio Guasp, Gabriel Ferrer, José Pablo Morales Miranda, and Salvador Brau), supported the "rational emancipation" of the Creole women. Tapia seems to be the earliest voice—and probably the most revolutionary of all—to claim egalitarian rights between the two sexes. His short article, "El aprecio a la mujer es barómetro de civilización,"2 conveyed the marrow of the...

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2 In the compilation I consulted, Cuentos y artículos varios (1938), the cited article is dated 1862. However, it appears in other sources as first published in Tapia’s newspaper La Azucena in November 1870. The article’s main points and ideas were repeatedly evoked by the Liberals, who viewed Creole bourgeois women not just as man’s sexually subordinated “hembra” but rather his equal friend and partner with whom he was able to discuss any matters pertaining to cultural or political life.
Liberals’ thought regarding the education of upper-class women which, in turn, was strongly opposed by the Conservative patriarchal majority.

Upper-class young men, in the Caribbean as well as in the rest of Latin America, had the opportunity to study overseas in Spain, France or the United States, a possibility not extended to young women. Despite the educational limitations of Puerto Rico and the reluctance of most fathers to provide their daughters with the same education they gave to their sons, Tapia fiercely defended women’s rights to education and access to the political sphere, premising his argument on the fact that the most cultivated and civilized nations of the world provided a thorough education to men and women alike. And that was what Puerto Rico urgently needed: educated women to transform the island into the cultivated, civilized, and modern nation that Tapia envisaged.

Woman, the most prolific topic of all times, says Tapia, represents “la diatriba y la apoteósis” simultaneously. Tapia, an aesthete par excellence, condemns satirical remarks against women—the diatribe—and favours the “apotheosis,” which for him is condensed in the dual formula “beauty and virtue.” Tapia insists that anywhere this dualism is found, there exists progress and civilized peoples. His interpretation of Rousseau’s concept of “the state of nature” serves him as the premise for weaving his argument around “beauty and virtue.” Thus Tapia attempts to design the political position for women within the proto-nation. His writing strategy is to provide a historical overview of past and present civilizations, following

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3 A remarkable exception was Ana Roqué, whose father insisted on her formal instruction. Although Roqué never studied abroad, her higher education—most of which was self-taught—was a rare privilege among the women of her time. The same can be said about Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo, who unlike Roqué, did study in Spain where she resided most of her life.

4 Tapia was referring to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s Second Discourse: On The Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men. He calls Rousseau “el filósofo de Ginebra” in the next quotation.
the historical model of Renan, to illustrate how educated women of all times have contributed toward the progress of humankind. He aims to demonstrate that the incorporation of women into society would eventually lead to the development of a more advanced nation. Most interestingly, Tapia’s counterpoint of civilization is exemplified by Asian societies, which he qualifies as “backward and primitive,” for they maintain women subjugated as servants while men are occupied with more important endeavours, such as military action, government or simply “holganza” (leisure). For example, he condemns the ancient tradition observed by some cultures in India of burning the wife alive along with the deceased husband since the woman is the male’s property. In his article, Tapia states that this kind of practice would never lead to progress or to civilization. Basing himself on Rousseau’s *Second Discourse*, Tapia emphasizes the following:

> Es evidente que, sin que sea ya necesario en nuestra época refutar el exclusivo sistema del filósofo de Ginebra, el mencionado periodo [India] no puede tampoco llamarse **estado natural**, puesto que nunca debe juzgarse al hombre más próximo a su **estado natural**, que cuando se encuentra mejor aparejado en la vía de civilizarse y perfeccionarse. El **estado de naturaleza** que imagina o establece el citado filósofo, está en palpable contradicción con la verdad, puesto que el hombre no fue creado para los bosques como los lobos, sino para la civilización que le acerca a la belleza y la **virtud**. Y ciertamente que el artista a quien ocurrió pintar al hombre de Rousseau despojándose de sus vestidos para ir a buscar en lo agreste de las selvas la dulce ventura de su **estado natural**, anduvo acertado, y su ocurrencia fue por demás ingeniosa, apropiada y peregrina. Si en semejante período anti-civilizado de los
I cite Tapia at length to facilitate the understanding of his interpretation of Rousseau's concept of "the state of nature." To justify his argument, Tapia states that Rousseau is in obvious contradiction with the truth "el estado de naturaleza que imagina o establece el citado filósofo, está en palpable contradicción con la verdad." According to Roger D. Masters, it has been argued that Rousseau's thought was indeed contradictory, however, his paradoxes were carefully and deliberately crafted. Tapia saw beyond the alleged contradiction regarding the state of nature that Rousseau imagined or established. He wastes no time in offering his own interpretation of the state of nature in order to introduce the subject of his essay—woman—one that was conspicuously absent from Rousseau's discourse.

Tapia proceeds to give examples of ancient societies—Hebrew, Greek, and Roman—that reached a significant level of advancement in the arts and sciences because they had ennobled women. According to Tapia, the notorious decadence of the Roman Empire impacted negatively on the place of women in society. Caesar's "Mesalinas" corroded the image of women and they began to be disrespected. This disdainful attitude towards women

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5 Roger D. Masters, in his Introduction to *The First and Second Discourses*, points out that most of the criticism of Rousseau's *Discourses* decries the inconsistency and contradictions of his statements. Masters insists that this is merely a "superficial inconsistency" and that we should look for the underlying principles that explain the paradox: "his writings are not only profound, they are paradoxical. His *First Discourse* is a learned essay on the danger of learned essays; his *Second Discourse* establishes the nature of man as the criterion for judging society, but reduces the natural man to an unthinking animal. The *First Discourse* can only be understood as a return to classical principles; the *Second Discourse* uses modern principles to attack the tradition derived from the classics" (24-25). Furthermore, Rousseau himself acknowledges his paradoxes: "they must be made when one thinks seriously; and, whatever you may say, I would rather be a man of paradoxes than a man of prejudices" (qtd. in Masters, 25).
continued during the Middle Ages, when the empty phrase “Dios y mi dama” was nothing more than an expression of mere vanity for the self-glorification of the knight, and not of true devotion to his lady:

El feudo de las cien doncellas, el derecho de pernada, el de vida en el marido para castigo del adulterio, la consagración forzosa y absoluta de la mujer a los menesteres mecánicos del hogar, su nulidad en el estado; todo prueba que la invocación caballeresca de Dios y mi dama era pura vanidad . . . no verdadera estimación. (Tapia 53)

Here, Tapia launches his revolutionary and controversial proto-feminist argument: a civilized society would and should appreciate women; that is, for Tapia, “the barometer” with which one can measure the level of civilization of any given society. In the modern age, Tapia declares, women are finally called to occupy their rightful place. The state now recognizes that she ought to be educated: in her condition as a mother, she is the solid base that supports the family, the nation-state, and society at large. Her “rational emancipation,” according to Tapia, lies in struggling against her ignorance about how to fulfill her civic role. Woman and man were both born with the same intellectual capacity; therefore, woman should break her shackles so that she can rightfully dispute with man in the fields of Law and Sciences. These are the greatest innovations and challenges that lie ahead in the nineteenth century, Tapia concludes: “La mujer ha pasado por la esfera de las esclavas y las libertas, ha ocupado el trono de las diosas; ese no es su fin, ese no es su camino; la mujer se eleva más, camina mejor hacia su estado natural haciéndose ciudadana; he aquí uno de los problemas que tiene que resolver el siglo XIX” (54, emphasis in Tapia). Tapia’s closing statement was one of the most controversial and daring written in the colony in the mid-nineteenth-century. Although
Liberals agreed that women were in need of a better education, they did not accept so easily their inclusion in politics, nor their claim to civil rights. It was on this very point that Tapia’s thought radically diverged from that of the rest of his contemporaries. Certainly, Tapia’s ideas were echoed by the Liberals, but the most important one, that of bestowing suffrage on women, was overtly neglected.

Tapia’s ideas advocating women’s rights did not have much public resonance until over a decade later. From the 1880s on, public opinion was bombarded with a cacophony of discourses regarding the “woman question.” Most of the records documenting social and cultural events in Puerto Rico in the 1880s that I have consulted show that ‘woman’ is an obsessive subject of discussion. These speeches, articles, and pronouncements, often articulated in extravagant language destined to stress the importance of motherhood and woman’s moral responsibility, followed basically the same structure: first, a brief account of notable women in ancient societies; secondly, a presumed analysis of the physical and moral development of girls, and third, a proclamation of woman’s maternal duties.

A good case in point is the lecture by Enrique Soriano Hernández, given at one of the many literary dinners of the “Círculo de Recreo” in San Germán. Under the ubiquitous title “La mujer,” Soriano’s opening lines recapitulate some of the ideas previously laid out by Tapia. Soriano’s main point, he states, is to offer a brief account of women’s historical influence over human history. After mentioning a number of celebrated women, ranging from Eve to Katherine the Great, he finds it necessary to concentrate on the analysis of women’s moral development. According to Soriano, even before a woman learns how to think nature has already taught her sacred destiny: maternity. Also following Rousseau’s

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6 This particular speech was read the night of June 27, 1880 in the “Círculo de Recreo” and published later by the press of J. Ramón González that same year.
thought, Soriano argues that, unlike man, woman is obliged, by her desires and needs, to
depend on man. Therefore, in order to fulfill her needs, man should agree to provide for her
needs, and to do so, she must gain his esteem: “el hombre pone precio al mérito de la mujer,
pesando lo que valen sus gracias y sus virtudes” (7). Thus, the moral qualities of women are
subject to a good education and to the imposition of social mores, to such an extent that it is
the only way to eradicate woman’s primitive character: “La obligación de la buena madre es
instruir la inteligencia del niño y desarrollar su alma . . . instruyamos a la mujer para que
pueda cumplir con su destino” (9), are the closing words of Soriano’s speech.

**Gabriel Ferrer’s *La mujer en Puerto Rico***

Probably the most influential proposal for women’s education in the 1880s was that
of Gabriel Ferrer y Hernández (1848-1901), a teacher, physician, and poet who actively
participated in the political and intellectual life of the island. According to Cayetano Coll y
Toste, Ferrer was praised in the “Juegos Florales” of the “Casino de Mayagüez” in 1893 for
his poems *Post Nubila*. He wrote two of dramas in 1883, namely, *El bastardo* and *Herir en el
corazón*, which were performed in San Juan (Coll y Toste 323). His essay, *La mujer en
Puerto Rico: sus necesidades presentes y los medios más fáciles y adecuados para mejorar
su porvenir*, won the first prize of the “Certamen Cervantino” in 1880.

The essay’s prologue by Manuel Fernández Juncos⁷ is worthy of special discussion,
for it illustrates the highly gendered ideologies that dominated the Liberals’ thought.

Fernández Juncos celebrates the subject of Ferrer’s work—the Puerto Rican woman—stating

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⁷ Manuel Fernández Juncos was the founder and chief editor of the Liberal newspaper *El
buscapié*, where Ferrer’s *La mujer en Puerto Rico* was published. A pamphlet version also
circulated throughout the island.
that it is “una cuestión que preocupa hoy a los pueblos más civilizados, y que por su importancia y magnitud puede considerarse como uno de los grandes litigios de la humanidad” (viii). Citing contemporary “hombres ilustres” in England, Germany, Belgium, and France who were also concerned with the “woman question.” Fernández Juncos’ prologue thus places Puerto Rican Liberals at the same level of progressive ideas as the “civilized” world—Europe.

Fernández Juncos approves of European writers such as Dumas and Girardin for supporting equal rights for men and women and for deploring the “código napoleónico” which gave men the legal right to kill their wives under certain conditions (ix). However, he argues that Dumas is too radical and excessive: “radical hasta la exageración, intenta hacer de la mujer un hombre” (x, emphasis in the original), while Girardin only aspires to the “la igualdad moral de la gran familia humana” (x). This statement strategically confirms the Liberals’ rhetoric about moral reformation, linking it to the paternalist language of “la gran familia” repeatedly used in these lectures and speeches.

In the context of this study it is pertinent to cite Fernández Juncos’ extremely romanticized representation of the Puerto Rican Creole woman, one that was commonplace in the writings of the time:

Hija legítima de la española, y más especialmente de la andaluza, es como ella impresionable y sensible, de viva y penetrante imaginación, de agudo ingenio, de carácter dulce y benigno, de nobles y generosos instintos, y de excelentes disposiciones para el cultivo de las ciencias y las artes. . . . La puerto-riqueña misma, con su natural gentileza, su talle esbelto y flexible, sus rasgados ojos, radiantes de luz
y de poesía, y su semblante agraciado, correcto y ligeramente pálido, con aquella
vaga expresión de languidez o de indecible melancolía... (xi)

Fernández Juncos’ assertion that the Puerto Rican woman is the “hija legítima de la
española” confirms the white Hispanic lineage that legitimates Creole woman as
authentically European. The Puerto Rican woman is thus defined in reference to the Spanish
woman, conveying a racially charged feminine representation that denies in principle any
African or Amerindian component.

This kind of racialized rhetoric was usual among the white Creole elite. Liberals
carefully substituted their racism by a rhetoric based on paternalist racial and moral
superiority. The delicate and charming feminine creature described by Fernández was,
however, dangerously misguided since her childhood to feed only her imagination rather than
her intelligence. As a result, she becomes inconstant and deprived of the capacity for
discernment, is consumed by her own vanity and frivolity. A solid moral education would
prevent her from falling into the most serious threat that affected the women of the middle
and upper classes: “el tedio ... terrible enemigo del hogar ... muy peligroso en la mujer”
(xv). For Fernández Juncos, boredom is the enemy of the home, and a very dangerous threat
for women, so it is necessary to combat it. To fight the dangers associated with boredom, the
upper-class woman must learn how to occupy her mind by studying Sciences and Fine Arts
in order to constructively entertain herself and her family: “de esta manera se elevará su
espiritu, adquirirá claras nociones de lo bello y de lo bueno, y se despertarán en ella nobles y
elevadas aspiraciones” (xv). Her position within the family unit is defined with respect to
man: woman is man’s natural companion and she should be able to understand him, comfort
him and help him. Only through appropriate instruction could women be saved from the
malignant vice that destroys homes. Thus, Fernández Juncos’ prologue corroborates the main points of the discourses that Liberal men displayed regarding the education of their women.

Gabriel Ferrer’s *La mujer en Puerto Rico* claims to be a serious, scholarly sociological essay. This essay was groundbreaking because it took into consideration socio-economic and racial differences among the female population, something that the Creole elite preferred not to acknowledge, at least not in a straightforward manner. Ferrer develops a classification of Puerto Rican women by class and race, prescribing to each group particular norms of behaviour and advice for their proper education. Since Ferrer was a physician, he bases his arguments on nineteenth-century European theories of hygiene that stressed the importance of bodily cleanliness, pure oxygen for the brain, and physical exercise. All three are important factors for maintaining a perfect equilibrium between a healthy body and the normal functions of the intelligence: *mens sana in corpore sano*. Ferrer’s main point is that women’s natural domain, whatever her class or race, is at the core of the family unit. In this capacity, she must be adequately educated to be morally responsible, so that she will be able to take care of and educate the new generations effectively: “la sociedad depende de las mujeres … es preciso enseñar a las madres lo que más tarde deben ellas enseñar a los hijos” (5). He defends the notion that there is a radical difference between supporting women’s rights to basic education, and believing that women are just the servants of “su tirano”—her male counterpart. However, women’s education must be limited; Ferrer does not support the idea that the rights of men and women should be totally equal.

Ferrer divides Puerto Rican women into two large economic groups: the moneyed class and the working class; and into three main racial groups: the white Hispanic, the mulatto or *cuarterona*, and the black. He explains that the well-being of society rests on the
labour of the working-class, therefore he finds it only fair to give advice to the daughters of honest artisans. Ideally, these unfortunate creatures, if orphans, should be able to recognize the causes of their misfortunes themselves and correct them. If they are not orphans, their parents should help them find a remedy to prevent them from “falling” and to assist them in correcting their mistakes (7). To explain his argument, he poses a rhetorical question: are there essential differences that would prove the superiority of men over women? Would these differences explain somehow women’s inferior behaviour in the physical and the intellectual order? Remarkably, Ferrer concludes that through the observation of the development of both male and female from infancy to puberty, it is evident that men have advantages over women at certain times, and that women often surpass men at others. Although we do not know what those particular instances are, at least Ferrer talks about a supposed balance between the two sexes, even if his discourse merely describes women in reference to men and never as independent beings.

Without being ill-intentioned, Ferrer represents woman as reduced to a single organ: the womb:

La mujer poseyendo además un órgano que . . . es el centro de donde parten las sensaciones más exquisitas, y al cual confluyen las simpáticas relaciones que emanan de sus diversos órganos, aparatos y sistemas, la caracteriza de tal modo, que él, por sí solo, bastaría para hacerla considerar un ser de naturaleza especialísima y al cual se doblegan sumisamente todas las prerrogativas que el hombre supone tener sobre ella: a la importancia de aquel maravilloso centro, de portentosa y delicada sensibilidad. El órgano a que hacemos referencia, ya lo habrán comprendido nuestros lectores, es la urna sagrada, el laboratorio admirable, en donde la vida se concentra en los
primeros y sucesivos instantes de la procreación y en el cual el organismo entero, rindiéndole justo vasallaje, fija toda su atención, le presta su valioso concurso para que se realice el incomprensible acto, primero de la vida, al cual siguen una serie de fenómenos todos extraordinarios, todos grandes, todos sublimes, y ante cuyo impenetrable misterio el sabio dobla la cerviz. (10)

Thus woman, by nature, is endowed with a quid divinum having a womb, a most mysterious organ that makes her resilient to the tremendous torments imposed by maternity. Therefore, woman’s capacity to give birth makes her unselfish, loving, tender, and delicate. Ferrer insists that the supposed male superiority pales before the role of maternity. While man is more robust, more daring, more prompt to fight, she is more delicate, less provocative, and more conciliatory; while man is full of pride, more material, more indifferent, she is more submissive, more idealistic, more sensitive; while woman is capable of extreme self-denial and self-sacrifice, man rarely feels true love. In sum, woman is ruled by “virtue” which makes her comply with the demands of “duty”: “gobierna la familia con sus consejos, inculca en sus hijos y hasta en su mismo esposo las máximas sagradas del honor y de los deberes… ¿dónde está, pues la decantada superioridad del hombre?” (11). Although Ferrer seems to be attacking male superiority, he represents woman only in reference to man. As Charnon-Deutsch points out, ultimately it is the male identity that is actually being problematized.

Ferrer assures his audience that Puerto Rican women, from both the wealthy and the working classes, are facing great needs, and that he is determined not only to pinpoint those needs but also to prescribe the most likely means to alleviate them.

La mujer puerto-riqueña, con dotes suficientes para ilustrar su inteligencia, es—y lo confesamos con dolor,—generalmente ignorante.
Si se trata a la mujer acomodada . . . no se tarda en conocer que toda su ciencia se reduce a algunos escasos conocimientos religiosos, a leer mal y peor escribir.

Su moralidad proverbial, hace de la madre en este país un dechado de virtudes. (14-15)

The upper-class woman is simultaneously a selfish mother and an ignorant being. Her knowledge is reduced to basic religious information; she barely knows how to read and her writing ability is even worse. However, she possesses notable imagination, sensibility, and a great capacity for love and self-denial. Among her limited activities, her great passions are music and dancing, so she enjoys attending the city’s ball-room. Dancing and reading novels are two of her favourite pastimes, both dangerous activities capable of misleading her feverish and childish imagination. Cuarteronas or mulatto women are more inclined to this kind of entertainment white women, and therefore they are in need of close control: “la cuarterona o mulata, tipo de una clase muy numerosa en las ciudades... son alegres y bulliciosas . . . su pasión se reduce a lucir galas; su manía es el baile . . . aman con frenesi y su inmenso cariño... las lleva a perder el tesoro de su virginidad” (19-20).

Despite these statements, Ferrer insists that the Puerto Rican woman transcends her imposed limitations as she seeks progress and self-advancement. However, the excessive religiosity of some women makes them often fall into public ridicule, as they seem extremely ignorant and superstitious, something that only proper instruction would remedy.

Nevertheless, the few women who are well-educated and have extraordinary wit, their own intelligence “las hizo romper con el hábito,” so they are forced to go abroad in search of

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8 “[R]omper con el hábito” meant that they were no longer “honourable,” could not live by themselves as respectable single women without the consequent scandal and social stigmatization.
more social freedom. In order to avoid this, he advises following the examples of Germany, the United States, and France, where women are educated and incorporated into national life. Notably, his contradictory discourse recognizes that Puerto Rican women do not lack intellectual faculties, just opportunities.

Ferrer is not opposed to the idea of single women living independently like single men outside the bonds of marriage, however with great moral limitations: “en este grave asunto no hay ni pueden haber términos medios: o buena esposa o buena soltera, aunque para ello sea preciso el sacrificio de la vida” (19). Thus, for a woman there are no options, except to cultivate her virtue at all costs, and the development of a strong will to keep her from committing what Ferrer’s calls “un acto criminal,” since a woman herself is totally responsible for maintaining intact her honour “el tesoro de su virginidad” (20). Otherwise, she runs the risk of being disgraced and outcast from society. Interestingly enough, in the context of adultery, Ferrer examines the living conditions of the daughters of low-income families or poor orphans. These poor girls marry older men for financial convenience and without love, so they have a proclivity to adultery. According to Ferrer, these girls should not get married, even if it means living in misery and being deprived of economic ease for the rest of their lives. This misguided advice is proof positive of how Liberal men viewed women’s sexuality as threatening and manipulative, while leaving men absolutely exempt from any responsibility.

Contrary to what one would expect, for Ferrer upper-class women represent the group at the greatest disadvantage with respect to their physical and mental development. Following Spanish notions of hygiene, Ferrer emphasizes that the upper-class woman is deprived of the basic means to be healthy: exercise, sun, and oxygen. Her languid, pale
complexion, and her physical weakness are due to lack of outdoor exposure. Confined to the boundaries of the home, she is used to living cloistered, and with reduced aspirations. Her activities are limited to going to church on Sundays and visiting close friends or relatives on rare occasions. This permanent confinement in enclosed spaces keeps her weak from childhood on. In school, girls are obliged to spend six hours a day in the same position, which Ferrer argues is against their nature. Consequently, they do not learn to appreciate study and quickly learn how to lie, becoming frivolous and caring only for fashion and beauty. When she is ten years old, a girl's school education ends and she continues at home learning passive activities such as embroidery, weaving or playing the piano, but still indoors, so that she grows up languid and ill. Her diet consists mainly of vegetables, which contribute to her slow development and weakness. By contrast, both peasant and mulatto girls are more robust and healthy because they are exposed to breathing pure air and to playing outdoors freely. To compensate for this lack, he proposes the Fröebel Kindergarten, where children can safely play outdoors and learn at the same time. In sum, women must be morally re-generated in order to offer future generations and men "una digna y virtuosa compañera" (41).

The merit of Ferrer's proposal, with all its limitations and contradictions, was to evaluate the role of women in society taking into consideration the prevalent differences between class and race. Unlike most Creole elite men, who simply chose to ignore these realities, Ferrer based his analysis on what at the time were considered progressive and non-traditional methods, such as hygienics and the German concept of the Kindergarten as proposed by Fröebel (42-43). Ferrer's solutions are, basically, to reform the educational system and open more schools for girls. Through a good education, women would also have
more access to the professions. Hence, Ferrer’s proposal to improve Puerto Rican women’s education was also intended to improve the island’s educational system at large.

**Salvador Brau’s La campesina (1886)**

In 1880, Governor Eulogio Despujol (1878-1881) published, in the *Gaceta Oficial*, his agreement and support for schooling for rural girls. Despujol’s words were echoed in the writings and speeches of men such as Salvador Brau, Gabriel Ferrer, and Manuel Zeno Gandía:

> Me hallo de todo punto conforme, en tesis general, *con la conveniencia de establecer escuelas rurales para niñas*. Completamente diseminada la población rural en chozas asiladas, falta de toda instrucción religiosa y de freno moral, sin que ni la eficacia del Sacramento ni la sanción de la Ley venga a legitimar muchas uniones, más o menos duraderas, creadas sobre la sola y deleznable base del apetito sensual, puede decirse, en verdad, que *la familia*, en los campos de Puerto Rico, *no está moralmente constituída*, siendo este quizá el principal obstáculo para su futuro progreso. (General Despujol, qtd. in Brau, *La campesina* 8-9. Italics in the original.)

Salvador Brau wrote his sociological treatise *La campesina* as a direct response to Governor Despujol’s support for the establishment of elementary schools for girls in the rural areas. *La campesina* is a chapter of Brau’s larger work *Disquisiciones sociológicas*, but it was also published by itself and circulated free of charge.9 *La campesina* was endorsed by other Liberal men representing cultural associations, such as Laureano Vega, founder and sponsor of “La Sociedad Protectora de la Inteligencia,” and José Cordovéz y Berrios who,

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9 The copy I examined was published in 1886 in the *Almanaque de las Damas*, a small magazine for women edited by José González Font, to whom Brau dedicated his essay.
interestingly enough, was the founder of the “Asociación de Damas,” and as Brau states in his “Advertencia,” an enthusiastic defender and promoter of the education of the Puerto Rican people (Brau, *La campesina* xiv-xv).

Brau begins his argument by addressing one of the most important problems faced by the intellectual elite in matters of higher education: the lack of a university on the island. Analyzing the precarious socio-economic condition of Puerto Rico, Brau reflects that a university in the island is “like a fairy tale” that would only satisfy a very limited number of privileged people who, as he suggests, already have the option to go abroad in pursuit of higher education. The social realities of the island impose priorities, and the increased provision of elementary schools for children in the rural areas is the most urgent. Based on the official census of urban and rural inhabitants of both sexes, Brau points out that 81% of Puerto Ricans live in the rural areas. He breaks down this percentage by sex, and indicates that 36% of the rural population are women: “¿qué instrucción reciben esas mujeres? Doloroso es contestar. Ni una sola escuela rural acusa en su obsequio, la estadística oficial de la enseñanza”(5).

Brau’s paternalist rhetoric, as a physician and sociologist, assumes a sententious tone of moral authority as he condemns “el vicio del concubinato” that, according to him, is so deeply rooted in the peasants’ customs. Promiscuity is the main evil of the rural sector that must be eradicated, since the salvation of the peasants’ morality is in the hands of peasant women. He emphasizes that anyone who has walked through the countryside is aware of the rampant promiscuity in which the rural children are immersed. Brau believes that peasant women must have priority for education, rather than men, because, as he notes, of the 257 elementary schools in the rural areas, none is for girls. The only exceptions are two schools
for girls in the neighboring island of Vieques. In Brau’s assessment, the peasant woman must be taught a strong set of moral principles through proper elementary and Christian education. The peasant woman is three times more responsible than man, because in her familial role as daughter, wife, and mother she is the only one responsible for instilling and preserving morality and beauty, and for sweetening the jungle-like habits that prevail among the people of her class (6-7). It is significant to realize how this incipient masculine rhetoric automatically exempted the male from any responsibility; even if men were the ones who received elementary education, sexual and moral problems were still blamed on women.

A most disturbing accusation that Brau points out is that of the sexual abuse of children. Brau indicates that this is a serious problem in the rural areas that affects particularly children between nine and twelve years old. He sadly comments that cases of children sexually assaulted on their way from home to remote schools are very common. Brau does not specify who assaulted these children. Instead, he enumerates various factors, such as the tropical weather, the exuberant vegetation, the isolation, and in general the geographical environment and the social milieu in which the proletarian class live, that contribute to their demoralized and promiscuous sexual behaviour (12-13). He believes that the negative influences of the tropical climate are aggravated by the poor diet of the jibaros, who were mainly vegetarian.

In the same “scientific” way that Ferrer approached the vegetarian diet and the oxygen deprivation of the upper-class woman, Brau claims: “las sustancias vegetales forman la base alimenticia de nuestra población rural, y la ciencia prueba que el alimento vegetal relaja las fibras musculares. El imperio del mundo pertenece a quien come carne y respira oxígeno a satisfacción en los pulmones” (18). In addition, the abuse of coffee keeps the
nervous system of the jibaros exalted but at the same time indolent and prone to extreme and uncontrollable sensuality.

In contrast to Tapia and Ferrer, Brau finds the education of the upper-class women satisfactory. He refers in particular to the families who live in the rural “pueblos,” arguing that they have the advantage of being able to hire private tutors for their daughters, so that they are not exposed to travelling long distances alone in isolated places. They also attend the local church where they can expand their social relations, and participate in social events that promote an exchange of ideas which help keep alive the “sentimientos tradicionales” of Puerto Rico (16).

Brau is aware that he is writing in answer to Governor Despujol’s claim that the rural proletarian family is not morally constituted, and his essay attempts to elaborate a sociological analysis for the Governor. His arguments are based on official statistics and a close examination of the idiosyncrasy of the peasants which, according to Brau, is founded on the “teoria racionalista.” In this way, he presents the problems of the proletariat, stating that they are mainly caused by genetic heritage, environmental influences, concubinage, extreme poverty and ignorance, and superstitious beliefs that lead to a sensual morbidity that dooms the peasantry. For Brau, there is no right answer, in so far as he merely points out the roots of the problem and calls for immediate action. His solution lies in creating co-educational schools. The only way to do this, he argues, is to transform the 257 existing schools into institutions for both girls and boys. The success of this project is based on the model of the United States, where an evangelical moral code is coupled with hygienic measures. This is the only way to provide the Puerto Rican peasant woman with a proper education: “La educación de las mujeres es más importante que la de los hombres . . .
instruyendo a nuestras campesinas su soledad concluye: nadie está solo cuando tiene un libro que le acompañe... No hagamos sabias a esas mujeres, pero no las dejemos tampoco abandonadas como irracionales” (40-41).

The Incondicionales’ Point of View: Fernando López Tuero’s La mujer

It is interesting to note that the Reformistas or Autonomistas were always ahead of the Incondicionales in social and political matters. The Liberals were the first to organize an official party in 1870, and months later the Conservatives organized their political party in an effort to counteract the influence of the Liberals. Ponce became the alternative capital of Puerto Rico, where the Liberals dominated almost all the cultural and official institutions. The brutal repression of the Compontes in the “año terrible” of 1887 succeeded in dismantling the political terrain that the Autonomistas had gained in those years. The Incondicionales were also late in their attack against the Liberals’ proposals for the education of women. In the 1890s Creole women organized themselves in feminine leagues and responded to these proposals. During this time, the Incondicionales launched their attack through booklets and pamphlets against the Liberals and against women’s claims for emancipation. One of these texts, published in 1893 under the overused title of La mujer, is remarkable for its length of 221 pages. Its author, the conservative Fernando López Tuero, energetically criticizes the Liberal Reformistas for their support of women’s education, and admonishes the “bello sexo” against the threats of emancipation:

La emancipación de la mujer: Algunos publicistas, eruditos a la violeta, pretenden demostrar que la mujer debe salir del hogar, y lanzarse a la vida pública donde pueda disputar al hombre sus triunfos y laureles en cualquiera de las múltiples esferas de la
actividad intelectual. . . . Y querer variar las leyes de la naturaleza y hacer mundo nuevo, tan sólo porque haya sido moda hablar de reformas y pedir derechos para la mujer, es perder el tiempo y dar qué reír a la gente discreta y a la opinión sensata.

(198-99)

López Tuero’s contradictory rhetoric states on the one hand that women’s intellectual capacity is equal to that of men; but on the other hand he underscores women’s lack of the necessary “aptitudes físicas” because their extremely sensitive temper is unsuitable for exercising the “nobles profesiones masculinas.” The political agenda of López Tuero excludes women, stating that the very idea of women’s direct participation in politics is absolutely ridiculous. López Tuero insists that the involvement of women in the political arena is a foreign idea, alien to the nature of the Spanish woman. The Puerto Rican woman does not need to embrace those dangerous ideas that will only confuse and detach her from her true “misión de la mujer.” For López Tuero this is the law of God and nature, therefore one must accept this inexorable condition without question: women must stay at home and leave the field of politics as men’s exclusive domain. Otherwise it is an act against nature, a utopia that will never come true because it is against the order of things as they are meant to be.

López Tuero, like Soriano, believes that woman is obliged to depend on man. Furthermore, he argues that there are as many men as women in the world, so that every man can and should take care of a designated woman (202). But his theory that there is a man for every woman fails, as he acknowledges that there are some exceptions represented by less fortunate women: “para estas mujeres desamparadas del destino, sí, debe buscarse refugio, protección y apoyo a cualquiera de las múltiples profesiones y ejercicios que existen propias
How would “el bello sexo” have access to these professions if men like López Tuero were actively denying access to them? He saw the financial dependency of women on men as something natural, just as Liberals did. He failed to realize that this was precisely the point of women’s emancipation: to remove the inextricable interrelation between sexuality and women’s economic dependency on men in the upper classes, as well as the sexual abuse of poor women by wealthy men (Findlay 73-74). Creole men, both Liberal and Conservative, were oblivious to this fact, and did not understand the reasons why “their” women were struggling for the right to be financially self-sufficient.

The exception acknowledged by López of the “mujeres desamparadas del destino” did not address either social status or race, thus revealing his exclusionary thoughts, and his vague and incomplete point of view. The reality was that the majority of Puerto Rican women at the time were poor peasants and former slaves, not to mention the middle-class and bourgeois women who were widowed or who were left by their husbands financially destitute and with children. Ana Roqué herself was a victim of her husband’s infidelity, and left financially ruined with four children to support. Roqué’s case was not exceptional, and other intellectual women suffered similar fates, such as the poets Fidela Matheu (1852-1927) and Trinidad Padilla (1864-1957), who had to work as teachers and free-lance writers to support their families (Findlay 68).

Deaf and blind to these realities, López Tuero insists that the sexual division of labour is fair, that women do not need this “emancipation” since it is men’s primordial duty to provide for them. Furthermore, López Tuero also condemns higher education for “el bello sexo,” claiming that university degrees mean nothing for women, that wisdom will only make them ugly and undesirable, and that their real career is pursuing the bonds of marriage:
“Huid, hermosas, de las tentaciones académicas, universitarias y bachilleras; ... la mujer debe ser instruida, pero no sabía ... con el estudio por todo lo alto, nada gana la mujer, sólo afearse y perder encantos; las carreras para nada le sirven y la sabiduría tampoco” (209). It is clear how the Liberals’ discourse favouring the rights of women in work, education, and politics clashed with the Incondicionales views, as represented by López Tuero’s discourse.

The Creole Women’s Response

Bourgeois women articulated a counter-discourse to the rhetorical formulas of men’s agitated pamphlets. Even though men extolled maternity, they accused women of lacking moral principles. Women, in their turn, protested against male privileges and accused men of blatant infidelity. The illegitimate unions between Spanish and Creole men and Taino peasant or black slave women contributed greatly to the racially mixed population that the Creoles themselves socially despised. White Hispanic women were highly regarded as reproducers of white children to perpetuate the dominant class, and elite men believed women needed to be educated in order to maintain their sexuality under control.

For their part, white Creole women were aware of their importance in the reproduction of the dominant class: “they were important as transmitters of Hispanic culture and values, and thus had a tremendous impact on the development of Puerto Rican culture and society” (Acosta Belén 1980, 274). Hence, elite women were conscious of their position as legitimate white Hispanic wives and mothers, and of their mission to reproduce the leading class. As Marcia Rivera Quintero notes: “the reproductive capacity of women acquired a tremendous economic and political importance throughout the Spanish conquest and colonization of the island” (9). It is significant that bourgeois women’s counter-discourse
claimed that they were morally superior to the men of their class; furthermore, they positioned themselves at the top of the social hierarchy as morally and racially superior to all men and women from the lower classes.

**Lola Rodríguez de Tió: “La influencia de la mujer en la civilización”**

Ivette Romero-Cesareo points out that Puerto Rican women intellectuals began voicing their concerns as early as 1875, when the poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843-1924) published her essay “La influencia de la mujer en la civilización.” According to Romero-Cesareo, Rodríguez de Tió used daring words as metaphors to denounce woman’s subjection to men and her state of ignorance. Rodríguez de Tió harshly criticized the frivolous language commonly used to address women, thus exposing that language itself was “another hobble holding women back in a disadvantageous position” (772). One could argue that Rodríguez de Tió was a precursor of the feminist discourse that claims women are restrained even by the dominant linguistic code, as French feminists did more than a hundred years later. With regard to Rodríguez de Tió, José Luis González declares that she must be recognized as “una de las conciencias patrióticas y democráticas más admirables de su tiempo” (*Literatura y sociedad* 137).

Rodríguez de Tió was far removed from the passive model of female behaviour promoted by the dominant conservative patriarchy. She was a woman of action who believed in women’s self-determination and their ability to be involved in politics to fight side by side with men. Rodríguez de Tió was a fervent separatist, and she and her husband were part of the group of intellectuals implicated in the pro-independence revolt, “El Grito de Lares,” in 1868. Rodríguez de Tió’s proto-feminist concerns were part of a larger movement for
women's emancipation that, as stated by Romero-Cesareo, began in the printing press around 1845 when a number of Liberal journalists initiated a series of debates protesting against women's limited access to formal education (773). This movement later expanded not only to education, but also to job opportunities and civil rights, endorsed by politicians, writers, and thinkers such as Eugenio María de Hostos, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, and Manuel Fernández Juncos.

**Ana Roqué's Feminine Program: “Nuestro Programa”**

Roqué struggled almost all her life to define a different image for women, trying to make people realize that both sexes could work together in equal conditions for the good and prosperity of the whole country. Historians most often regard Roqué as an educator, owing to her restless campaign for the improvement of higher education on behalf of Puerto Ricans. Although she did fight for a general improvement in education, promoting co-educational and laicized schools, her pursuit was clearly focused on the education of women. Roqué believed that women's emancipation would come only through equal opportunities with men in education, so that women could compete with men in the professions and be financially independent. Roqué wrestled unceasingly to create sources of work, training in various crafts, and scholarship funds to provide financial support for the formal education of women. In her later years, under the United States administration, Roqué became a key organizer of the Puerto Rican women's suffragist movement. For this reason, the society of her time considered her the first feminist of Puerto Rico and a “mujer de ideas avanzadas” (Angelis 83).
Roqué is renowned not only for her role as an educator but also as a journalist and a businesswoman. In Humacao, in 1894, she founded the first national printing press solely managed by women and the newspaper *La Mujer*. Findlay notes that Roqué’s printing press and *La mujer* were the result of the “fragile network” that Creole women began in the 1890s across the island (65). Even though the circle of bourgeois proto-feminists was small, it had a resonance throughout the island, and the Autonomist men often initiated debates on articles in *La Mujer* and in papers such as *La Democracia* (83).

The late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican feminine circle, of which Roqué was the most prominent leader, was not a homogeneous or monolithic one. Women’s positions fluctuated between extremely conservative and radically pro-emancipation. To provide a balance, Roqué created “Nuestro Programa” to lay out the philosophy, goals and objectives of the feminine league, which at the time became a strong response to the earlier masculine prescriptions for women’s education. While women agreed with Liberal men that educated mothers were the key to a better society, they also pointed out that women’s economic vulnerability forced them to depend on their sexual wiles. Liberal men alleged that the central problem was women’s immorality, frivolity, and lack of discernment between right and wrong, so they had to educate women in order to morally regenerate them and reinforce female sexual control. Like Ferrer, Liberal men demanded total sacrifice from women; they were to preserve their virginal virtue and not to marry only out of financial interest. They did not acknowledge women’s economic vulnerability, nor the fact that they had no options, especially if they could not be educated for the professions, as men were. Despite Roqué’s continuous struggle for women’s financial independence, her discourse kept intact the honour codes and innate sense of racial superiority as laid out by the patriarchy.
In Roqué’s “Nuestro Programa,” and in other articles such as “La instrucción de la mujer,” and “¿Deberá ser limitada la educación de la mujer?,” she defined patrician women in opposition to the plebeian. Bourgeois women identified themselves with Roqué’s exaltation of Hispanic heritage and cultural values, giving them a sense of racial hierarchy. “Nuestro Programa” carefully excluded plebeian women from the bourgeois feminine political project. Lower-class women were infected with racial miscegenation. African blood made them too sensual, potential seductresses who represented the major threat to masculine fidelity, and therefore they needed to be under close surveillance and control. Bourgeois women articulated a counter-discourse to the masculine moral prescription in terms of race, and class identity, claiming that those devoid of moral principles were precisely men from all classes, followed by plebeian women. The lower-class women of African descent were dangerous rivals because of their untamed sexuality and notorious public life in the urban centres and the countryside, where they became the concubines of white Hispanic men. *Mulatas* or *cuarteronas*—generally addressed as “pardas” in colloquial speech—were especially blamed as the main agents responsible for the adultery that affected Puerto Rican society. The lack of morality of bourgeois men was also part of the conspiracy that caused infidelity, but men were not able to resist the seductive powers that women of African descent exercised over them. Findlay points out that Roqué, in both her fiction and in *La Mujer*, found the ideal medium for denouncing male infidelity:

Ana Roqué exposed this suffering in her fiction, openly denouncing the male extramarital sexual desires left unnamed by the Liberals. The pages of *La Mujer* were also filled with veiled references to the philandering of bourgeois men. Superficial charms, the authors warned, would not keep a husband’s heart; only intellectual
companionship could guarantee men's lifelong love. Thus, education would not only release women from trading on their own sexuality for financial support but also meant freedom from other women’s sexual threats and husband's straying. (70-71)

Strategically, the female bourgeois positioned themselves as racially and morally superior to the men of their class, as well as to the popular masses marked by miscegenation. Roqué and her followers claimed that white Hispanic Creole women had the inherent right to devote themselves to motherhood, since they were the means to properly educate the future generations. The lower-class woman, however, must accept birth control and have limited access to education, sufficient only to develop her basic skills for crafts or domestic work in order to satisfy the needs of the growing urban upper-class. Thus, bourgeois women attempted to control plebeian women through vocational training and the maintenance of the domestic division of labour. In this way, lower-class women would be provided with a level of subsistence and would constitute a lesser threat to the “sanctity of the home” and to the integrity of the Great Puerto Rican Family.

Both bourgeois men and women shared the same basic preoccupations but focused them in different ways to fulfil their own sexual political agendas. Men articulated discourses that opened a debate between Liberals and Incondicionales based on ideas of racial purity, moral reformation, and honour codes, in order to control female sexuality and reproduction. Creole men, using a rhetoric founded on the law of God and the “natural law,” did not acknowledge women’s financial dependency as a reason for emancipation. For their part, the feminine league attacked men’s infidelity and insisted on monogamy for both males and females, protected the honour code, and favoured the sexual division of labour. It is
remarkable that what was originally a native women's movement flourished in Puerto Rico, but tragically it soon began to be discredited:

Faced with a growing autochthonous Puerto Rican feminism and fearing an explosion of female mobilization such as that taking place in Europe and the United States, the Autonomist Liberals' earlier public sympathies for women's emancipation began to break down. The chorus of Liberal voices that had hailed male-led female education as the key to good mothering and moral womanhood during the 1870s and 1880s ceased entirely. (Imposing Decency 83)

It is central to this study to explore the voices from the period in question to reveal the gender ideologies held by men and women from the elite. The fiction of Puerto Rican writers in the late nineteenth century echoed the debates on women's education discussed here. It is through the exploration of their literary gender representations and metaphors that one can find insightful information about the problems that were not publicly addressed, and complete the social picture of this complex time of political changes. This study can serve as the foundation for further research that would add to an understanding of the silence (to which Findlay refers) that followed in the first quarter of the twentieth century.
GENDER REPRESENTATION AND THE CREOLE AESTHETICS OF
ALEJANDRO TAPIA Y RIVERA (1826-1882)

[Y]o, para quien el encanto ideal de la mujer fue siempre un móvil . . . por quien todo, valor, virtud, talento, todo he querido tenerlo; yo, que siempre vi un rostro de serafín o de mujer en el fondo de todo espacio, de todo tiempo, de toda idea, de todo ensueño, cuyos ojos y sonrisas eran un paraíso que en imagen, en recuerdo, en esperanza vivía siempre como un encanto en mi fantasía. (Alejandro Tapia, Mis memorias 15)

This quotation reveals the ever-present idealized image of woman in Alejandro Tapia’s imagination, which inspired every act of his life. In his autobiography, Tapia states that when he was young he always dreamt of possessing the talent of a poet, a talent that he views as a magic wand endowed with the power to fascinate female beauties and make them dream and love. Tapia’s romantic spirit, deeply motivated by Neo-classical and Romantic literature, essentialized woman as a celestial being with an ideal charm—a seraph—and the muse that motivated his literary creation. Beyond his romantic idealization of the feminine, Tapia denounced the material conditions that oppressed women in society, and became an advocate for women’s movements and egalitarian rights for both sexes. This fact is crucial for an understanding of Tapia’s empathy with nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon struggles for women’s emancipation, which was little understood by his Hispanic contemporaries.

The complexity of the process of nation-state formation in Latin America, dating back to the Conquest, had a different outcome in the history of the Caribbean, particularly because of the longevity of colonialism and slavery, the extended miscegenation, and the syncretism between Amerindian, European, African, and Asian cultures. The conjunction of all these elements marked the fiction of the Caribbean as eccentric and eclectic. As I discussed in the previous chapters, nineteenth-century Puerto Rican aesthetics and literary
trends had their roots in European models (such as Neo-Classical, Romantic, and Realist) which were adapted by Puerto Rican writers to represent their local concerns. However, European literary models were often incompatible with Caribbean realities and, as Enrique Laguerre suggests, the literature of the area turned into a mestizaje of styles (see Chapter 2).

Adding to this cultural blend, by the end of the nineteenth century the German Romantics and philosophers, in particular the ideas of Karl Krause (popularized in Spain by Sanz del Río), together with the principles of espiritismo laid out by the French philosopher Allan Kardec (mainly disseminated through the writings of Camille Flammarion), influenced Puerto Rican Liberal intellectuals in various degrees. Espiritismo soon became a popular practice, which in turn blended with indigenous healing systems for body and soul. The late works of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera are grounded on ideas related to the doctrine of espiritismo (such as the transmigration of souls and the possibility to communicate with the dead), to which he dedicated serious study as in the nineteenth century the practices of espiritismo were assumed to be scientific.¹

This chapter focuses on Alejandro Tapia y Rivera’s novels Póstumo el transmigrado o historia de un hombre que resucitó en el cuerpo de su enemigo (1872), and its sequel, Póstumo el envirginiado o historia de un hombre que se coló en el cuerpo de una mujer (1882).² Significantly, the last ten years of Tapia’s life (1872-1882) are framed by these two novels which became two parts of one book. Using the theme of the transmigration of the

¹ Marta Aponte Alsina indicates that Tapia studied the writings of the astronomer and espiritista Camille Flammarion, as is apparent from their inclusion in the list of books in the “Tapia Collection” at the Universidad de Puerto Rico. Tapia also recommended Flammarion’s readings in his newspaper La azucena (44).

² From now on, I will refer to both novels as the Póstumos, and individually as El transmigrado and El envirginiado.
soul as a connecting thread, Tapia develops a humorous plot where the remarkable transmigrations of a transgressor spirit, Póstumo, lead to displacements of bodies and souls that metaphorically parallel nineteenth-century forms of imperialism. Tapia incorporates elements from espiritismo as a literary convention, in order to indirectly criticize the sociopolitical, sexual, and spiritual crises of late nineteenth-century Spanish society, and by extension that of Puerto Rico.

In this section, I provide a review of some relevant literary criticism regarding the Póstumos in order to inform the reader and to contextualize the analysis. I argue that both novels have elicited a range of interpretations, most either superficial or treating the Póstumos as mere satire of “prácticas espiritistas,” thus overlooking their political criticism. Tapia incorporated elements from the popular practice of espiritismo to launch his sociopolitical and gender claims unnoticed by censorship, thus disguising his criticism as something else. Despite its relative success as Tapia’s most ingenious work, El transmigrado was greeted with muted enthusiasm by most critics. Its second part, El envirginiado, along with Tapia’s extensive epico-philosophical poem La Sataniada (1878), are probably the author’s least understood texts.

In her pioneer study, La novela en Puerto Rico, Gómez Tejera has classified the Póstumos under “La novela de tendencias: filosófica; satírica; de propaganda política” (40). This classification also includes Tapia’s novels Enardo y Rosael o el amor a través de los tiempos and A orillas del Rhin,³ which evoke topics related to espiritismo beliefs such as reincarnation: “[h]ay en todas estas novelas un simbolismo muy marcado. Tapia parece

³ Both appeared as serial novels in 1874 in Tapia’s newspaper La Azucena, and were published in book form in 1880.
preferir la alegoría como medio de expresión” (Gómez Tejera 39). For the reasons indicated above, it is not strange that Tapia resorted to espiritismo as a topical frame of reference. His novels Enardo y Rosael and A orillas del Rhin maintain a philosophical tone which blends Neo-classical and Romantic styles on the topic of eternal love, and do not display the keen satirical tone that characterizes the Póstumos. Tapia’s short-stories “El purgatorio de un ególatra,” “El desahuciado,” and “Un alma en pena” also belong to this cycle of philosophical/allegorical and romantic fiction.

Gómez Tejera was the first Puerto Rican scholar to offer a classification of Tapia’s novels and to provide a compilation of the small body of criticism that the Póstumos generated at that time (1929). These were in turn gathered and amplified in 1964 by Manuel García Díaz in his Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, su vida y su obra, the first complete biblio-bibliographical work about the author. García Díaz also classifies Póstumo el transmigrado as a “novela satírica,” emphasizing that is a satire of certain “prácticas espiritistas” (124). Regarding Póstumo el envirginiado, García Díaz states that Puerto Rican critics such as Manuel María Sama and Manuel Fernández Juncos found El envirginiado inferior to El transmigrado in terms of originality and literary merits. Yet El envirginiado should be considered neither superior nor inferior to El transmigrado, as García Díaz observes; the reason why the text contains some literary flaws is because Tapia left it unfinished at his death, without having a chance to revise it. El envirginiado was rather misunderstood, for it stands as Tapia’s defence of nineteenth-century women’s movements for emancipation:

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4 Gómez Tejera and García Díaz make reference to local critics, such as Manuel María Sama’s Bibliografía puertorriqueña (1887) that qualifies El transmigrado as “la más ingeniosa de las novelas de Tapia.” Félix Matos Bernier’s Isla de arte (1907) calls it “ sátira sangrienta … contra ciertas prácticas del espiritismo” (Gómez Tejera 43; García Díaz 122).
“nueva y original treta en un país en que era un pecado para el hombre abogar por mayores libertades para el sexo femenino” (127-28).

In the early twentieth century, the Spanish philologist Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo reviewed *Póstumo el transmigrado*, stating that it was “una de las más originales [novelas], aunque no exenta de parentesco con el delicioso *Avatar* de T. Gautier…” (Menéndez y Pelayo, qtd. in Gómez Tejera 43; García Díaz 122). Menéndez y Pelayo was determined to find a model that Tapia must have copied. However, *Avatar* (1857) is a story of unrequited love that differs substantially from *El transmigrado*’s plot. There is evidence that Tapia was familiar with the French romantics, and he may well have read Gautier’s *Avatar*, but the only similarity between the two is the use of the transmigration of the soul as a literary artifice.

In *Avatar* is a predominant theory of spiritual affinities is defined by the love between Prascovia and Olaf, while in *El transmigrado* body and soul blend together without a triumphant amorous relationship at the end. In addition, the narrative technique in the two novels is dissimilar: while *Avatar* is rich in detailed descriptions of setting and characters, *El transmigrado*’s plot is mainly constructed through dialogue. It is probable that Menéndez y Pelayo was not aware of the suffocating colonial context with which Tapia had to struggle, and that he did not understand Tapia’s literary strategies. Even though the Spanish critic recognized a certain poetic talent in Tapia, he was not especially sympathetic to the Puerto

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5 A summary of *Avatar* might be helpful. Octavius is madly in love with the Countess Prascovia who is happily married to Count Olaf. With the help of Dr. Charbonneau—a wise man knowledgeable in oriental occultism—Octavius’ soul transmigrates to Olaf’s body and vice versa. Prascovia realizes that the body of her husband is occupied by someone else and rejects and fears him. In the end, Dr. Charbonneau restores Olaf’s soul to his legitimate body and Olaf and Prascovia’s happy marriage is consolidated. The heartbroken Octavius decides not to return to his body. Taking advantage of the situation, the old Dr. Charbonneau transmigrates into Octavius’ young body and continues his life anew.
Rican author’s predilection for supernatural topics, nor with his philosophical reflections. Perhaps, as García Díaz implied, Tapia’s work offended Menéndez y Pelayo’s zealous Catholicism and patriotic sentiments, as he was horrified by the epico-philosophical poem *La Sataniada*: “es un centón de todo género de herejías, y atentados, pues comienza por llamar Diablo a S.M. Imperial e Infierno a sus dominios de la Tierra” (Menéndez y Pelayo, qtd. in García Díaz 104). The critique of Spanish imperialism is quite obvious in *La Sataniada*, but for Menéndez y Pelayo it was heretical and offensive. The Spaniard thought of Tapia as a kind of pseudo-mystic and *espiritista*, and he judged his work from a biased perspective: “de genio ya hemos dicho que carecía Tapia, pero tenía cierto grado de talento poético, amor desenfrenado al arte, manía de grandezas estéticas.”

Tapia’s insistence on the treatment of supernatural topics in his fiction leads us to concur with García Díaz who states that the doctrines of *espiritismo* not only provided the Puerto Rican author with a wealth of materials for literary plots, but also were a serious object of his research and study (García Díaz 121). Contemporary scholarship enables us to move beyond the simplistic judgments of Menéndez y Pelayo, who was more perplexed than anything else by Tapia’s work, as Marta Aponte Alsina asserts:

¿Cómo referir, para dar un ejemplo, el criterio goldmanniano de la coherencia a obras como ésta, resbaladizas y desbordantes, sin de inmediato condenarlas por descabelladas como lo hiciera Menéndez y Pelayo? La ausencia de códigos establecidos de lectura, el desconocimiento de los pormenores de la biografía del autor, el hecho de que una parte de su obra permanece sepultada en revistas de la

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6 See Menéndez y Pelayo’s *Historia de la poesía hispanoamericana* (1911) 343. Also qtd. in Gómez Tejera 43; García Díaz 122; and Aponte Alsina 55-56.
In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the lack of adequate instruments of analysis to approach this type of eccentric literature frustrated any attempt to decode the novel's multiple levels of interpretation which do not correspond to a single literary trend or school. The once highly respected opinion of Menéndez y Pelayo, which represented European canonical authority in the early twentieth century, irremediably falls apart in face of the transcultural, heterogeneous, and hybrid nature of Tapia's work. Furthermore, one must take into consideration the fact that the Puerto Rican context in the nineteenth century differs notably from the history of the rest of the continental Hispanic colonies, making it even more difficult to categorize Tapia's novels.

In the 1930s, Antonio S. Pedreira's seminal cultural essay on Puerto Rican identity, *Insularismo*, also betrays a distaste for the inclusion of supernatural elements in Tapia's work, calling it a literature of evasion or apolitical romanticism:

*La literatura puertorriqueña, generalmente hablando, urbaniza sus mejores solares en el limbo... Alejandro Tapia, con ser tan fecundo y principal, es un magnífico ejemplo de lo que digo: sus dramas y novelas más importantes no tienen la sazón de nuestra biología y nuestra geografía. La censura acosó a Tapia desde su inicio y tuvo que proteger sus facultades distanciando su obra en otros climas. ... Nuestros autores regionalistas tenían que dedicarse a la prestidigitación, al barroquismo excesivo, a componer alegorías prudentes para expresar a media sus sentires.*(65)
Pedreira's contempt is only partially valid, that is, in the matter of the censorship. On one hand, he is speaking from the perspective of the 1930s, when Puerto Rican intellectuals were gravely reflecting on the past thirty-two years of United States occupation; the topics and concerns of the literary production of this period concentrated mainly on national identity. On the other hand, Pedreira talks about “nuestra biología y nuestra geografía” forgetting other works such as *El bardo de Guamaní* (1862), *La palma del Cacique* (included in *El bardo*...), *La leyenda de los veinte años* (1874), and *Cofresí* (1876) in which Tapia makes use of the national topics that were of prime importance to Pedreira's nationalist imagination.

Aponte Alsina has declared that Pedreira's criticism popularized the wrong image of Tapia as an “escapista” but, probably unknowingly, at the same time he opened a door to new interpretations when he described the repressive conditions under which Puerto Rican literature was produced (Aponte Alsina 65).

Marta Aponte Alsina wrote her insightful essay, “Póstumo interrogado: relectura de Tapia,” on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Tapia's death. She is probably the only scholar who has approached these novels from the perspective of the nineteenth-century literary predilection for the supernatural. She defines both novels as eccentric texts whose complexity goes beyond the traditional moralistic and didactic treatises of espiritismo and the novellas that abounded in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. The notion of espiritismo that the human being is a dual entity—body and soul—provides Tapia with a literary trope to represent the problem of identity and the lack of individual autonomy that he suffered so intimately. The motif of the double also lends itself to denounce indirectly the double standard of the island's colonial condition:
Así se nos representa la lucha entre los hijos del país y los peninsulares por una parte, entre los separatistas y los incondicionales por otra; pero, sobre todo, los sentimientos que abriga en su seno el criollo, quien, sin acabar de asumir una identidad propia, se ve desgarrado por la contienda entre sus deseos de afirmación y la impotencia del estado colonial. (63)

The ambiguities that Tapia faced at both levels, intimate and public, speak to the duplicity of his life as both a Creole and a Spanish man, and of his ongoing struggle for representation and recognition in Spain’s cultural milieu.

After Aponte Alsina’s essay in 1982, there is an absence of literary criticism on Tapia’s *Póstumos* until the 1990s, when Angel A. Rivera re-reads these novels and offers new interpretations. In “Avatares de una modernidad,” Rivera approaches the *Póstumos* from the perspective of Modernity and its interrelation with literature, nationalism, and the development of capitalism in the nineteenth century. According to Rivera, in both novels there is a close relationship between the manipulation of the body as a symbolic entity, the emergence of a new type of subject, and the desire to found a modern community (90). Later, in 1994, Rivera’s article “Puerto Rico on the Borders” offers a comparative study of Tapia’s *Póstumo el envirgiñiado* and Carlos Varo’s *Rosa Mystica*. He explores issues related to homosexuality, transvestism, and transsexual representations as related to cultural and personal survival. Rivera connects Varo’s *Rosa Mystica* with Tapia’s *El envirgiñiado*, establishing an intertextual dialogue from different centuries that locates both novels as

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narratives of the borders where culture and the body are interpreted as creative acts of survival (31-44).

The recent reprinting (1998) of Póstumo el transmigrado bears witness to the ongoing interest in this exceptional novel. In the prologue, Antonio Benítez Rojo states that the literary models that Tapia followed in his early works corresponded to the Neo-classical and Romantic trends. However, Póstumo el transmigrado does not fit into this classification, and Benítez Rojo suggests that it belongs to a group of obras cuyos modelos fueron tomados a partir de una crisis preexistente en la conciencia del escritor; esto es, una interiorización de la crisis pública originada por el derrumbe de los valores de la Ilustración y por la ansiedad de buscar su sustitución dentro de los nuevos códigos del romanticismo. Esta clase de obra, que suele mostrarse escéptica, no abunda en la Hispanoamérica del siglo XIX. Póstumo el transmigrado es este tipo de novela. (20-21)

There is no doubt that both novels, Póstumo el transmigrado and Póstumo el envirginiado, are exceptions that cannot be compared to other nineteenth-century Hispanic novels, and they are exceptions even within Tapia’s own literary production. Both texts show characteristics of the Spanish Realist novel, however, as Aponte Alsina argues, the supernatural topics that they exhibit place them in a different category, that is, a narrative that combines realist and idealist elements (57). This does not mean that they belong to the moralistic spiritualist treatises of the mid- and late-nineteenth century; rather, the Póstumos are “textos excéntricos . . . obras periféricas por su manera indirecta de relacionarse con una

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8 Other critics such as Carmen Gómez Tejera, Francisco Manrique Cabrera, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, José Luis González, Manuel García Díaz, Marta Aponte Alsina, and Angel A. Rivera agree that Tapia’s early dramas and novels are clearly guided by the Neo-classical and Romantic spirit.
tradición europea innegable y su aire criollo” (44). The problem in analyzing Tapia’s
Póstumos and of trying to classifying them as part of a specific literary trend poses an
obstacle to their interpretation. In order to understand and evaluate them properly, they have
to be analyzed within their rightful context in light of the overall development of Puerto
Rican literature in the nineteenth century, as I have tried to describe thus far. Undoubtedly,
the Póstumos belong to their own time, to their particular historical and socio-political
conditions, and—with all their ambiguities and contradictions—they constitute an important
piece of the Puerto Rican literary mosaic of the late nineteenth century.

In “Carnaval/Antropofagia/Parodia,” Rodríguez Monegal explores the usefulness of
Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories on the novel to interpret (or re-interpret) difficult periods in Latin
American literature. Rodríguez Monegal points out that Latin American and Caribbean
literary studies have been guided by a type of criticism much preoccupied with the
logocentrism of European models (403). This tendency presents a methodological problem
when analyzing eccentric texts such as Tapia’s Póstumos, which do not belong to any
particular literary school or trend, and Bakhtin’s notions of the carnivalesque and parody lend
themselves as versatile literary tools for an interpretation of such texts. The reason for this, as
Rodríguez Monegal explains, is the inversion of the Aristotelian canon that Bakhtin’s
theories posit—the novel does not derive from the Epic genre, but from what are considered
lower cultural forms such as parody and Menippean satire. When Bakhtin conceived his
theories, Soviet culture was regarded as “marginal” vis-à-vis the Western canon: “En un
movimiento típicamente carnavalesco, Bakhtin desplazó el centro a la periferia y probó que
las formas ‘marginales’ habían ocupado el centro” (406). The marginalization of Latin
American culture made the inversion of the European models possible, and as Rodriguez Monegal asserts, Bakhtin’s theories are particularly useful in our context.

Since its very beginnings, Latin American culture was marked by the brutal process of assimilation of foreign cultures, the violent imposition of a Christian and feudal worldview, and the massive African slave trade, all crucial elements that were expressed in extreme forms of carnivalization (407). Hence, Latin American and Caribbean literatures find in the concept of carnival a useful instrument for cultural integration, not in submissiveness to Western models, but rather as the parody of a cultural text which already contains the seeds of its own transformation (408). Thus I argue that the Póstumos do not necessarily imitate or copy European models; rather, they parody and carnivalize other models and texts.

The same operational process that Bakhtin proposes, that is, a carnivalesque movement that displaces the centre to the periphery, can be applied to Latin American and Caribbean literatures. Thus, the emergence, evolution, and consolidation of Caribbean literature can be interpreted as a cultural movement of displacement that may function in both ways—from the colonized margins to the colonizer’s centre, and vice versa, displacing the centre to the margins. Creole writers adapted European canonical forms to their “marginal” culture, and displaced the margins to the centre, as demonstrated in Tapia’s novels.

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9 Rodriguez Monegal argues that “formas extremas de carnavalización” were reciprocal between Europeans and Amerindians since the beginning of the Conquest. For example, the Aztecs saw in Hernán Cortés a representation of the semi-god Quetzalcoatl, and the Spaniards identified the New World with the Garden of Eden. These forms of reciprocal carnivalization, motivated by the clash of heterogeneous cultures, are the base of what came to be a Latin American culture (407).
Other Latin American theoreticians, namely Angel Rama, Antonio Cornejo Polar, and Ernesto García Canclini, have problematized the reformulation of an autochthonous literary and cultural critical methodology. They offer alternative approaches based on their theories of “transculturación narrativa” (Rama); “heterogeneidad cultural” (Cornejo Polar); and “hibridez cultural” (Canclini). Such approaches would be more suited to addressing the transcultural, heterogeneous, and hybrid nature of Tapia’s works than a fixed model of analysis. In particular, I find Bakhtinian notions of carnivalization and parody especially useful for their openness to the interpretation of nineteenth-century Puerto Rico’s displaced culture with respect to the Spanish Peninsular literary canon.

Tapia experienced first-hand Puerto Rico’s strict censorship under the absolutist colonial regime, thus his writing becomes a space for literary representation and political agency in Spain. This explains, partially, the reason why the setting of the Póstumos is Madrid and not the island. In order to avoid censorship, Tapia strategically intersects his political claims with supernatural elements. He finds in the practices of espiritismo a versatile literary vein of topics and of innovative material that enables him to satirize socio-political issues obliquely. In a carnivalesque movement, Tapia appropriates the colonizer’s urban centre as a strategy for cultural representation. This literary strategy allows the author indirectly to denounce his frustration with the impossibility of exercising the Liberal progressive ideals that the Enlightenment proclaimed to all men, when in Puerto Rico there reigned a despotic colonial regime within an economy based on slavery and human exploitation. The revolutionary ideas of the Romantic movement added to Tapia’s anxiety as a colonized subject who realized perfectly well that the sociopolitical conditions of his country impeded the eventual progress and modernization of the island.
Both *El transmigrado* and *El envirginiado* illustrate Tapia’s concerns with nineteenth-century European Modernity, his proto-feminist ideas, and his critique of what he considered a decadent bureaucratic administration—that of Spain. Tapia manifests in both novels the crisis of self-identity of the colonized subject, as he portrays a dysfunctional character—male and female—who would not be displaced as a non-European-Other, but who would collapse nonetheless under the absurdity of social conventions and the bureaucratic system. Hence, I read Tapia’s novels from the Creole writer’s viewpoint of cultural displacement. That is, as a carnivalesque movement from the colonized margins (San Juan) to the European metropolis (Madrid) and a literary strategy for representation. As I mentioned previously, in order to launch his sociopolitical and gender claims unnoticed by censorship, Tapia disguises his critique as something else, incorporating elements from the popular practice of *espiritismo* into his fiction. Moreover, both novels are exemplary in showing how the Creole writer (a colonized subject) articulates literary strategies for self-representation and gender representation in the late nineteenth century.

The *Póstumos* bring to the fore most interesting claims about the late nineteenth-century gender crisis. These claims distanced Tapia from his contemporaries, who did not understand his advocacy of the early feminist cause nor his indirect denunciation of Puerto Rico’s colonial condition. Notwithstanding their unusual thematic and aesthetic ambivalence, Tapia’s *Póstumos* stand as rich and unique literary sources for a myriad of interpretations, and as key late nineteenth-century texts which illustrate Puerto Rican cultural acumen and literary achievement.
Alejandro Tapia’s Life: The Metaphor of the Double

As a white, middle-class *criollo* living in the remnants of Spain’s Latin American empire, Tapia wrestled all of his life with his own contradictory feelings toward Puerto Rico. He lived a strange love-hate relationship with his home island, often expressing in his writings both his heart-rending affection for his proto-nation and his hatred for a colonial system that stigmatized him as a colonized subject. In his unfinished autobiography, *Mis memorias*, Tapia remarks that his dear affection for Puerto Rico “no me ha impedido llamarme cosmopolita, en el sentido humanitario; siendo para mí, antes que todo, el género humano” (57). Tapia calls himself a cosmopolitan man, but carefully emphasizes that above all he is a humanitarian, since he was aware that true cosmopolitanism was not possible for a *criollo* like himself under Spain’s absolutist colonial regime and in the teeth of Puerto Rico’s slow crawl towards modernization. Assuming a “humanitarian” attitude, he projects his moral superiority and paternalist vision, an attitude typically assumed by the Liberal elite. He sees his home island as weak, defeated, and feminine:

Creo que en toda naturaleza bien organizada el amor a la localidad en que se ha nacido es como el amor a la madre. Yo no quiero a Puerto Rico por lo que vale, antes bien, mientras más necesita de sus buenos hijos, por lo mismo que vale poco y en ella todo está por hacer, más la quiero. Mientras más derrotada y desvalida la veo, más en débito me creo en ella. (*Mis memorias* 72)

Tapia felt indebted to his homeland, and constantly struggled for its social and cultural development, but the colonial government obstructed or impeded the realization of most of his initiatives. Because of his inner frustration, Tapia describes his conflictual relationship
with the island as an ominous and mysterious one, comparable to Quasimodo’s love for the bell tower of his cathedral in Victor Hugo’s Notre Dame de Paris:

A veces he creído que mi amor a este pedazo de tierra tenía algo de fatídico y misterioso como el de Cuasimodo a la campana grande de Notre Dame de París, cuando abrazado a ella parecían hombre y campana convertirse en una cosa misma, en un solo cuerpo con dos almas o en un alma con dos cuerpos.

Lo que pasa entre mi tierra y yo, no es menos singular y acaso más extraño, jamás pudo verse amalgama de cosas más opuestas. (Mis memorias 5-6)

The grotesque image of Quasimodo is Tapia’s most suitable self-representational trope—the hunchback is his monstrous double. His appropriation of Hugo’s deformed character also suggests a double purpose as a strategy for representation. First, the literary image taken from a recognized French writer places Tapia within an unquestionable Western European literary tradition (from which he does not want to be displaced). Secondly, his self-representation as a human monstrosity, albeit with a noble soul, sets the anguished tone of his lifetime inquiry into the “vínculo fatal” that tied him to his island. He goes so far as to wish he had been born somewhere else, in another climate, with another people: “sin embargo, encuentro no sé qué atractivo singular en uno y otro . . . ¿Qué vínculo fatal es éste de que no logro deslizarme?” (6, emphasis mine). This question, for which he never found an answer, tormented him throughout his life: “¡Abrázate, Cuasimodo, a tu campana, atúrdete con el ronco estruendo de sus bronce, remóntate y cae y torna a remontarte con ella y apegado a ella, en vertiginoso giro por los aires; hasta que el hielo de la muerte te afloje los brazos y caigas en los abismos de la tumba...!” (6)
Portraying himself as the hunchback (the "yo-colonizado" as a deformed being) and the bell as Puerto Rico (a heavy and static object) embraced together in a sordid dance that will only end with death, Tapia strategically denounces an unequal and imbalanced relationship, that hinders the island's progress and modernization.¹⁰

Tapia's double discourse regarding his contradictory feelings for Puerto Rico is the ideal starting point for an examination of how he employed the metaphors of the double and duality as vehicles for the representation of both, the island's colonial condition and his own intimate frustration. Scholars have pointed out that the literary representation of the double was commonplace in nineteenth-century fiction.¹¹ Moreover, the split between body and soul as a metaphor has broad interpretative possibilities; for example, it may also represent the double life of the writer, or the division between imagination and reality (Showalter 68). It is not strange, then, that Tapia articulated the motif of the double to depict his inner struggle, tormented as he was by the stagnation at all levels that reigned on the island. He was torn simultaneously by the realization of his home island's potential for progress and modernization, and by the impossibility of achieving his lofty ideals.

¹⁰ Angel Rivera also offers an insightful analysis of Mis memorias regarding the discourse of the construction/deconstruction of the self in his article "Siglo XIX, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera y Mis memorias: tecnologías del martirio y de la con/figuración del yo," Revista de Estudios Hispánicos (1996): 275-94.

¹¹ For example, in "Dr. Jekyll's Closet" Elaine Showalter points out that "indeed, the fin-de-siècle was the golden age of literary and sexual doubles" (68). Francine Masiello in The Art of Transition states that "[t]he matter of dual identities was central to the debates of nineteenth century republics and the foundation of liberal thought" (56).
Representation, Espiritismo, and Sexual Politics in Tapia’s Póstumos

**Póstumo el transmigrado (1872)**

*El transmigrado* narrates the story of Póstumo, a young bureaucrat who works for Spain’s Budget Office in Madrid. Póstumo dies from a sudden fever immediately before his wedding to Elisa Doble-Anzuelo. Póstumo’s soul refuses to leave his body even after “un par de cuartillos de cloruro” (15) were implanted in his stomach to preserve the body. The living-dead Póstumo escapes from his crypt at midnight, leaving the cemetery guard tied up. He ventures to Elisa’s house to find out that far from mourning him, she is going to a masquerade-ball. Póstumo witnesses Elisa flirting with Sisebuto, his rival and enemy, whom she later marries. Meanwhile, the cemetery guard invokes a policeman’s spirit who captures the fugitive corpse, forcing him to be buried. Póstumo’s soul is then released and goes to Limbo, but is desperate to return to Madrid without forgetting his former identity and to take revenge against the unfaithful Elisa and Sisebuto.

His wish granted, his Guardian Angel finds him an available body, which happens to be that of his rival and enemy Sisebuto, now Elisa’s husband. Póstumo transmigrates into Sisebuto’s still warm body at the precise moment when a doctor is about to perform the autopsy. The unexpected resurrection of Sisebuto causes great confusion, and he escapes running through the streets of Madrid completely naked. Póstumo rejects his host body and refuses to assume the identity of his former rival, telling everybody that he is actually Póstumo and not Sisebuto. His contradictory behaviour takes him first to jail and later to a mental asylum. Both times Elisa has him released. As a spiritist-seer, she understands that Sisebuto is indeed Póstumo.
After much resistance, Póstumo "ensisebutado" accepts his new identity and tries to be a good husband to Elisa who gives birth to "Postumito," a terrible child who happens to be Sisebuto reincarnated and proceeds to make their lives unbearable. Meanwhile, Elisa has a relationship with don Perpetuo and flirts with don Cósmico. Póstumo is so tormented with his life as Sisebuto, with his impossible child, and his unfaithful wife, that he commits suicide, in part to destroy Sisebuto's body and in part to damage Elisa's reputation. He returns to Limbo promising never to come back to this world.

The polysemy of El transmigrado, characterized by its multi-leveled style of organization, Menippean satire, and esoteric symbolism—among other features—renders a rich textual space open to myriad possibilities of interpretation. Aponte Alsina suggests that the traditional analysis at two levels, form and content, does not suffice to decode the discursive complexity of this novel (45). Understanding that both El transmigrado and El envirginiado are highly complex texts, I try to offer sufficient intertextuality and contextualization to follow my interpretation of the texts at various levels. The literary treatment of the transmigration of souls elicits the trope of the double, a useful literary artifice for representing the conflict of self-identity. My analysis explores how Tapia makes use of the metaphor of the double and duality to put into literary representation the fragmented identity of the displaced colonial subject.

The text I consulted is organized in sequential chapters of unequal length—twenty-nine and an epilogue in El transmigrado, and thirty-four plus an epilogue in El envirginiado, for a total of 341 pages. El transmigrado is set in a double-plane of existence, the astral and the earthly that mirror each other. The main characters straddle these two planes of existence, one being eminently urban and European— that of Madrid—and the other a metaphysical or
astral space represented as “Limbo.” The narrative is characterized by extensive dialogues, stage directions, and parenthetical notes that resemble the formal structure of a play. It is important to remember that theatre was Tapia’s true love, and that he was the first Puerto Rican playwright to initiate a national theatrical tradition. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the Bakhtinian sense, Tapia was parodying the formal structure of a play and novelized it.

Some of the main themes drawn at first glance from the narrative’s diegetic level are the desire for revenge, the transgression of all rules (terrestrial and celestial), the struggle for self-identity, the control institutions exert over the body and mind (the judicial system and the mental hospital), the self-infliction of pain, adultery, and suicide. These themes—woven in the story with humor and keen irony—are highly controversial, particularly if examined according to the codes of nineteenth-century morality and the convoluted sociopolitical conditions of Puerto Rico and Spain between 1872 and 1882. Tapia deliberately addresses such topics in a double way, lightened with humor but loaded with criticism. This intentional duplicity is reflected at all levels in both novels.

At the structural level, there is a series of binary oppositions, namely body/soul; death/resurrection; world of the living/world of the dead; feminine/masculine. At the core of these opposed axes lies the inherent clash between the colony (Puerto Rico) and the mother-country (Spain). Most of the characters’ names have double meanings, beginning with the name of the protagonist, Póstumo (posthumous), that conveys the idea of the continuation of life after death. Tapia carefully chose this name for his protagonist, and in Mis memorias the author reveals his personal fascination with the term: “pues bien, he amado el renombre póstumo, religiosamente, con toda sinceridad. El mundo no habría bastado a mi tonta o loca, pero noble, ambición. Vanidad disculpable en quien cree tener un alma y no ser enteramente
polvo" (58, emphasis mine). Tapia was referring to his belief in the Afterlife which drove him to incessant philosophical inquiry about the ultimate meaning of life and death. He could never accept an empty, meaningless existence that would eventually end without leaving any traces behind.

From the beginning of the plot Póstumo is assumed to be dead. There is a clear intention to establish a level of awareness regarding the double meaning of the noun /póstumo/ which functions as a literary artifice for the sake of the narration: “atendido su nombre, parecía destinado a vivir después de muerto … y si la muerte se llevó a Póstumo traigámosle otra vez a este mundo, aunque sólo sea porque así conviene a nuestra narración” (13). Póstumo, while alive, is described as an immature young man, more like a child in the body of a man:

Póstumo era joven . . . pues por lo que atañe al espíritu, el de nuestro héroe estaba llamado a ser siempre niño . . . Era uno de aquellos seres que siempre sueñan despiertos, y que parecen dormidos . . . Tenía, pues, los ojos en lo infinito, en el vacío. Esto, por lo que toca a su ánimo; por lo que atañe a su físico, era Póstumo bastante guapillo y agraciado: vistiendo con natural elegancia, aunque un tanto al desengaño, cual convenía a un soñador con los mundos imaginarios. Algún vez hubo que sacarle de zanjas o pozos, en donde cayera por ir mirando al cielo: verdadero observador de la región etérea. (13-14)

Póstumo is an isolated subject, a day-dreamer whose romantic spirit lives in “mundos imaginarios.” He is represented as a dysfunctional and unsuccessful man who is not in harmony with his own reality: “sus planes no eran para este escenario; pudiendo decirse que, destinado a otro globo, había venido a este por equivocación” (14). The voice of the narrator
echoes Tapia’s own dilemma with his contradictory feelings for Puerto Rico, as he expressed in *Mis memorias* including his frustration at not having been born in a more developed and progressive country than his home island. The use of theatrical language, that compares life to a stage and the role of Póstumo in the world as that of an actor, reinforces the idea of life as a masquerade and a spectacle in which Póstumo is the tragi-comic protagonist: “Sucedía con frecuencia que creyendo hacer dramas sólo hacia entremeses... verdadero despropósito para esta mundanal escena, con risa de los concurrentes, que proclamaban su insuficiencia en achaques de caracterizar otro personaje que el suyo” (14).

The first five chapters of *El transmigrado* narrate the misfortunes of Póstumo in his ambiguous situation as a dead-man-walking: “¡Cosa rara! Como Póstumo era póstumo, después de dar la última boqueada, en que se le atragantó el nombre de Elisa, sintióse como vivo” (15). Póstumo’s corpse represents the body of Puerto Rico as stagnant and in decay, a metaphor that allows us to associate it with Salas y Quiroga’s phrase that Tapia remembered: “Puerto Rico es el cadáver de una sociedad que no ha nacido” (qtd. in Tapia, *Mis memorias* 16). The metaphor of Puerto Rico as the corpse of an unborn society might have inspired the first five chapters of *El transmigrado*. During the course of the narrative, Póstumo’s corpse is in the process of decay, he smells putrid and begins to lose his limbs: “si este olor es síntoma de putrefacción, pronto vendrá la disolución de mis miembros, iré lanzando brazos y piernas por donde quiera... ¡cómo me voy pudriendo! Exclamó con amargura” (23). And at the end of the fifth chapter, the omniscient narrator adds: “rotos ya los tegumentos que ligaban sus miembros, se estaba desvencijando” (34). According to Bakhtin, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Menippean satire is dialogical and its multi-styled form, full of parodies and travesties, serves to ridicule and laugh at our immediate reality:
In the plane of laughter one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects, therefore, the back and rear portion of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance. The object is broken apart, laid bare (its hierarchical ornamentation is removed): the naked object is ridiculous; its “empty” clothing, stripped and separated from its person, is also ridiculous. What takes place is a comical operation of dismemberment. (Bakhtin, 23-24)

The process of laughter reveals the artificiality of social codes and disrupts the social order as a metaphorical “dismemberment” of the object of ridicule, an image that becomes literally enacted in the dismemberment of Póstumo’s corpse. This can be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the sociopolitical stagnation of Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century, and the social life of Madrid in the midst of Carnival is simultaneously represented as a masquerade.

The traditional celebration of Carnival provides a real referent that is extended metaphorically throughout the narrative in the carnivalesque transformation of characters and events. Madrid’s Carnival functions as the ideal background in which the living-dead Póstumo passes almost unnoticed: “Llegó la noche. Todo Madrid se entregaba a las delicias del Carnaval; época señalada para hacer más ostensiblemente lo que con disimulo se hace todo el año; a saber: caretas y embustes, y vestirse cada cual de lo que no es” (17). The narrative launches here a social critique pointing out the hypocrisy and deceit of society through the metaphor of the Carnival and the disguise of identity. In this setting of carnivalesque frenzy, Póstumo enters a forbidden space (reserved for the dead), altering the normal course of things in the world of the living.
During Carnival, people disguise their identities, assuming supernatural or mythical ones, a most convenient atmosphere to enable Póstumo’s corpse to blend into the crowd. He also disguises himself in a dark cloak and a mask in order to sneak into the masquerade-ball at “El Teatro Real.” The reader knows that the crowd in the ballroom is composed of ordinary people properly disguised, and Póstumo participates in the masquerade-ball’s conscious process of disguise, deceit, and recognition.

The literary representation of a real corpse destabilizes the carnivalesque scene by creating a tension between appearances and reality—Póstumo is indeed a corpse and not merely the appearance of one. His supernatural intervention as a living-dead body subverts the apparent normality of the feast, raising confusion and discomfort with his cold drafts and his chloride smell of death. He engages in a frenetic dance with a disguised matron, who screams in horror when she sees a worm coming out of his nose. These amusing scenes combine grotesque images with the excitement of the ball, where Póstumo dances “saltando de aquí para allá como picado por la tarántula” (22), spreading chaos everywhere.

At the precise moment when Póstumo finds his fiancée, Elisa, flirting with his rival and enemy, Sisebuto, he is unmasked in a violent, albeit hilarious scene, while his friends hold a séance that forces him to appear before them. Póstumo is so upset that he slaps the faces of his friends one by one: “¡zás! ¡zás! comenzó a repartir bofetones a uno por barba, que, como dados con mano de muerto, es decir, bastante pesada, iban echándoles por tierra respectivamente” (32). The spirits of three policemen materialize at the ball, creating a riot, pulling Póstumo by the neck and shouting: “¡Difunto prófugo, date preso en nombre de la

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12 In her study of the vampire novella *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu (which coincidentally was also published in 1872), Tamnis Elise Thomas suggests that the masquerade-ball functions as an uncanny space, a topos dominated by supernatural and morbid elements that provide the necessary disequilibrium on which the plot depends (45).
Eternidad!” (32). The confused crowd screams in turn: “¡Un muerto, un cadáver que se ha escapado de su sepulcro! ¡acaban de cogerle!” (33). Póstumo, unmasked, is then recognized by Elisa who “lanzó una serie de ayes en distintos tonos, y se desmayó en brazos de Sisebuto” (33). The living-dead man does not waste any time cursing them both, Elisa and Sisebuto, while the policemen from the Afterlife take him back to the cemetery. Póstumo is securely tied-up and quickly buried to make sure he will not cause more distress. His soul is then released and goes to Limbo.

The intervention of real ghosts in the ballroom leaves the stunned participants in bewilderment and confusion, as the spirits disturb the social order and transgress the law on earth. The carnivalesque setting functions as the scenario where the characters move in a sequence *in crescendo* from the ordinary through the strange to the bizarre, ending in absolute chaos:

Grave escena de agitación y de espanto quedó reinando en aquel concurso, en la que tomaban no poca parte los polizontes de Madrid, que, al ver invadidas sus atribuciones, pedían favor para la ley, clamando contra aquellos salvaguardas de la Eternidad. —Si los muertos, decía un cesante, se meten en las cosas de acá, donde no cabemos ya los vivos, ¡buenos vamos a estar! ¡Ya que de por sí eran tan pocas las tajadas! (33)

Thus, the supernatural intervention subverts the logical order of the world and its institutions. It destabilizes conventional social relations and authority, the former represented by the masquerade-ball and the latter by the Madrid police.

After he is buried, Póstumo’s soul finally leaves his body and meets his Guardian Angel—his *Custodio*. Póstumo is enraged about what happened to him on earth, and wants to
return to Madrid immediately. The Angel explains to him that everything is part of a predetermined plan. Póstumo must wait until the authorities in Heaven find him a new position. Meanwhile, he must drink from the waters of the Lethe in order to forget his past life and be reborn. Póstumo does not accept such terms and refuses to forget his former life and to stand in line to be born again.

The Custodio tries to persuade him to give up his whimsical wishes by telling him about the extraordinary cases of three intriguing men who also transgressed the natural order of the cycle of life and death. Don Cósmico wished to remember all his incarnations and now he lives under the weight of thousands of past lives; Don Perpetuo Paquidermo wished to be immortal and now has lost interest in life; and Don Horóscopo wished to know the future and lives constantly tormented because he knows what is going to happen. The three are introduced into the plot in three separate chapters narrated by the Guardian Angel. The stories of the three men are examples meant to persuade Póstumo from wanting to go back to the world of the living without forgetting his former life, since the three of them have miserable existences for having their wishes granted. Later in the story, Don Cósmico, Don Perpetuo Paquidermo, and Don Horóscopo will play decisive roles in Póstumo’s life in the body of his rival, Sisebuto.

Despite the Guardian Angel’s warning stories, Póstumo is not convinced, and insists on his desire to go back to earth at the moment he left, without forgetting his past life. Through the intercession of Saint Peter and the Custodio, he is granted his wish to transmigrate back to Madrid, but not without a serious warning: “El Eterno, en su bondad infinita . . . te otorga la merced que demandas, pero sin ejemplar; desea probarte que
volviendo al mundo el mismo, tornarás a ser engañado como lo fuiste antes” (58).

Notwithstanding, Póstumo is happy to return to earth and disregards the warning.

The return of Póstumo back in the world mocks the bureaucracy of the Spanish institutions. The Custodio shows the clerk in charge at the “Dirección General de Encarnadores” the supreme order from “El Eterno” to help him find a suitable body for Póstumo: “Se quiere, expresó el Custodio, un cuerpo recién muerto, sin descomposición aún, en que la lesión orgánica, si la hubiese, pueda ser pronto reparada. Ha de ser en Madrid, España, y que el difunto haya pertenecido al presupuesto del Estado, en categoría, por lo menos de 30,000” (60). The “Dirección General de Encarnadores” parallels a state agency full of ill-tempered clerks. The narrator’s voice justifies the rude and unkind manners of the angelical clerk: “Sin duda el oficio era sobrado fastidioso, hasta el punto de haber agriado un tanto el carácter angelical del acomodador” (59), thus implying that bureaucratic perfunctory tasks are the reason why normally pleasant people would turn bitter. The staff at the “Dirección General de Encarnadores” is unfriendly and hostile, but they accomplish their job nonetheless:

Examinó con mal gesto el acomodador de almas los registros terrenales, y ya perdía la esperanza de hallar lo que buscaba, cuando ¡zás! El telégrafo que unía misteriosamente aquel lugar con millones de mundos, y que estaba comunicando de continuo los distintos fallecimientos, hasta el punto de no bastar millones de ángeles para tomar notas en aquellos registros, transmitió desde la Tierra el telegrama siguiente:-- “España. Madrid. Sisebuto 30,000 reales; repentina; vaso del cerebro roto.” (60)
The notion of Limbo as a bureaucratic body of offices, workers, and lines of souls awaiting their turn, mirrors the paperwork—the “oficinocracia” as Tapia calls it—of the state and its public institutions. All this functions as a literary strategy to criticize Spanish bureaucracy and its interminable chain of steps and procedures, as well as the rudeness of public employees. It must be recalled that Tapia experienced first-hand the bureaucratic apparatus of the colony when he worked as a public clerk in Havana, Cuba, and as an administrator in Ponce, Puerto Rico. In his fiction, the supernatural setting of Limbo gives him the freedom to parody the system without drawing the censor’s attention.

Póstumo’s transmigration back to earth takes place at the precise moment when a doctor is getting ready to perform the autopsy on Sisebuto. The spirit of the famous doctor Dupuytren repairs the broken vein that caused Sisebuto’s brain hemorrhage, and Póstumo’s soul enters the body through an ear. The reference to the French anatomist Dupuytren (Baron Guillaume Dupuytren 1777-1835) once again opens a level of historical intertextuality, an ever-present artifice in the course of the narrative. Sisebuto resurrected (or Póstumo transmigrated) escapes from the amphitheatre and runs naked through the streets of Madrid, causing scandal wherever he goes: “En cuanto a Póstumo, corria a punto el postre por la calle de Atocha hacia la de Carretas, produciendo por calles y plazas el alboroto que es de suponerse” (68). Póstumo, transmigrated into the body of Sisebuto, moves in a real urban geography—the streets of Madrid—that transfers the reader into an ordinary and familiar reality. This literary strategy builds the story’s credibility while at the same time underscoring the protagonist’s dislocation and estrangement:

Era la hora en que la multitud ociosa, que en Madrid no es grande que digamos, suele irse de paseo, hora que se extiende a todo el día. ¡Qué rubor para tanta señorita casta
y tanta matrona púdica, sorprendidas de mala manera en medio de la calle por aquel hombre al natural, verdadero Adán sin atavios! ¡Cuánto grito de espanto! ¡Cuántas Evas fugitivas! ¡Cuántas Evas desmayadas! Desde que por haber comido la manzana homicida perdieron aquellas la inocencia innata, sustituyéndola con las rosas del pudor... ¡qué escándalo, qué escándalo! (69)

Just as Póstumo’s corpse subverted the order of the masquerade-ball, the public exposure of the naked body of Sisebuto destabilizes everyday reality, disrupting the social order and breaking moral codes. The naked Póstumo is compared to Adam, a metaphor that establishes a relationship with the individuality and self-determination of the Liberal man, but that results in the universe of the text in a total absurdity. The reference to Adam deliberately opens a level of intertextuality that parodies European authors and works. The omniscient narrator recognizes a certain similarity with *Diablo Mundo* by Espronceda:

> No es pecadillo nuestro si da en parecerse tanto en este punto la inaudita historia que narramos al poema, por desgracia no acabado, de Espronceda... Tal podría decirse también de la novela de Soulié, *¡Si la jeunese savait!* cuyo protagonista es exactamente el viejo hecho joven del Diablo Mundo. Uno de los dos ha plagiado al otro, o ambos han plagiado a Goethe... Nuestro Póstumo... ¡Ojalá pudiera compararse siquiera remotamente a algunas de las infinitas bellezas que a manera de piedras preciosas esmaltan los fragmentos de Diablo Mundo, bellíssima corona del Cisne de Extremadura! (70-71, emphasis in the original)

Thus, the underlying metaphor of the double provides Tapia with a line of attack for representing the inner struggle for the agency and autonomy of the colonized subject and his identity conflict. This is metaphorically illustrated in the nudity of the body that functions as
an imaginary space for political denunciation. Póstumo in Sisebuto’s body is exposed to the
public eye and in this way, as Angel Rivera asserts, the narrator establishes an
epitomological gaze in the reader: “recordemos que la mirada, el deseo, el cuerpo y el deseo
de conocimiento están conectados en la narrativa. Los paseantes observan el espectáculo, y
en consecuencia los lectores, escrutinan y enjuician la nueva filiación de Póstumo”
(“Avatares de una modernidad” 107). Póstumo/Sisebuto’s nakedness can also be read as a
representation of the loneliness of the modern subject, and the way in which social
circumstances can transform an individual into an outcast in need of disciplinary control.
Such discipline can become a general formula of domination that generates policies of
coercion that act upon the body.13 Discipline is a type of power which comprises a whole set
of instruments, techniques, and procedures that are deployed by specialized institutions: the
hospital, the police apparatus, the penitentiaries, and so forth. Póstumo “ensisebutado” ends
up captured by the police. Control over the body is reinforced by the image of the naked man
locked up in a police station where a judge proceeds to interrogate him.

The interrogation goes nowhere, since Póstumo/Sisebuto cannot provide any form of
identification or place of residence, job, or the like. Although he is recognized by Sisebuto’s
servants, who are horrified to see their just-dead master resurrected, he denies his identity.
His identity conflict places him back in Madrid as an outcast of society. Elisa comes to help
him, and as she is a medium-seer, she realizes that Sisebuto’s body is indeed occupied by
Póstumo’s spirit, and takes him out of jail covered only with a cape.

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13 In his well-known study of “discipline,” Michel Foucault argues that in the course of the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, methods of control over the body were developed as
specific technologies of power: “These methods, which made possible the meticulous control
of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed
upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called ‘disciplines’” (Foucault, Discipline
and Punish 137).
Póstumo, resurrected in Sisebuto’s body, suffers an extraordinary identity crisis; he resents having to accept that he only came back to this world to be Sisebuto’s substitute, as his hatred rival. Each time he curses his body—Sisebuto’s body—he feels a thousand pins hurting him: “¡Ya se ve! como no estoy acostumbrado a este cuerpo maldito... ¡ay, ay!— gritó de nuevo—no conozco sus mañas, que Dios confunda... ¡ay! gritó otra vez... ¡Ya econtrarás otro infame Sisebuto... ¡ay, ay!... que te consuele... ¡Adiós, adiós!” (81). He refuses Elisa’s help and goes back to the streets covered only with the cape. This time, his controversial behaviour and semi-nakedness take him to the mental asylum from which he will be rescued once again by Elisa.

The presence of Póstumo in Sisebuto’s body is a transgression that temporarily places the body outside the disciplinary system of control and defies the notion of “docility” which assures the manipulability of the body. This also subverts the well-known image of the “docile Puerto Rican” that in the nineteenth century was introduced by the paternalist rhetoric of “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña.” The Liberal Reformists’ familial imagery was an integral part of the language used to describe ideal social relations that underlined the Liberals’ moral superiority.

The uncontrollable body of Sisebuto has to be tamed, and the disciplinary machinery of the prison and the mental hospital act as coercive forces over the insurrected body. However, the ultimate coercion to regain total control of the body is performed by Póstumo himself, turning the body of Sisebuto into a docile one. This only happens through the act of punishment, or what Foucault calls the “mechanics of power” (Discipline and Punish 138).

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14 I refer to Foucault’s notion of “docility,” produced through the application of certain disciplinary methods (Discipline & Punish 135-40).
Postumo is first punished by his host body in his own flesh and blood, and secondly by the judicial system and the mental asylum.

Postumo/Sisebuto has to assume responsibility for his unnatural transmigration, since he did not wait for his proper turn to reincarnate and refused to drink from the waters of the Lethe. He realizes that to avoid going back to jail or the hospital, his only option is to reconcile himself with his new body, make peace with Elisa, and try to resume his old bureaucratic position at the Budget Office. However, things are not that simple to accomplish. He will confront adversity and deception, just as his Guardian Angel warned him, and he will continuously run into Don Horóscopo, the man who knows the future and torments him with his negative omens.

Elisa insistently tries to get him back his former job, but Postumo/Sisebuto is too proud to accept Elisa’s help, despite the fact that she is the only one who saves him every time he is in trouble. Postumo “ensisebutado” looks for a job without success:

Lo que más le aguijoneaba era, como debe suponerse, la necesidad de encontrar acomodo que le diese pan; pero estaba en Madrid, y he aquí lo grave. Allí se cuenta una baraja de pretendientes para cada empleo, y él no conocía otra industria, profesión u oficio que el presupuesto, como acontece a tantos. Hélo, pues, allí sin comedero, por habérselo limpiado su reemplazante. Con favor todo se hubiera allanado; pero en su calidad de ex-muerto, el oportuno apoyo le faltaba. (117)

The critique of the socio-political phenomenon of the cesante is strongly alluded to throughout the narrative. Postumo “ensisebutado” tries to find a job but instead finds himself wandering the streets aimlessly: “Echóse a andar otra vez de calle an calle, flâneur por la fuerza de las circunstancias” (129). The image of Postumo as a flâneur-malgré-soi moves
Tapia’s satire of urban society to another level. Walter Benjamin, in his study of the Parisian stereotype of the *flâneur,*\(^{15}\) describes it as a “male urban myth” whose habitat is in the novels of Balzac, Sue, and Dumas. The *flâneur* is an “urban native,” a connoisseur of the pleasures of urban life, a new creature born from the democratic individualism of capitalist consumerism. The intertextuality of the image of the *flâneur* brings to the fore the author’s intention of writing as representation. His literary motifs are interpretations of the late nineteenth-century centres such as Paris and Madrid, where the citizens were exercising new urban pleasures of individualistic freedom. There is an interrelationship between the Parisian *flâneur*—a legitimate creation of European modernity— and the non-European-Other represented by Tapia, the Puerto Rican author, who is looking for political agency vis-à-vis Madrid. If the *flâneur* is an urban myth who lives in the imagination of French authors, Tapia invented his own Spanish *flâneur* with unique Creole overtones. Intersected with the Spanish tradition of the Picaresque, Póstumo stands midway between a modern *picaro* and a dysfunctional *flâneur,* a unique character who is not only a body—a bourgeois body—but also a soul. Póstumo is more than mere flesh; he is an astral entity who transcends matter but who is always lingering and longing to be back in that very flesh. The reader sees through his eyes and lives his adventures—and misfortunes— in the metropolis. Póstumo, in his previous life, represented the everyday working middle-class bureaucrat living in a European city, a bourgeois who lost his comfortable status-quo. In his new conflicted life in the body of his

\(^{15}\) Benjamin’s concept of *flânierie* is that of an autonomous and personal activity, a leisure act of street-walking closely linked to the social and spatial relations of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. The *flâneur* is the new subject of modernity, a product of democratic individualism, *bourgeois par excellence,* anonymous and autonomous, personal, and masculine. To expand on Benjamin’s concepts of the *flâneur* and *flânierie,* see “Paris: Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” in his *Reflections* (1978): 146-62. See also Benjamin’s “Convolutes, M [The Flâneur],” in *The Arcades Project* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 415-54.
enemy and rival Sisebuto, he tries unsuccessfully to regain his lost autonomy and individuality.

His intention to serve “la patria” drives him to solicit a job at *El Palacio de las Cortes* which results in an act of deceit: “Nuestro D. Póstumo era buen patriota y ardía en deseos de servir a la nación; por eso buscaba empleo. El caso era conseguirlo, con tantos que anhelaban igualmente prestar sus servicios a la patria” (117). Outside *El Palacio* there is a heated political meeting in which Póstumo tries to participate because, he thinks:

> Esto me orientará en la marcha de las cosas, ya que pienso dedicarme al servicio de la patria por medio de algún empleo lucrativo. Todo empleado cesante o activo, o todo pretendiente, debe hallarse bien orientado en el movimiento de la política, que es madre entre nosotros de todo medro personal. (123)

With much difficulty, he makes his way through the crowd looking for a good place from which to watch. There is a session of the legislative chamber to pass a bill of censorship against the ministry. The anarchist opposition is huge, and the one presiding over the ministry is Don Côsmico, the man of a thousand lives, who is vociferating incongruent arguments to agree with the opposition. In short, the meeting ends up in a riot: gunshots, screams, and protests for freedom ring through the streets, and Póstumo is shot in the forehead.

Póstumo finally obtains an interview with Don Côsmico in order to get back his old job, and showing him his patriotic bruise, tries to flatter his ex-boss. Don Côsmico is reluctant and determined: “Motín desgraciado, incalificable; manera de proceder que hace después difícil el restablecimiento del orden y la buena marcha de la administración. Anarquía y demagogia que no deben mencionarse nunca, sistema ilegal que arruina al
pais”(144). Don Cosmico’s ambivalent posture parodies the fluctuations of the Spanish political system, the demagoguery and opportunism of the politicians in times of turmoil and confusion. Even though Póstumo eventually gets his job back and reconciles himself with Elisa, the Angel’s warning, voiced again through Don Horóscopo’s evil omen, will catch up with him.

Elisa gives birth to a sort of spawn of the devil, who is Sisebuto’s soul reincarnated. The terrible child, born hairy and with teeth, is a monstrosity. Postumito learns to speak very early and tells his father about Elisa and Don Perpetuo’s illicit meetings while Póstumo is at work. Póstumo is so desperate and unsatisfied with his life in the body of his enemy that he decides to end it, but not without harming Elisa’s reputation. He commits suicide, leaving a dreadful letter implicating Elisa.

The series of awkward relationships between Póstumo and the other characters leads to his inevitable self-destruction. His relationship with the Custodio is contentious. His relationship with his own body—Sisebuto’s body—is one of rejection, self-punishment, and domination. Elisa is unfaithful both as a bride and a wife. Don Horóscopo constantly harasses him with evil omens. Póstumo’s ex-boss, Don Cósmico, denies him a position in the government. His son Postumito, l’enfant terrible, brings to the fore his dysfunctional fatherhood; and lastly, Don Perpetuo emerges as a rival more powerful than Sisebuto. All these conflictual relationships represent the impediments that the individual faces on the path to self-development, suffering constant repression from disciplinary methods of control that strive to make a misfit out of him. His ultimate act of defeat is to terminate his miserable double life.
Póstumo's suicide evokes an intertextual reference to Victor Hugo's character Claude Frollo, in *Notre Dame de Paris*. In Hugo's novel, Quasimodo pushes Claude Frollo from the Northern Tower of Notre Dame cathedral, provoking a spectacular fall that leads to his death on the Paris pavement. This reference to Hugo's character is not casual in *El transmigrado*. Póstumo's soul takes the place of Quasimodo, who pushes Sisebuto's body through the window, becoming a "Segundo Claudio Frollo":

Pero salir protestando, dejando con su trágica muerte una mancha sobre la reputación de aquella mala mujer: una muerte que fuera sonada... ¿Qué más ruidosa que arrojarse de un segundo piso?... Así lo pensé, y así lo llevó a cabo... Segundo Claudio Frollo, cayó á la calle, aunque no de tan alto, y casi a su gusto (164).

The intertextuality established by Tapia's dialogical imagination provides a narrative closure open to multiple levels of interpretation. The self-destruction of Póstumo/Sisebuto could be interpreted not only as a suicide but as a murder. Póstumo must kill Sisebuto in order to liberate his soul and free himself from the martyrdom of his life in someone else's body. It seems evident that when a man transgresses the celestial law merely to fulfill his own egotistic desires for hate and revenge, his end has to incorporate a moral lesson. Póstumo in Sisebuto's body is an aberration that needs to be destroyed, as Dr. Frankenstein must destroy his creature, as Dorian Gray must destroy his portrait and die, as Dr. Jekyll must kill himself to get rid of his evil double Mr. Hyde. In this respect, the protagonist's death functions as both martyrdom and retribution. However, Póstumo does not die—cannot die—since it is central to Tapia's artifice to have his character return to perform his deceiving games of duplicity once again in the sequel published ten years later.
Póstumo el envirginiado (1882)

The story begins with a terribly bored Póstumo in Limbo who decides to take a stroll back to the streets of Madrid. Spotting a very attractive young andaluza, Virginia, he desires to occupy her body in order to see the world through a woman’s eyes. Póstumo forcibly penetrates Virginia’s body, chasing away her legitimate soul. In the body of Virginia, Póstumo has to marry an old Duque for the sake of convenience. The day of the wedding s/he feels attracted to Segismundo Salazar, the reincarnation of Elisa Doble-Anzuelo, Póstumo’s former wife. Virginia surprises her husband flirting with her young seamstress, which provides her with the perfect pretext to distance herself from the Duque. One night Salazar sneaks into Virginia’s bedroom and the jealous Duque attempts to shoot Virginia. S/he flees incognito, with her best friend Matilde, to the Paris Demi-Monde where Virginia becomes a bohemian singer known as frivolous, cold, and calculating.

After the suicide of Alfredo, a young poet who was her most fervent admirer, s/he decides to change, and makes a commitment to the struggle for women’s rights. Virginia abandons her career as a singer, and under the protection of an Englishman, Lord Berckley, travels to the United States where s/he becomes involved in the North American women’s emancipation movement. Back in Madrid, Virginia realizes that Spanish society is too backward to absorb her modern ideas. After much struggle, Virginia is shot in a barricade during the 1868 September revolution in Madrid and dies a pseudo-heroine. Once again in Limbo, the disobedient spirit of Póstumo is imprisoned in solitary confinement to make sure he will never be able to talk to anyone or leave again.

In Póstumo el envirginiado Tapia presents an agenda on sexual politics that challenges nineteenth-century literary representations of gender difference, since the
protagonist is a man in the body of a woman. *El envirginiado* represents the feminine body as a space available to be taken by assault for a spiritual transmigration that leads to a transgendered reincarnation. Virginia is portrayed as a strong character who fights for egalitarian rights, however, she is not just a woman but rather a man inside a female body. Tapia, the writer, creates an androgine who is able to experience the world simultaneously as male and female. Póstumo’s spirit exercises the power of self-transformation through a spectacle of domination and control by means of desire and violence.

In spite of his supposedly spiritual nature, Póstumo is bored to tears in Limbo and longs for the sensuality of female forms; he lustily describes how much he misses “los espíritus encarnados en bien torneadas, graciosas y expresivas formas mujeriles, coronadas por sedosas cabelleras, con ojos de fuego, labios de coral, dientes como perlas, cuellos de cisne, menudos pies y sandunguero andar, envueltas en vaporosas gasas, luciente seda y encajes primorosos” (179). He escapes to Madrid, where he spots a beautiful woman:

“Cáspita ¡qué hembra!—exclamó arrebatado el espíritu de Póstumo … Una vez lanzada por nuestro héroe aquella exclamación, púsose a caracolear en torno de la dama a guisa de moscón”(179). The choice of vocabulary elicits erotic images of the feminine as an aesthetic object of pleasure, agreeable to the senses with delicate round shapes and soft textures.

Póstumo’s opportunity to transmigrate into such an appealing body is particularly pleasant, since his former transmigration was into the abhorred body of his rival Sisebuto. Furthermore, his reasoning is justified by his innate male curiosity: “Así podría comprobar y saber lo que pasa dentro del cuerpo de la mujer, sobre todo si es hermosa” (180). Metaphorically, Póstumo rapes the body of Virginia in an act of possession; he plays a
double game, not only to satisfy his curiosity to explore a woman’s body from the inside out, but also to understand her and be in solidarity with her.

I read this paradox as follows: Tapia, the author—a man—grants representation to a woman from the perspective of a “masculine-I” (or a “masculine-eye”), in his hope of legitimating the claims for women’s rights by occupying the mind and body of a woman. This is not an innovative artifice in Tapia’s writing. He already used it as means of representation of the female subject in his newspaper *La Azucena* (1870). Tapia created three imaginary women friends, Graciela, Julia, and Ysaura, who exchange letters that defend women’s intellectual capacity to learn hard sciences, such as mathematics, or “difficult” languages such as German. These fictional letters provide a platform to criticize patriarchal assumptions about women’s inferiority.

The Liberal Reformists still felt committed to dictating moral prescriptions and norms of conduct for women in the late 1800s in Puerto Rico. Liberal men wrote exhortations to bourgeois women to reject frivolity, implying that women’s problems were a result of their immorality, vanity, and inability to distinguish right from wrong. This rhetoric was in consonance with paternalist approaches that nineteenth-century male writers shared in Europe and America towards the education of women and their controlled incorporation into the national life.

The violent occupation of Virginia’s body can also be interpreted as the representation of a colonized space. Similarly, in *El transmigrado*, the decaying corpse of Póstumo represents the stagnant body of colonized Puerto Rico (which connects with Salas y Quiroga’s metaphor of Puerto Rico as “el cadáver de una sociedad que no ha nacido”), and the naked body of Sisebuto exposed to public scrutiny illustrates the vulnerability of the
colonized subject. In *El envirginiado*, Virginia’s body suffers a brutal violation of her physical autonomy and identity. These metaphors of the body parallel the loss of autonomy and displacement of the colonial subject, conceived as a territorial space to be dominated and exploited.

Despite the Custodio’s warnings, and without God’s permission, Póstumo sneaks into Virginia’s body through her mouth. The forcible occupation of Virginia’s body is depicted in an almost surrealistic scene of convulsive violence. Once again, Póstumo perturbs Madrid’s ordinary urban life, and this time right in the middle of the “Paseo de la Castellana” at the most crowded hour:

Supóngase el lector, con todo un diablo que se le había metido dentro del cuerpo. La joven cayó desamayada en brazos del primer galán que de tal quiso servir en aquella escena … Virginia era presa de espantosas convulsiones. No podía menos al verse con dos espíritus en el cuerpo y espíritus que comenzaron lucha tenaz y revolcona, verdadera lucha por la vida. (182)

Again, the transmigration of Póstumo raises scandal and confusion. Virginia’s mother takes her daughter’s spastic body home, where a team of doctors is appalled by such extraordinary events. The body of Virginia—the female body—is not only represented as a battlefield, but also her beauty is desecrated in a carnivalesque manner in the presence of the “body” of doctors (Rivera 119):

Lo cierto es que los médicos observantes no sabían a que atenerse, puesto que a la tos siguió un ruido de tripas algo prosaico en el cuerpo de una bella, efecto sin duda y por simpatía, de la agitación que debió producir en el apigastrio y estómago la entrada del turbulento espíritu asaltante. Sinapismos volantes—dijo uno. (184)
The woman’s body, previously represented as desirable and voluptuous, is thus degraded to an animal state. The degradation of the object of representation is both erotic and humorous, blending beauty with vulgarity and the sacred with the profane. This bizarre occupation of the female body by a male psyche functions as an erotic masculine fantasy that is at odds with middle-class nineteenth century moral codes and sexual taboos. In parody, as Bakhtin states, it is possible to desecrate the lofty aspects and models of the dominant culture, as Tapia does with the medical institution. One of the instances where this artifice is illustrated, is when the Custodio invokes the spirit of Virginia with such force that she is dragged out violently from her body in the form of a loud sigh, precisely at the moment when one of the doctors is testing on her a vial of smelling salts of his own invention:

El doctor que aplicaba al olfato de la ex-Virginia un porno de esencias, específico de su invención para estos casos, al ver que el cuerpo con aquel suspiro abrió los ojos mostrando que recobraba vida y sosiego, exclamó con entusiasmo: --¿Qué decís? ¿qué decís de mi específico? Recibiendo de los admirados concurrentes la tácita certificación de su eficacia. (185)

This is how Póstumo’s soul installs himself in the body of Virginia. The voice of the narrator now calls him “El Envirginiado” or “Virginia Postúmica,” wry epithets that add humor to the narration.

Under his new identity, Virginia/Póstumo has an amusing conversation with Doña Flora, Virginia’s mother, and learns about Virginia’s planned marriage to the wealthy Duque de la Verbena, lord of almost half of Castile. After his bitter experience in Sisebuto’s body, Póstumo opts for docility as he tries to accommodate himself to his new life in the body he has invaded, not without some resistance: “Pues no creo que esté obligada a casarme con un
viejo por más duque y rico que sea” (188). And “El envirginiado” almost dies again when s/he meets the Duque: “El duque de la Verbena era un viejo de más de 60 años que harto se conocían en lo rugoso de sus facciones agraciadas y hasta hermosas en otro tiempo. Trataba de disimular este abuso de primaveras con el peluquín, la pintura de las cejas y bigote, y la postiza dentadura” (190). “El envirginiado” must marry the Duque, because Virignia’s mother is bankrupt and the marriage would secure a social position for her as the Duquesa de la Verbena. S/he realizes that the marriage is a matter requiring urgency, and “El envirginiado” changes his mind:

Luego que Póstumo se quedó solo en su alcoba con su nuevo cuerpo, contemplólo a su sabor y vio que era cabal, hermoso y digno de ser amado. No sabemos si lo examinó con ojos de hombre, pues de tal debía su alma tener resabios. Sólo así se explica que cayese en el desvanecimiento de Narciso, enamorándose de lo que de allí en adelante había de constituir su persona. Narciso se vio en una fuente, y él o ella en un espejo. La nueva Virginia sintióse hermosa, y esto no es extraño, porque rara es la mujer bella que no está enamorada de sí propia. (193)

The narcissistic and erotic contemplation of the feminine body convinces “El envirginiado” that s/he deserves the best. The action of looking at his image as a woman in the mirror opens an intimate erotic space to the reader’s eye, a sort of voyeurism. Póstumo enters into a state of aesthetic ecstasy through the reflected image of his new body. The mirror also symbolizes a cherished feminine space that not only reflects her image but also represents a confined space in women’s lives. The mirror acts as a doubly cathartic element in the narrative: it is both an instrument associated with female vanity and a philosophical riddle: who is that “being” that looks at herself in the mirror? The real object is confronted with its own
reflection and the world is reversed in the mirror. The naked feminine body in *El envirginiado* acquires a singular power of self-representation that does not exist in *El transmigrado*.

The naked male body exposed to the public eye in *El transmigrado* represents the conflict of self-identity and the estrangement of the individual, while the naked feminine body reflected in the mirror, within the intimate space of the female bedroom, represents the confirmation of self-identity. It is through the mirror that Póstumo recognizes the “womanness” of his new body and decides to assume responsibility for his invasive transmigration. This act of self-recognition places Póstumo in the body of Virginia as an autonomous subject who is eager to exercise the power of Virginia’s status-quo, that is, to become La Duquesa de la Verbena. In Tapia’s terms, Póstumo in Virginia’s body comprises an androgynous whole, which in Tapia’s sexual politics is a gender representation connected to the late nineteenth-century agenda of social progress and modernity:

Así tendremos el fecundo híbrido bisexual, tan conveniente y hasta indispensable para las producciones del alma y del espíritu, o sea del corazón y la inteligencia, tal como la admiramos en la organización de los verdaderos poetas y artistas, cuyas producciones revelan los elementos predominantes en cada uno de los dos sexos: fuerza y sensibilidad moral, virilidad y gracia, vigor y ternura al mismo tiempo, conjunto armónico que es el ideal de la personalidad humana. (296-97)

Although the appropriation of Virginia’s body is violent and even offensive, it was for Tapia a the most viable literary strategy through which bestow representation onto women. The literary tropes of androgyny and travesty were thought to empower woman, although she remained under the guidance of the man; in this case, the man is her very mind. In several
parts of the novel, however, Tapia insists on the corporeal feminine power over which the male mind does not have complete control: “Aquel suspiro y tales emociones venían de su alma o del cuerpecillo meridional y tiranuelo que solía revelarse entre sus discursos y propósitos” (280).

Póstumo/Virginia must conform to the social demands of his/her new body and marries el Duque for convenience. The day of the wedding, “el envirginiado” feels a powerful attraction for a handsome man, Segismundo de Salazar y Mendoza. Their mutual attraction becomes obvious to all the wedding guests: “¡Cómo chispearon y se hallaron los ojos entre Virginia y su Romeo en los lanceros que bailaban frente a frente! Para no llamarle Romeo tendríamos que expresar su verdadero nombre: Segismundo; pero no el de La vida es sueño sino de Salazar y Mendoza” (200).

In order to justify to the reader Virginia and Salazar’s fatal attraction, Póstumo’s Guardian Angel explains that Salazar is the reincarnation of Elisa Doble-Anzuelo, his (Sisebuto’s) former wife. The intertextuality again comes to the surface level in the narrator’s voice, and like the many other intertextual references in the narrative, this one is not casual. The allusion to Segismundo, the protagonist of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s La vida es sueño (circa 1634), links Póstumo’s situation with that of Rosaura, a woman who dresses like a man. In El envirginiado’s plot, Elisa is “dressed” not with male clothes but with a man’s body. Thus, Póstumo/Virginia is cleared of any possible allegation of homosexuality. But this travesty goes even further; since the spirit of Póstumo “envirginiado” has the reminiscences of a man, he/she also feels attracted to a young woman, Matilde, la Condesa de Cierzo:
Originado todo ello por la anomalia postumico-virginiana: que no así de cualquier modo puede cambiarse de sexo o asaltarse en cuerpo ajeno. Dios no ha hecho las cosas para que los noveleros como Póstumo traten de trastornarlas sin consecuencia. Póstumo vio entre las damas a la joven Matilde, Condesa de Cierzo: parece que la vio con los ojos de hombre que había sido, y ¡chá! nuevo flechazo. (200)

The recognition of Póstumo’s anomalous situation is constantly underscored throughout El envirginiado’s narrative. The Guardian Angel gives him an ultimatum before he walks out on Póstumo, leaving him to his own fate. The Angel warns him that he should make good use of the body he usurped or he will suffer terrible punishments. For the first time, Póstumo is terrified of the consequences of his acts, which entails a moral lesson. From this moment on Póstumo “envirginiado” tries to behave in compliance with the social conventions demanded from him/her, falling however into the trap of maintaining false appearances:

La mónita de las mujeres es hábil en esto de dar al deber la apariencia y al gusto el alma, como suele acontecer a todo esclavo: al amo la apariencia; el pensamiento y la voluntad íntima a su deseo. Esta moral es muy acomodaticia . . . En una palabra: el fingimiento. Olvidaba Póstumo-Virginia que éste abre la puerta y luego se cuelan el engaño y las traiciones. (207)

There is a moral voice behind these statements that warns against simply keeping up appearances. Trapped in false pretenses, Virginia’s life becomes tedious although she is surrounded by luxury and worldly pleasures. His/her only distraction is the friendship with Matilde, la Condesa de Cierzo. They establish an intimate relationship and the young Condesa opens her heart to “El envirginiado,” telling him/her about her unhappy marriage. She confesses that she married a man who is anti-Catholic and does not tolerate her religious
prudery. Here, Tapia parodies the life of aristocratic women, young and beautiful, living in extreme opulence but extremely bored and unhappy, leading a life of pretense. The narrative also addresses religious beliefs and portrays women as tending to be a religious fanatic, an attitude that was seen as a defect in women and severely criticized by Ferrer and Brau in their proposals (see Chapter 3).

There is a feminist claim voiced in Virginia’s interior monologue about the unfairness of the only choice open for women—marriage:

¿Y ha de permanecer una mancornada con este cadáver de cuerpo y alma? ¡Pobres mujeres! La infeliz mujer a quien la necesidad del estómago unas veces, la vanidad en que la criaron otras, o la necesidad de tener en el mundo el carácter y consideración que sólo dan los pantalones, como se dice vulgarmente, ¿cuándo puede alcanzar los medios que le den voluntad propia para emanciparse de la necesidad del casamiento, como acontece al hombre? (208)

These words were echoed in Gabriel Ferrer’s treatise La mujer, which reveals the influence of Tapia on the island’s Liberal thought. Likewise, they are also reflected in Ana Roqué’s fiction. Thus, Tapia’s text provides a space to proclaim his agenda regarding sexual politics:

--No somos más que esclavas cuya futilidad y exterioridad se adorna para llevarnos al mercado de la sociedad, en busca del matrimonio, como allá en Oriente las cautivas al mercado de los sultanes. --La mujer del pobre trabaja con el marido, si no trabaja ella sola a manera de ciertos pueblos salvajes; las palizas alternan con el trabajo por aquello de que a la bestia no cabe tratarla de otro modo . . . la mujer no es más que un paria coronado de flores; y donde hay parías no hay verdadera sociedad ni progreso moral posible. (219)
This statement, directly or indirectly, will have resonances in the narratives of Brau, Zeno Gandia, and Roqué, which represent the Puerto Rican peasant woman oppressed by a tyrannical masculine power. Poor women work side by side with men, often being battered and abused. These statements in the narrator's voice establish a complicity with the reader to feel solidarity with "El envirginiado" despite his extraordinary and anomalous situation. However, Póstumo is not innocent and the punishment for his transgression is expected.

Póstumo/Virginia, in fear of being condemned eternally, tells the truth to Matilde and warns her about their close relationship: "Matilde, has de saber que no soy lo que parezco... soy un ser especial, un hombre con cuerpo de mujer... Yo soy el espíritu de un hombre (221)." Matilde finds this confession very amusing and bursts in laughter "¡Ja, ja, ja! ¡qué adefesio! ¿Y los espíritus tienen sexo?" (221). But Matilde finally believes him/her and in her confusion visits her confessor, Padre Benito, in search of advice. The priest thinks that Virginia is possessed by a demon and that she needs to be exorcized. He advises penitence, self-punishment, and fasting. Matilde tells "El envirginiado" that she will continue their relationship only if they both observe the penitence Padre Benito prescribed. Póstumo's manly spirit then realizes that Matilde is indeed very mischievous and that the penitence was just an excuse to continue their intimate relations:

Póstumo se ratificó entonces respecto de Matilde en que tenía de traviesa todo lo que aparentaba de tonta, y que aquella caridad de los rebentazos no era más que un medio para continuar en el trato y amistad con él o ella. Y hasta comprendió que aquel misterio de hombre y mujer la encantaba y enloquecía exaltando su maravillosidad.

(225)
Matilde, then, comes to Virginia’s room with a rough hemp rope tied up underneath her clothes “un áspero cordón de cáñamo que lastimaba sus bellas carnes” (226) and a couple of scourge whips to punish each other: “Matilde pegaba con el furor de quien tiene fe en un buen remedio o en castigo merecido. Póstumo no se quedaba atrás por aquello de la buena correspondencia y de que quien bien te quiere te hará llorar” (226). The confession as a mechanism of control and discipline is parodied since Matilde uses it to fulfill her own desires. She does not see the priest again in several days, during which “siguieron ella y su amiga flagelándose a más y mejor” (226). Matilde carefully omits to tell the priest of her continued relationship with “the possessed woman” or that she did not fast. These scenes of sadomasochism as a form of pleasure between women are quite rare in Tapia’s writing, and speak to a real or imaginary practice parodied in the narrative. Woman is represented as perverted and capable of the manipulation of information for selfish ends; since Matilde did not tell the whole story to her confessor (her continued friendship with Virginia and opulent feasts), the mechanism of control from the Church fails.

Virginia continues her life of sensual pleasures and narcissistic devotion, and as a good nineteenth-century modern consumer, she spends lots of time and money with her French seamstress, Madame Choufleur, enjoying delicious gossip among textures of velvet and exquisite models à la dernière. There is a feeling of joy and pleasure in this space of fashion and consumerism, a place where the feminine subject is empowered. As expressed by Foucault in his History of Sexuality, there is a fundamental relationship between power, knowledge, and sexuality. Sexual repression and body control coincide with the development of capitalism, since this become part of the bourgeois order. Virginia is a bourgeois, a decadent aristocrat and a capitalist consumer. Married to el Duque she suffers sexual
repression, however, thanks to her double nature, the masculinity inside her finds mechanisms of survival to counteract that very repression. Póstumo’s exposure to the intimate world of the aristocratic women is a form of knowledge that is concealed from the lower classes, particularly men. One of the fascinations of this text lies in the fantasy that the reader can take a glimpse at the private life of the women of the privileged class, as a kind of voyeurism. It is in this intimate space of fashion and feminine vanity that, in her underclothes in front of the mirror, Virginia learns about her husband’s affair with the seamstress’ young apprenticeship, Carlota.

Virginia carefully plans to expose the Duque’s relationship with Carlota for her own benefit. Using masks and cloaks—again the artifice of identity disguise —Virginia and Matilde go to the social club and find the Duque and Carlota in animated conversation. Once again the carnivalization of society comes into play as the story questions the institution of marriage. Virginia’s act of apparent jealousy and control results in a deception. It is the perfect excuse for her to break with el Duque: “Es usted un infame, y desde hoy indigno de ser mi esposo. Todo vínculo ha desaparecido entre nosotros” (238). She leaves el Duque and Carlota in perplexity, and when she is outside, she laughs out loud: “Lo ha tomado por lo serio y es cuanto pretendía” (238).

“El envirginiado” feels free and is determined to live as if Virginia were single or a widow, but conveniently within the bonds of matrimony. S/he is ready to enjoy all that Virginia’s social position and money can offer. While at el Duque’s private theatre box s/he takes great pleasure in the luxury that surrounds her, not without deeply reflecting upon the artificiality of her glamorous situation:
Cuando yo era hombre y me llamaba Póstumo y los treinta mil de la paga andaban empeñados o no corrientes, envidiaba desde una de esas delanteras del paraíso a los que hoy se sientan en estos lujosos sitios. Entonces venía yo por la ópera exclusivamente; y en la actualidad, aunque no deje de gustarme, porque al fin es cosa que halaga el oído y es estética al alcance de todo el mundo, mi posición social, mi sexo de hoy y las tendencias de este cuerpo femenil, me convierten en una de tantas, es decir: en una cualquiera de estas tontas que por todo habrán venido, menos por el Arte. (240-41)

Her interior monologue is interrupted when someone’s magic eyes stare at her: it is Salazar. They embrace in a sensual eye contact which is noticeable to all, including the Duque. That same night, when Virginia is alone in her room, Salazar enters suddenly through her balcony. Virginia tries to resist, a cliché scene of a comedy of cuckoldry, where seduction takes place in the married woman’s bedroom, in the style of Don Juan. The Duque has been told by his spies about Salazar’s move and knocks at Virginia’s door: “Abra V. señora . . . Abrid, o voy a derribar la puerta” (245). Salazar leaves quickly in the same way he came in, and el Duque finds Virginia alone: “Señora, ¿dónde está ese infame?” (245), shouts el Duque with a pistol in his hand. Virginia leaves the room quickly and el Duque shoots her as she escapes to the street.

Póstumo finds himself once again in a situation similar to Sisebuto’s—in the street half-naked and without money and decides to go to Matilde’s house (246). The apparent adulterous transgression stigmatizes Virginia. S/he could not do anything against her husband when s/he found him with Carlota (except to declare her “independence”), but in her own similar circumstances she is accused immediately by social mores. One must remember that
the honour code in the nineteenth century was basically the public construction of reputation, particularly for women. In Puerto Rico, the honour code’s requirements for women were laid out in the colonial legislation that also included Cuba (Código Penal para las islas de Cuba y Puerto Rico of 1886). It was solely the responsibility of the woman to maintain her sexual reputation intact. If this code was violated, it could easily destroy a woman’s reputation to the extent of making her destitute or even lead to imprisonment. To save herself, Virginia flees incognito in the company of Matilde.

Virginia and Matilde begin a new life in Paris and pretend to be two Spanish Marquesas, widows and cousins. Virginia is “Marquesa de Monte Bello,” Matilde is “Marquesa de Río-Seco,” and once again the game of doubles and duplicity takes place in the narrative. The sententious voice of the narrator condemns the extremes of the honour code:

Nos encontramos en la vasta ciudad del Sena. Allí ha ido a refugiarse Virginia, huyendo de las iras de un marido celoso a quien alientan en su furor las costumbres resabiadas y conservadoras de tradiciones sangrientas, y hasta en cierto modo las leyes de nuestra época, no exentas aún del espíritu feudal de las anteriores. (247)

As Foucault noted, in the nineteenth century and especially during the Victorian period, sex was prohibited and silenced, and confined to a sacred space—the bonds of matrimony whose ultimate end is not pleasure but reproduction. Sexual repression opened the door to the excitement offered by the bordellos and the night-life of European cities, such as Paris Demi-Monde. These urban sites became alternative places to satisfy the sexual fantasies of bourgeois men and women. It is in the Parisian Demi-Monde that Virginia and Matilde find a space of relative freedom: “Así es, que sin más acá, ni más allá, encontráronse formando parte del famoso círculo del Demi Monde que tan bien ha fotografiado Dumas
hijo” (248, bold in the original). The two women, not used to hard work, have soon spent all their money gambling, attending the theatre and going to parties. Virginia discovers that she has a gorgeous voice, and dedicates herself to the study of music. Their lives are on the brink of poverty when Matilde falls into the arms of a Russian Count, a liaison that separates the two friends.

Left alone, “El envirginiado” begins a singing career and soon s/he becomes a successful opera singer whose beauty and charm captivate many admirers. She lives a bohemian life and in her spare time dresses in man’s clothes “to study women,” as Póstumo’s spirit was committed to. Virginia’s transvestite avatar plays a doubly deceiving strategy, as she uses the masculine attire to go to bordellos and other questionable places where women are exploited:

Deseosa de estudiar más a la mujer, como se había propuesto, disfrazábase de hombre y concurría acompañada de otra artista a quien catequizó para que la imitase, a las orgías de las que llamaremos hermosas desgraciadas o extraviadas. Entonces pudo convencerse, por las confidencias de estas mujeres, que los hombres al prostituirlas, se prostituyen a sí mismos, no viendo a ser la mujer sino reflejo de los miserables caprichos y de las bajezas inconcebibles del otro sexo, por lo que ellas tienen razón en pagar desprecio con desprecio, y allá se van los unos y las otras. (264-65)

This travesty empowers Virginia in her crusade for women’s rights and she denounces the evils of prostitution, accusing men as the very cause of it. This sexually charged claim is another element in Tapia’s agenda of sexual politics, as he tries to expose the social consequences of male degenerate behaviour.
Virginia has two fervent admirers who stand out in the plot: the English Lord Berckley and a dreamer, the young poet Alfredo. Alfredo is an ardent fan of “El envirginiado” and attends every performance and even the rehearsals in which Virginia takes part. However, after her interviews with prostitutes, Postumo “envirginiado” concurs that s/he would be “vengadora de su nuevo sexo” (271). With this in mind, Virginia acts like a cold and frivolous woman, who just wants to take advantage of the opposite sex. Lord Berckley confesses his deep feelings for her, and even though she teases him, they develop a close friendship, and the Lord becomes her protector.

The narrator’s voice lets us know that deep inside Virginia’s masculine reminiscences there is “un espíritu bonachón,” and that her posture as la femme fatale did not really work. Alfredo writes his most precious verses to his idol, Virginia, and she is profoundly touched: “Cuando Virginia empezó a tratar al poeta Alfredo, percibió que su cuerpo sentía, no ante el talento de éste, sino a causa de su bella e interesante figura, la atractiva simpatía que en otro tiempo sintió en presencia de Salazar; pero su alma estaba absorbida por el amor al Arte” (273). “El envirginiado”—with all the heavy weight of his/her transmigrated past life experiences—clearly sees the naivety and candor of Alfredo. S/he tries to open his eyes and make him realize that he is in love with merely a dream, an image that his poetic soul has created. Alfredo’s disillusion is devastating. The following nights Virginia misses the presence of the poet in his accustomed place at the theatre. Alfredo appears again the night of Virginia’s greatest performance: “¡pero qué cambio! Estaba desconocido, pálido, ojeroso, desencajado su semblante, parecía que había pasado por su alma y su ser todo un año de desventuras” (282). When the second act begins, Alfredo disappears. The performance ends in a climax of ovations, flowers, doves, and poems, but none like those of Alfredo: “llegó al
escenario cierto rumor, cierta noticia que heló el corazón de la cantante y amargó su triunfo: un joven, Alfredo según todas las señas, acababa de suicidarse no lejos del teatro” (282).

Virginia feels distressed and troubled, understanding that she has been the instrument of a horrible crime: “Ella había asesinado sus ilusiones que le hacían tan feliz; le había despertado de un sueño delicioso a una realidad inaceptable” (283). This terrible event is a shock for Virginia’s body and Póstumo’s soul, and s/he decides to abandon her successful artistic career. Accompanied by Lord Berckley, her long time admirer and good friend, she travels to the United States. The Lord proposes marriage to her, but she refuses, and instead they agree to live as man and wife before the eyes of the world; but like brother and sister between themselves (287). Once again Tapia breaks traditional formulas of morality and of gender roles as he parodies the obligation of women matrimony and protecting their public reputation. However, the English Lord is Virginia’s protector and bestows on her a legitimate image in society. Therefore, woman is still subject to the authority of a man, in order to save her reputation. In the United States Virginia finds herself in the land of egalitarian rights for both sexes:

Universidades y colegios compartidos por ambos sexos, escuelas superiores especiales para las mujeres; ¿qué más podía exigir en esta materia? Las mujeres sirviendo con lucro e independencia en el profesorado científico como maestros, en el terreno científico industrial como médicos, abogados, periodistas, ingenieros, empleados públicos y hasta como ministros de la religión. (289)

The relationship between Virginia and Alfredo can be seen as the reverse of the relationship between Dorian Gray and Sibil, the characters of Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890). Dorian’s vanity and narcissism push Sibil, the singer, to commit suicide. In the case of Virginia, she was actually trying to save Alfredo from herself.
Lord Berckley takes Virginia to a meeting at the “Cooper Institute of the Women’s Rights Society.” The next ten pages of the novel provide the transcription of a woman’s speech on civil rights, supposedly translated word for word from English into Spanish by Lord Berckley. Whether or not the speech is Tapia’s invention is not clear, but it is entirely possible that parts of it at least are taken from an actual address. Whatever the case, from an aesthetic point of view, the inclusion of this speech on women’s suffrage disrupts the narrative with its monotonous and sententious tone, and diminishes the artistic value of the story. If Tapia had summarized only the major points from the speech in the novel, and published the entire text in his newspaper La Azucena, the narrative would have had more aesthetic cohesiveness. But we must remember that the author did not have time to correct the manuscript of El envirginiado because of his sudden death in 1882. What I find most significant in the feminist discourse cited is the way it ends: “Antes llamábamos a esta sociedad Woman’s Rights Society. Hoy la apellidamos con título que abarca más ámbito moral. Equal Rights American Society, es decir, iguales derechos no sólo para la mujer sino en general para toda la raza humana” (298, bold in the original).

This egalitarian philosophy is in consonance with Tapia’s “humanitarian” position, as he always proclaimed in his writings that he cared for the well-being of the entire human race, men and women, blacks and whites, from the colony or from the metropolis. It is interesting to note that the topic of women’s suffrage was given literary treatment by H.G. Wells in Ann Veronica (1909), 27 years after El envirginiado. This shows how much Tapia’s fiction anticipated social changes, and was ahead of his contemporaries.

Virginia believes that she is an apostle for women and that she needs to go back to Spain to spread the good news. Back in Spain, Virginia has to hide her real identity by
assuming that of an English Lady, Lord Berckley’s wife: “Muy pronto hubo de comprender que allí estaban verdes sus teorías y que para nuestra patria eran aún verdaderas utopías. Las mujeres le tomaron miedo . . . no querían innovación alguna, estaban bien con su frivolidad, su ignorancia, su idolatría masculina y sus supersticiones” (305). Virginia even founds a newspaper to voice the feminist claims she has learned in North America, but it is fiercely criticized and closed down; then she realizes that Spain is too backward to accept her egalitarian proto-feminist epistles. In Madrid, Virginia is soon recognized by many old friends, but she manages to play the role of the English Lady and confuses them. Even the very old Duque apologizes after a failed attempt to unmask her. Thus the game of doubles and duplicity is played by Tapia, who empowers Virginia to deceive everyone, including Salazar.

The narrative uses the month of September 1868 as the background that puts an end to Póstumo’s life as Virginia: “Al primer motín que hubo de armarse, para imponer al gobierno acción revolucionaria más decidida, creyó que debía dar el ejemplo de redentora” (333). “El envirginiado” feels the impulse to fight in the Revolution: dresses in soldier’s clothes and armed with a rifle, accompanied by Lord Berckley she joins a skirmish in the street where “una bala impía hirió a Virginia” (335). In a house across the street a woman offers them refuge, and when Virginia opens her eyes she recognizes her old friend Matilde. Back from Paris, Matilde was first embezzled and then abandoned by her former husband. She has become an outcast from society and fallen into disgrace. Virginia is enraged to realize how low her friend has fallen, but she can do little as she herself is on her deathbed:

Yo he transmigrado más de una vez... He habitado este mundo en más de una ocasión... Dios perdonará mis culpas... Si mi existencia en este cuerpo comenzó por
un capricho, concluye... con una buena obra... La redención de un sexo desvalido...
la mitad... del género humano. (339)

Virginia dies and receives the burial of an English Lady which numerous people attend. The novel ends with a meaningful metaphor that reinforces the idea of repression and control over the individual. Póstumo’s spirit goes back to Limbo, where he is held incommunicado in solitary confinement. His Guardian Angel is also admonished, despite his allegation that he abandoned Póstumo to his own fate. Póstumo is then imprisoned under the care of a new Custodio who is supposed to be tougher than the former “prohibiéndole que oyese hablar al preso, de cuya labia y travesura tanto y con justo motivo se recelaba” (341).

Both Póstumo el transmigrado and Póstumo el envirginiado show an aesthetic concern that goes beyond Romantic or Realist goals. In El transmigrado, Tapia parodies European literary trends and criticizes his contemporary reality while El envirginiado voices his own agenda regarding sexual politics, one that at the time was considered revolutionary and controversial. He was evolving as a writer and his preoccupations turned to newer ideas and methods of literary experimentation, as El Envirginiado reveals. Tapia’s thought is clearly concerned with sexual politics and changing gender roles in society, he makes of this book an eccentric compendium of early women’s movements for emancipation following the North American model. He also believed in nineteenth-century European egalitarian ideas, not just for men but for humankind, and in the possibility of progress and modernization on the island of Puerto Rico.

17 In Tapia, señalador de caminos, Elsa Castro Pérez asserts that Póstumo el envirginiado presents a social thesis in which “el espíritu de Póstumo en el cuerpo de Virginia no es otro que el del propio autor exponiendo sus argumentos en defensa de la mujer” (141).
Although *El envirginiado* is presented as the second part of *El transmigrado*, the only common thread between the two is the spirit of Póstumo. *El envirginiado* loses the supernatural intervention that *El transmigrado* displays. The exceptions are scattered interventions from Póstumo’s Guardian Angel in the form of a voice that warns him of his wrong doing. The main supernatural element throughout the story is “El envirginiado” himself: “¿quién de todos los concurrentes podía imaginar que aquella radiante Duquesa no era otra cosa que espiritu del otro mundo venido a éste sin nacer, y echando a otro de la vida sin matar su cuerpo?” (240). The transgressive spirit of Póstumo, resurrected in the body of his enemy, and later invading the body of a woman, can be read as Tapia’s own creature, a monster of his imagination in the tradition of nineteenth-century fantastic literature. This multifarious character represents a dysfunctional modern subject, simultaneously a *flâneur-malgré-soi* and a displaced Spanish/French/North American feminist. Póstumo’s arbitrary and anarchic behaviour stigmatizes him as a dangerous, trouble-making, and mischievous spirit: his body refuses to die, his soul refuses to forget his previous life, he is reincarnated twice, and in both cases his death is violent and abrupt.

Thus, Póstumo/Sisebuto/Virginia can be interpreted as the creature that best expressed Tapia’s innermost anxieties and frustrations as a colonized subject. His fictional creature can be interpreted as an aberration of nature, an anarchist spirit that acquires immortality by defying the natural cycle of life and death, but who in doing so can find only eternal confinement. In his ongoing struggle for political agency vis-à-vis Spain, Tapia sought representation for what he believed was a humanitarian cause: to better his country by having the same civil rights in Puerto Rico as in Spain; but furthermore, he was a visionary who believed in egalitarian rights for both women and men.
CHAPTER 5

ENGENDERING RACE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEASANT GIRL IN TWO CRIOLLISTA NOVELS

Tierra sin gente es desierto. Gente sin tierra es plebe. El amo de la tierra es el amo de la patria. La tierra puertorriqueña es nuestra, y nadie en la adversidad puede servirla mejor que nosotros mismos, los agricultores. (Manuel Zeno Gandía, 1927)

After Alejandro Tapia’s sudden death in 1882, his attempt to establish an anti-colonial dialogue with Spain, rooted in the articulation of his frustration as a Creole subject, will continue in the writings of other Creole intellectuals. One of them, Manuel Zeno Gandía (1855-1930) continued to denounce colonialism after the shift of sovereignty from Spain to the United States. The epigraph above contains famous lines from his speech delivered in the Asamblea de la Asociación de Agricultores in June 10, 1927, which became a patriotic motto (Laguerre xx; Rosa-Nieves 263). It synthesizes the nationalist ideals of Zeno Gandía and of his generation, which are ever present in his fiction.

The majority of the nineteenth-century Puerto Rican writers belonged to the professional elite who had studied law or medicine in Spain, France or the United States, such as Manuel A. Alonso, Gabriel Ferrer, Francisco del Valle Atiles, and Manuel Zeno-Gandía. There were exceptions, though, as in the case of Alejandro Tapia and Salvador Brau whose families did not have the economic means to send them study overseas, and who were mainly self-taught. Most of the writings by these men concentrated on the expression of an autochthonous social criticism, and belong to a literature of sociological engagement focused on the campesinos puertorriqueños or free mountain people, colloquially called jíbaros.

The Puerto Rican mountain folk were definitely not considered a revolutionary group, and their self-sufficient and individualistic way of life evoked the foundations of individual
freedom and of political autonomy dear to the elite (Lewis 266). Paradoxically, writing about them nevertheless proved an effective vehicle to denounce colonialism without openly criticizing the institution of slavery at first, and the Libreta regime later, or acknowledging any trace of "Africanness." In the hands of these writers, the jibaro's "whiteness," coupled with his political apathy and independent spirit constituted an ideal trope that would become a central theme in literature, and, eventually the symbol of Puerto Rico's national character.

**Puerto Rican Writing with Sociological Intent (1880-1890)**

By the end of the 1880s, the nascent European disciplines of sociology stimulated some Puerto Rican Liberals to study the rural population, in a search for ways to better its social conditions and instil moral reform in order to ensure its economic productivity. In 1887, Francisco del Valle Atiles (1847-1917) published *El campesino puertorriqueño*, one of the pioneer essays in the development of Puerto Rican rural sociology. In Lewis's assessment, the importance of del Valle Atiles's essay lies in the fact that it recognizes the jibaro's cultural contribution to the growth of nationalist sentiment. For del Valle Atiles, the jibaro's folklore—despite its "vulgarity and pessimism"—was commendable for its originality, and was the source of an indigenous musical tradition that influenced "more modern forms of dance" that were in turn adapted by the Creole elite (Lewis 268). Manuel Fernández Juncos also wrote essays describing rural and small-town social types, in *Costumbres y tradiciones* (1883) and *Tipos y caracteres* (4th ed 1919). This type of essay contributed to a growing Creolized cultural expression that was felt to be more authentically boricua than the Euro-centred culture of the most conservative sectors of the elite. Salvador Brau's *Las clases jornaleras* (1882) and *La campesina* (1886) belongs to this cycle of
sociological essays. Both are part of Brau’s more systematically organized work, *Disquisiciones sociológicas* (written between 1882 and 1886), considered the most complete late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican sociological study (González, *Literatura y sociedad* 151; Quintero Rivera 200).

Puerto Rican literary historians\(^1\) agree that the novel *Inocencia* (1884) by Francisco del Valle Atiles marks the beginning of a Creole Realist aesthetic on the island. *Inocencia* narrates a disturbing case of satyriasis and infanticide. A girl, Inocencia, is the sexually abused victim of a lecher, who happens to be a man of the upper-class. Inocencia becomes pregnant, and because of a mental deficiency attributed to long-standing consumption, she kills her own baby. Inocencia’s crime is forgiven after a physician demonstrates that she is seriously ill with tuberculosis and cerebral anaemia. *Inocencia* is an unusual narrative since it exposes male sexuality as predatory and degenerate, and denounces the way in which men from the upper-classes pursued illicit sexual advances under the protection of their own social status. This representation of satyriasis is opposed to the public discourses that the Creole Liberals articulated in which male sexuality is deemed “natural” and men are exempted of responsibility, women being those in grave need of sexual control. A physician educated in Spain and France, del Valle Atiles echoes in *Inocencia* the late nineteenth-century medical discourse on sexual pathology. It is interesting to note that he focused on male rather than female sexual disorders, the latter being the norm at the time. Perhaps that is why *Inocencia* was quickly forgotten and never republished, appearing in the histories of literature only as an example of the Creole Realist trend.

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\(^1\) The main historians of Puerto Rican literature I have consulted are Carmen Gómez Tejera, Francisco Manrique Cabrera, Josefina Alvarez de Rivera, Cesareo Rosa-Nieves, and José Luis González.
Three years after *Inocencia*, Salvador Brau published *¿Pecadora?* as a serial novel in the *Revista Puertorriqueña de Literatura, Ciencias y Artes*, directed by Manuel Fernández Juncos. In 1890 it was published in book form under the title of *¿Pecadora? Narración Puertorriqueña*. Manrique Cabrera places *Inocencia* and *¿Pecadora?* within the context of a series of debates in the local newspapers, called “la querella naturalista” (180). According to Manrique Cabrera, the weekly newspaper *El Buscapie* (also directed by Fernández Juncos) published between 1882 and 1885 works by Emile Zola which incited critiques and controversy among the island’s literati. Many Puerto Rican authors seemed determined to espouse Naturalism and capture the *jibaro’s* customs, speech, and independent spirit both in their essays and creative writing. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the mountain folk appear as a recurrent literary theme in dramas, novels, and short stories that laid claim to “social realism.” This type of literature displayed the contradictions and anxieties of the Creole elite, who admired the *jibaro’s* character and culture, yet represented it as rustic, ignorant, ill, and devoid of moral fibre.

The white Creole elite had established in their writing a correspondence between skin colour and sexual morality; they claimed that the darker the skin, the more promiscuous and sexually degenerate the person would be, since they believed that slavery left Africans to grow stupid and reduced them to a state of brutishness. Men and women who bore the

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2 “La querella naturalista” was carried out in the newspapers *El Boletín Mercantil* and *La Democracia* during 1889 and 1890, in a series of articles which, according to Manrique Cabrera, are awaiting to be compiled and analyzed for a clearer understanding of the impact that Zola’s naturalist aesthetic had on the island (180).

3 It is convenient to recall here that Puerto Rican historians have documented that by the nineteenth century the majority of the population were blacks and mulattoes, and that there was a large population of free blacks (before the abolition of 1873) who worked in urban centres as well as in the rural areas.
"African stain" represented a sexual threat and a social disgrace to the white Creoles. This anxiety about the moral dangers carried by blacks and fear of miscegenation resulted in the fictional representation of an ideally white society, both urban and rural. The novels ¿Pecadora? and La charca are emblematic of the moral anxiety that the Creole elite felt about race, and the role that women played as reproducers and the keepers of the imagined Puerto Rican nation as of white Hispanic descent.

The omniscient narrator in both ¿Pecadora? and La charca frequently interrupts the narrative flow with judgemental and moralistic statements. It was a commonplace literary technique in nineteenth century Latin American novels that the narrator’s voice showed sympathy for good characters and provided happy endings for morally approved people. This literary artifice has been criticized, rather than problematized in order to understand the way in which moral anxiety functions in these type of narratives. In “Soledad: Bartolome Mitre’s ‘Social Contract’,” Norman S. Holland refers to John Brushwood’s criticism of Mitre’s “moral anxiety” in fiction, with reference to Mitre’s use of the judgmental voice of the omniscient narrator(73). Following Hayden White, Holland argues that “the moral” is always represented under the aspect of the aesthetic in nineteenth century novels, especially because the underlying purpose of foundational narratives was the transmission of history (73). In his preface of Soledad Mitre claims this very fact, which corresponds to Andrés Bello’s notion of the “narrative method.” The narrative method was intended to fill in the gaps of historical knowledge, which in turn would provide an emerging nation with the beginnings of an independent and local expression. Most of the early Puerto Rican narratives I consulted for this study show this underlying intention to provide a historical background that informs readers about unknown events of the past, such as Tapia’s autobiography, Brau’s historical
plays, and many of Roqué’s works. The “moral anxiety” felt by the Creole elite was channelled through fiction representing the evils of colonialism through immoral characters. Contrary to the happy endings and moral allegories of the early Latin American romances, Puerto Rican novels in the late nineteenth century such as the novels of Francisco del Valle Atiles, Salvador Brau, Federico Degetau, Manuel Zeno Gandía, Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo, and Ana Roqué were engaged in representing the crude aspects of reality and did not provide happy endings. It is also understandable why writers deliberately focused on the representation of the jibaro, giving rise to a distinct literary tradition based on what was considered authentically indigenous and not on imported slavery or European ideas or genres. In this context, the literary representation of the rural classes—both landlords and peasants—acquired special relevance in the formation of a Puerto Rican literary identity.

In this chapter, I examine how fictional representations of gender are built upon morally charged definitions of race and class intended to educate readers and criticize colonial mores. The texts analyzed here exemplify the hybrid quality of late-nineteenth-century Puerto Rican literature, which shows the convergence of Realism, Naturalism, and Costumbrismo which resulted in a mestizaje of styles or a Creolized literary expression. Influenced by late nineteenth-century Positivism and new notions of sociology, Brau’s ¿Pecadora? and Zeno Gandía’s La charca represent the rural peasantry as the embodiment of the island’s sociological problems. The underlying message of these narratives is didactic, as they were intended to convey the need to educate the rural masses, especially women, in order to improve their lives, and therefore that of the island at large.
Salvador Brau’s ¿Pecadora? (1890)

Salvador Brau is undoubtedly one of the key Puerto Rican thinkers and writers of the nineteenth century. An historian, sociologist, politician, poet, playwright, and novelist, his contributions to the development of Puerto Rican literature are quite significant. As González remarked: “de haber sido argentino, chileno o mexicano ocuparía lugar señalado en las historias de la literatura hispanoamericana” (Literatura y sociedad 151), referring ironically to the lack of diffusion and recognition of Brau’s literary work outside the island. Scholars such as Lewis, González, and Quintero Rivera have emphasized that Brau’s most important contribution is not necessarily found in his fiction but in his sociological work, written at a time when sociology was just becoming a recognized discipline world-wide. This is an important fact to keep in mind when analyzing Brau’s literary work, as it bears the influence of the historian and the sociologist:

He is a sociologist, influenced at once by Robert Owen and Herbert Spencer. He thus conceives of society as a body of men whose activity unfolds gradually by virtue of the activities imposed upon them by the total experience of life. Those activities make up the book of history. Brau thus opposes to the traditional epic conception of history, inherited from classical Spanish scholarship, the more modern conception of history as composed of economic life, commerce, agriculture, industry, and the rest. Yet at the same time Brau oscillates between different interpretations of the historical process. (Lewis 269)

The “different interpretations of the historical process” to which Lewis refers take us back to the ever-present contradictions that permeated the discourses of Puerto Rican Creole intellectuals. Brau explained social phenomena by linking them to racial attributes that, in his
view, were the direct product of miscegenation between Amerindian, African, and European elements: “Tres han sido las razas pobladoras de este país . . . He aquí las tres piedras angulares de nuestro edificio social.” This type of remark in his sociological discourse may seem supportive of an ideal racial harmonization and integration; however, Brau still based his arguments on the Liberal paternalist rhetoric of “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña,” and his fiction offered an ideal white Hispanic representation of the island’s people or, at best, a racial mix of Spanish and Taino. Despite the contradictions and fluctuations in his point of view, Brau went beyond the rhetorical formalities of De Hostos’ Moral social in his acknowledgment of Puerto Rican cultural hybridism. As Quintero Rivera asserts in Patricios y plebeyos: “frente al exclusivismo excluyente de los conservadores de entonces, que visualizaban la ciudadanía solo para propietarios descendientes de españoles, el intento integrador de Brau . . . reconoce nuestra realidad de pueblo híbrido, mulato” (204).

¿Pecadora? first appeared as a serial novel and later was published in book form. It consists of five chapters and an epilogue, a text which Puerto Rican literary criticism has classified as a short novel. The plot has a circular structure, bringing the reader back to the historical present of the story in the last chapter. It can be summarized as follows: one stormy night, Dr. Bueno is riding his horse in the highlands when suddenly he hears a painful moan. Guided by the cry, he finds José María Méndez in his bohío [hut], next to the corpse of a

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4 See Salvador Brau’s Las clases jornaleras in Disquisiciones sociológicas 1886 (San Juan 1956)127-28, qtd. in Quintero Rivera 204.

5 As I have explained in the previous Chapters, the Creole Liberals constructed a rhetoric based on the familial trope of “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña” that defined the Puerto Rican nation as one big family. At that time, the dominant class saw this trope as a progressive political standpoint. It expressed the belief that the racially mixed masses were the country’s poor and unredeemed children, in need of the moral guidance and help that only the white Creoles, seen as the superior fathers and mothers, were able to provide.
woman. José Maria tells Dr. Bueno the story of his dead cousin and corteja (concubine), Cocola (short name for Escolástica). Cocola was left an orphan and sheltered by her aunt, José María’s mother. Cocola was a beautiful girl, and soon doña Mariquita, the hacienda owner’s wife, requested her for domestic service. One day, doña Mariquita’s son came back from abroad and seduced Cocola. When doña Mariquita found out, she fired Cocola. The girl, pregnant, returned to José María’s care.

José María wanted to marry his cousin but could not afford the special ecclesiastical dispensation demanded by the Church in the case of marriages between close relatives. Consequently, they lived in concubinage, condemned by Padre Calendas (the local priest) and scorned by their community. José María turned to gambling in order to make more money to pay for the dispensation, but he was unjustly imprisoned. While he was in jail, the town’s Sheriff proposed to Cocola. When José María was freed and learned about the Sheriff’s intentions, the young campesino took revenge and brutalized his rival. Aware of his wrongdoing, José María fled to another farm with Cocola and her baby. The cousins then had a child of their own and lived in extreme poverty until Cocola died from tuberculosis.

Dr. Bueno hears this story and feels compassion for the peasants. He goes to town to arrange a funeral for Cocola, but learns that Padre Calendas has denied her Christian burial. At the same time, the church is organizing a pompous funeral for the concubine of “el mayordomo de fábrica de la parroquia.” Dr. Bueno confronts the priest about this injustice, but without success. Cocola is then buried without religious service in a desolate site destined for heretics and suicides, while her humble entourage watches at a distance the magnificent burial of the mayordomo’s concubine. One night, Padre Calendas desperately calls Dr. Bueno to attend a woman who is giving birth. The woman is the priest’s concubine, and Dr. Bueno
saves her life. When the priest asks for the doctor’s fees, the latter replies that his was an act of charity, and reminds Padre Calendas of Cocola’s case. The priest, ashamed, cannot look the doctor in the eye. Dr. Bueno, quoting Christ “el que de vosotros esté sin pecado arroje la primera piedra,” leaves the priest’s house.

¿Pecadora? conveys both a moral lesson against concubinage and a harsh criticism of a corrupt Catholic clergy. The narrative structure employs the “flashback” technique to present José María’s ill-fated story of his cousin Cocola. Combining realist and naturalist elements, the narrative is rich in detailed descriptions of the characters’ physical features, the Puerto Rican forest, and the peasants’ poverty and misery. The psychological tone and setting of the novel is defined by the weather conditions, the “pathetic fallacy” of Romantic and even Neo-classical literature. Ana Roqué also uses this convention in many of her stories as a means to introduce the plot. ¿Pecadora?’s opening exemplifies this literary technique:

Corría una de esas noches del equinoccio de otoño, preñado de tempestades en la zona regional de las Antillas. La densidad de las nubes, inmóviles en el espacio, ocultando el fulgor de los astros, envolvía la tierra en profunda lobreguez, interrumpida, a intervalos irregulares, por el fugitivo centelleo de esos relámpagos que los campesinos de Puerto Rico designan con el gráfico nombre de fusilazos, y que, observados en aquel momento, parecían incendiar la extensa faja boreal del horizonte. El calor natural de la estación sentía aún más sofocante, por el enrarecimiento del ambiente y la calma absoluta de la atmósfera. No se escuchaba el más tenue crujido en la arboleda ni en los cañaverales cercanos, y hasta esos rumores nocturnos tan perceptibles en los campos, parecían sometidos a la acción de soporífero adormecimiento. (179, italics in the original)
The description of the calm before the storm provides the psychological setting for the
dramatization of the events that will unfold. The reader witnesses a solitary horseman riding
in the midst of the tropical forest at night, under the threat of a hurricane, when suddenly he
hears a cry for help: "¡Caridad por Dios!" que acababa de oírse, al anunciar el
acontecimiento reclamaba en nombre de un sentimiento cristiano, los auxilios de la
humanidad" (180). Brau maintains the suspense and entices the curiosity of the reader by
concealing the mysterious horseman’s identity. The story, written in the style of the serial
novel which addresses the reader as a witness of the narration, accentuates the desired tone of
suspense: “si mis lectores desean conocerle, sigamos tras él” (181). Further on, the narrator
states: “pero, ¿quién era aquel caminante desconocido? Quizá pueda descubrirse en el curso
de esta narración...” (183). The voice of the narrator addressing the reader in the form of a
dialogue was a common technique used in this genre. Tapia and Roqué also resorted to this
practice in their fiction, with the same purpose, that of maintaining interest in the narration
by including the reader as a witness within the story, thus imparting a greater sense of
credibility. The voice of the narrator takes the reader into the humble home of “un hombre
labriego de tan mezquina condición como la choza, a juzgar por su desparramado traje y sus
enflaquecidos músculos” (181). A humble peasant greets the stranger, showing “esa timida
afabilidad del jibaro*” (181, italics and asterisk in the original). Brau’s description of the
peasant confirms his position as a sociological observer of the rural conditions in the realist-
naturalist tradition.

¿Pecadora? exemplifies the values and ideologies that the “progressive” Creole
upper-class, upheld in terms of racial superiority and paternalism in relation to the lower
classes. In this sense, Brau’s liberal paternalism is clearly represented in the character of Dr.
Bueno who, as his surname suggests, is a benevolent and well-intentioned man. Dr. Bueno is depicted as neither artificial nor filled with false affectation; he belongs to the patrician class, described as elegant and distinguished, "pero distinción natural, espontánea, como cualidad ingénita de su organismo" (183). Brau goes even further, comparing Dr. Bueno to Christ, offering an almost divine representation that attests to the character's innate good-hearted intentions, education, and superior moral qualities:

This Christ-like representation of Dr. Bueno suggests that he is devoid of sexual attributes, but rather has spiritual qualities. In this respect, Dr. Bueno is endowed with certain *quid divinum*, the quality of the idealized white Creole professional, an honourable man with a superior sense of Christian morality, and in the best disposition to help the poor and abject peasantry. In addition, he is a doctor of medicine, a profession that embodies unquestionable authority and judgment. Dr. Bueno represents the ideal embodiment of the paternalist Creole elite. The careful description of his impeccable outfit and elegance contrasts with the poverty of the rustic *bohío* and its inhabitants, reminding the readers at all times of the abyss between social classes:
Vestía el desconocido, traje completo de tela de hilo --traje de plantador que diría un novelista europeo-- de corte irreprochable y cuya blancura formaba contraste con el pañuelo negro de seda que, anudado cuidadosamente al cuello, servía de corbata. En una de sus manos, resguardadas por guantes de gamuza cenicientos, y que envidiaría más de una dama de gran tono, cimbraba ligera fusta con empuñadura de marfil, completando el equipo, flexible sombrero de Panamá y ligero sobretodo impermeable, recogido sobre el brazo izquierdo. (183-84, italics in the original)

This detailed description is inscribed in the Spanish realist literary tradition. It provides a contemporary and fashionable depiction to which the reader can relate, and adds a tone of credibility to the narration. In contrast, the poverty of the bohío where the peasants live brings the naturalist intention to the fore:

Al penetrar en la choza, débilmente iluminada por la ahumada luz de algunas astillas resinosas que ardían en un extremo, entre varias piedras destinadas a servir de hogar, tendió rápida ojeada el visitante . . . Allí se alzaba sobre cuatro groseras estacas, uno de esos tabladillos que los campesinos de Puerto Rico llaman barbacoas; lecho tan incómodo como humilde, donde, con entera mescolanza de edades y sexos, suele entregarse al descanso toda una familia . . . Desprovisto el suelo de pavimento, mostraba por todas partes la tierra desnuda, fétida por las suciedades domésticas y reblandecida constantemente por la humedad.(184-85, italics in the original)

In this portrait, the omniscient narrator also introduces judgmental statements that add a sententious moralistic tone, reminiscent of Romanticism. The constant insertion of didactic explanations in the narrative flux distracts the reader’s attention from the main story, and diminishes the force of the narrative. Even though this type of narrative technique has a
didactic end and flaunts the author’s scientific knowledge, its effect is counterproductive from an aesthetic point of view.

The insertion of Taino words in the context of the story, such as *barbacoa, hamaca, bohio*, and *jibaro*, forces Brau to offer explanations, as he is probably thinking about a foreign readership unfamiliar with Puerto Rican indigenous expressions. It also shows Brau’s effort to appeal to a broad range of readers, which places him in a conflicting position as a Creole writer, as he has to accommodate words that were considered vulgar and non-Hispanic in order to approach literary circles beyond the island. The constant explanations speak to his didactic intention. The term *jibaro* italicized and marked with an asterisk in the original text, has an explanatory footnote: "*Jibaro, voz del lenguaje caribe, con que se denominaba una de las familias o pueblos en que se dividia aquella nación trashumante. Se aplica en Puerto Rico al campesino rústico*” (182, footnote). This explanation reveals Brau’s pedagogical position and nationalist intention to inform his readers. It also speaks to his political agenda in terms of class and race, since he categorizes the peasants as a rustic group of people in a separate class. In addition, the explanatory footnote helps Brau justify to his readers the use of the word *jibaro*, a term psychologically loaded with negative connotations.

In the same way, he uses technical wording to designate the native Caribs as a “nación trashumante.” The word *trashumante* was considered a scientific term devoid of derogatory meanings, indicating specifically the seasonal migration of people and livestock from the meadows to the mountains and vice versa. Moreover, the indigenous inhabitants of Borinquén were Taínos, not Caribs and the etymology of the word *jibaro* is of Taíno origin. In addition, the Taínos were not seasonal migrants and did not raise livestock. With the best of intentions, though, Brau was aware that in using local vocabulary he would have to
provide explanations, and he did so using a "scientific" approach for his readership. By the same token, he also explains the term *bohío*: "por ese nombre se designan en Puerto Rico esas cabañas miserables" (185); and that of *hamaca*: “Al hablar de hamaca no se imagine algún lector, poco avisado en las cosas de nuestra tierra, que se trata de una de esas redes de flexibles y delicadas mallas” (185). Perhaps Brau had in mind an international readership because *Pecadora*? was first published in serial form, and he makes reference to “algún lector poco avisado en las cosas de nuestra tierra.”6 Yet despite the narrator’s sententious and didactic tone, the description of the Puerto Rican landscape, coupled with the attempt to render the *jíbaro’s* speech, are distinct regional elements that show Brau’s nationalist sentiment as well as his *criollista* style, in the best of the nineteenth-century Hispanic American tradition.

Inside the *jíbaro’s* “morada miserable” (186), Cocola, the dead woman, is represented as in a naturalist tableau:

La muerte, al enseñorearse de su víctima, habíale impreso sus reflejos característicos, acentuando con matices terrosos la amarillenta palidez del semblante.

Los ojos de aquella mujer, extremadamente abiertos, destacaban el negro intenso de sus pupilas desde el fondo de las hundidas cuencas, elevados al parecer en lo infinito... El cabello negro, lacio, profuso y enmarañado, encuadraba el rostro, bello en mejores días, a juzgar por la corrección de sus principales líneas, desfiguradas ahora por los estragos de la enfermedad; los labios carnosos, lividos entreabriánse aún a impulsos de la contracción final de la catástrofe; una mano crispada, asiendo el

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6 It is documented that despite the prohibitions and censorship of reading materials during the Spanish colonial administration, there was a massive exchange of newspapers and magazines from the American mainland and from Europe.
ligero cobertor, habiéndole replegado convulsivamente, dejando al descubierto el pecho desecado, huesudo, mientras el otro brazo, rigamente extendido, parecía querer atraerse una criatura de cortos meses que, desnuda en absoluto, dormía profundamente, ofreciendo singular contraste junto a aquel cadáver. (186)

The description of Cocola is clearly that of a non-black woman. It underlines the paleness of her face—“la amarillenta palidez del semblante”—, albeit with a yellowish tinge brought on by her illness. Her straight hair, although tangled, also denotes the absence of the African phenotype. Moreover, the emphasis on Cocola’s whiteness is intended to arouse the reader’s sympathy, whereas a black or mulatto woman would have been seen as inherently impure, sexually dangerous, and unworthy of the public’s compassion. In Brau’s fiction, Cocola’s character offers an ideal representation of the white peasant girl, which will be taken to its extreme in the case of Silvina, the heroine of *La charca*.

The interrogative title ¿Pecadora? suggests hesitation to condemn the peasant girl, and her lack of African blood guarantees that the reader will agree with this questioning. Even though Cocola is portrayed as a victim of her circumstances, she is not entirely innocent. Despite the fact that Cocola was seduced by Doña Mariquita’s son, Dr. Bueno affirms categorically that she “provoked” the sensual appetites of her cousin. When José María is released from jail, he can scarcely wait to see Cocola again, and runs to his home where he finds her in bed:

Y tal como estaba en la cama, se levantó a abrirme. Al verla delante de mí, me trastorné; la apreté en mis brazos pues como nunca lo había hecho; ella me echó los suyos… pues… ¿qué iba a hacer! En fin que fue un disparate: pero no me culpe usté, señor dotor… Tentaciones del enemigo malo… ¡ya no tiene remedio! (198)
Even though the narration does not specify whether Cocola was naked or half-naked, her sexual provocation is suggested in the phrase “tal como estaba en la cama se levantó a abrirmne.” Dr. Bueno does not condemn José María at all, on the contrary: “-No te culpo- le dijo- ni te culpará nadie que conozca la inflexibilidad de las leyes de la naturaleza, a que hemos de someternos todos” (198). The reference to the inflexibility of the laws of nature pinpoints the Liberals’ ideas about biological determinism from which men cannot escape, being themselves the victims of their own “natural” instincts.

The Liberals’ “scientific” rhetoric separates them from the religious beliefs of the peasants, considered ignorant and superstitious since they blame the devil for their sexual desires: “nada tuvo que ver en eso el demonio” (198) states Dr. Bueno. In any case, the male’s sexual desires fall into the realm of what is “natural” and biologically determined, and Cocola’s body functions as the sexual enticer of those natural appetites. In agreement with the Liberals’ moral prescription, epitomized in Ferrer’s La mujer en Puerto Rico, José María is forgiven of any responsibility since he is just a man naturally provoked by the sensuality of Cocola’s body. Dr. Bueno also blames the circumstances that, by placing the cousins living together under the same roof, prompted José Maria to fall in love with Cocola without being fully aware of it (198). In spite of José María’s attempt to rescue Cocola “del borde del precipicio a que la había lanzado una ligereza juvenil” (199), what happened was primarily Cocola’s fault: “esa mujer vivía bajo tu mismo techo, provocando apetitos sensuales” (199). This latter statement, in my view, reinforces the notion of the woman’s role as an enticer.

Thus, José María fits into the ideal representation of the masculine honour code. He is exempted from any responsibility, and he is willing to save his cousin’s honour in the only possible way, that is, by marrying her. He is incapable of
throwing her into the street with a child, an act that would only cast her “al fango asqueroso de la prostitución” (199). The masculine moral prescription demanded that women protect their virginity at all costs, exclusively through strong will power and a sound moral education. Cocola lacked both attributes, and her “ligereza juvenil” caused her disgrace; she failed to guard her feminine virtue, an act without apparent redemption. As Ferrer severely admonished, the honour of a girl is a serious matter with no middle ground: she must be either a good wife or a good single woman, “aunque para ello sea preciso el sacrificio de la vida” (La mujer en Puerto Rico 19). Yet the interrogative title “¿Pecadora?” leaves room for a margin of doubt and ambiguity which underlines the ambivalent position of woman, and in the end might work in her favour. It is convenient to remember that, for Brau the Puerto Rican rural class women must receive elementary education in order to successfully accomplish their triple moral duty:

Ocioso parece detenernos a exponer la conveniencia de propagar la enseñanza elemental entre las mujeres de la clase proletaria de nuestros campos, llamadas por el triple deber de hijas, esposas y madres, a embellecer las arideces y amarguras de su misero hogar, y a dulcificar las costumbres selváticas de aquellos seres con quienes han de compartir sus trabajos y existencia. . . . tenemos la convicción de que ese vicio [concubinato] existe por la falta de conciencia de los deberes morales, que aqueja, por lo general, a la mujer pobre de nuestros campos. Eduquemos a esa mujer, si es preciso antes que al hombre. (Brau, La campesina 7)

Cocola’s lack of elementary education is, then, the main reason for her failure to fulfil her “triple deber moral.” The loss of her honour, leading to an illegitimate pregnancy, places her
in an ambiguous position as both a victim of the social conditions and the perpetrator of her own disgrace.

By denying the cousins the sacrament of marriage because they do not have the money to pay for the dispensation bestowed by the Church in cases of close consanguinity, the Church itself leads them to live in concubinage. This turn in the plot grants Brau a golden opportunity for launching his anticlerical discourse:

En país constituido como el nuestro, los vinculos de parentesco tienen que ser extensos entre las familias, trayendo, por consecuencia, los matrimonios consanguineos. Estos matrimonios que la ciencia condena como favorables a la degeneración física, los obstaculiza la Iglesia, si bien autorizándolos mediante dispensa canónica. Como no todos pueden sufragar los derechos pecuniarios que esa dispensa reclama, las uniones ilícitas entre parientes alcanzan un tanto por ciento alzado en la estadística de la desmoralización. El concubinato, así estudiado, acusa junto al vicio social el vicio patogénico. (La campesina 33)

Not surprisingly, Brau fictionalized this very social problem in ¿Pecadora?, voicing his concerns regarding the high percentage of illicit unions in the “estadística de la desmoralización.” Linking ideas on biological determinism and Spencer’s social Darwinism, Brau develops a distinctive realismo costumbrista (Lewis 270). Inspired by his sociological observations of the peasants’ poverty and isolation, he claims that these factors are the major causes of their ignorance, sickness, and immorality. Both Brau and Zeno Gandía represent the rural population as an isolated social body impervious to the outside world, but at least Brau attempts to see the causes, while Zeno Gandía merely points out the peasants’ laziness and promiscuity.
In Brau’s assessment, the peasants’ isolated rustic way of life and abject misery deprive them of basic health services and Christian education, and therefore prevent them from improving their quality of life. Every attempt by José María to save money for the “dispensa canónica” fails, and a chain reaction of fatality unfolds as one negative act leads to another. His financial need drives him to gamble on cockfights. Games of chance constitute another extended practice among Puerto Rican men from all classes that Brau insists on attacking: “Quoting the Spanish writer Arenal, Brau argues that games of chance and the irresponsible philosophy of life that they encourage are as much the vice of the rich as they are of the poor” (Lewis 270). Thus, José María attends the local palenque where upper- and lower-class men amuse themselves gambling with their best birds. José María’s rooster, “Culebra,” is a champion and a favourite, but it is suddenly taken away unbeknownst to José Maria. When “Culebra” is back in the arena, the rooster looks weakened and dizzy, and refuses to fight. José María realizes that someone is cheating him, and discovers that it is doña Mariquita’s son (Cocola’s seducer, who has no name in the story). Blind with rage, José María severely beats Mariquita’s son, sending him to the hospital. Doña Mariquita accuses the peasant of public violence and vagrancy. An unfair debt registered in his “Libreta de jornalero” complicates his case, causing him to be sentenced to forced labour for two months:

Aquella noche dormí en la bartolina. Me siguieron un sumario, resultó por mi libreta que estaba estampado, como si fuera a hacer trampas tomar dinero a cuenta de trabajo, y como si la mitad de aquella deuda no hubiera venido de premios por la

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7 Lewis refers to Brau’s Las clases jornaleras de Puerto Rico (1882), an essay included in Disquisiciones sociológicas (1886). Las clases jornaleras offers a historical and sociological description of what Brau identifies as the causes of the precarious situation of day-labourers, and proposes solutions for their moral and material advancement.
espera. Después el embustero del comisario informó que yo vivía acortejado, y, una cosa y otra junta, y los empeños de doña Mariquita, que estaba hecha un alacran porque le había maltratado a su querendón, hicieron que el corregidor me condenase a dos meses de obras públicas con los de vago y mal entretenio. (197, italics in the original)

This passage clearly illustrates gender and class power relations and tensions that, in the context of the story, contributes to the cousins’ financial ruin and to the impossibility of buying the ecclesiastical dispensation. At the interpretative level, the namelessness of Cocola’s seducer is significant. He is a young man protected and represented by his mother before the law, an act that bestows power on the feminine figure of doña Mariquita. At the same time, it shows how class oppression renders lower-class women prey to the whims of upper-class men. Moreover, women from the upper-class receive the law’s unconditional support and side with their class interests, as represented by the mother acting on behalf of her son. These highly gendered class tensions function in the story to the detriment of the peasant class. José Maria and Cocola will succumb to the island’s institutions represented by Mariquita and her son (the dominant class), the Sheriff (the Law), and Padre Calendas (the Church). Only Dr. Bueno, representing the small and powerless professional class and the Liberals’ political agenda, advocates on behalf of social justice for the peasants.

Brau’s attack on the corruption of the Catholic clergy is thus tied to the social problem of the peasantry. ¿Pecadora? blames Padre Calendas’s lack of mercy and charity, emblematic of the Church’s concern with profitable business practices rather than spiritual aid and guidance. In addition, not even Padre Calendas escapes from the extended practice of
concubinage. He has a pregnant woman, doña Remedios, living with him, along with four children, who suspiciously call him “padrino”:

Derretíanse de gusto las beatas, ponderando la conducta intachable del reverendo funcionario; mas no faltaban en el pueblo lenguas viperinas que se entretuviesen en censurarle, porque daba alojamiento en la propia rectoría a una ‘familia’ compuesta de doña Remedios y cuatro niños, tres de los cuales trajo el cura al hacerse cargo de la parroquia; habiendo nacido el último en época posterior, sin que nadie pudiese darse cuenta del modelador de aquellos angelitos, lo que comentaban los murmuradores sacrilegos, afirmando que habían sido ‘engendrados por obra de algún espíritu santo.’

(223, quotations marks in the original)

The ironic tone against the “beatas” constitutes another gendered stance present in both Brau’s and Ferrer’s writings. The Liberals condemned women’s proclivity for religion, accusing them of exaggerating and twisting the Christian message, impregnating it with superstition due to their ignorance: “Religiosa por costumbre, traspasa muchas veces los límites de sus creencias, llegando frecuentemente su fanatismo hasta la superstición... No es extraño que con tales creencias caigan muchas veces en el ridículo” (Ferrer 15-16). The Liberals, in general, envisaged the secularization of the island’s institutions—from education to government—and were quick to point out the Church’s vices and corruption.

The physical description of Padre Calendas as “un hombre repulsivo y zahareño” mirrors his inner-self, bringing an unpleasant image to the reader’s mind; “Figúrese el lector un hombre zanquilargo, enjuto de carnes, abundante en huesos, cargado de espaldas, con los ojos grandes y saltones, velludas las orejas, cetrina la color, salientes los pómulos, deprimida la frente, y anchas y rúcas las mandíbulas” (223). The priest’s ugliness resembles his corrupt
and cynical persona, in contrast with Dr. Bueno’s Christ-like physical features and good-natured character.

The novel reaches its climax when Dr. Bueno tries to arrange the burial of Cocola, and faces the drastic refusal of Padre Calendas, despite the latter’s own notorious concubinage. Padre Calendas remarks: “¿y qué pruebas puedo tener yo del arrepentimiento de esa pecadora? Pues si a usted le consta que murió llena de gracia, absúélvala y recibála en su iglesia y disponga su enterramiento como mejor se le antoje” (228). The priest’s recrimination “hirió el temperamento delicado del bondadoso médico,” yet despite Dr. Bueno’s allegations, he does not have the power to make the priest change his mind. In this sense, the authority of the medical institution is seen to be subordinate to that of the Catholic Church, a telling point underlined as part of Brau’s agenda in favour of the secularization of the political order of the colony. Even José María dares to complain about the mistreatment of his dead cousin. Faced with the priest’s allegation that the Church does not deny anything to anybody, and that he is just complying with its regulations by only admitting into religious burial ground those who were good Christians and observed the Church’s commandments, José María responds:

Sí; como los cumplía La Paloma, que después de haber vivido en el escándalo perpetuo, harta de carne, se metió a fraile, es decir, se echó de padrino a un mayordomo de cofradía, muy beato y con muchos cuartos, que le paga un funeral religioso. Si la entrada en el paraíso se ha de conseguir por ese medio, sobran los sermones de misión y estorban las buenas costumbres. (215)

Its open critique of the Catholic Church was perhaps one of the reasons why ¿Pecadora? did not enjoy a favourable reception among its contemporaries. In Brau’s representation, nothing
moves the priest’s heart, and he maintains his position, notwithstanding the town’s criticism:

“La querida de un jornalero no puede entrar, después de muerta, en recinto sagrado. La manceba de un hacendado ya es otra cosa” (217). Despite the priest’s action, the end of the story is a lesson of charity and compassion evinced in Dr. Bueno’s acts. He becomes Brau’s spokesman for the social moral of the story: “la moral social ha de ser una sola. Si yo hubiese desatendido el ruego de usted que ha ido a levantarme de mi lecho de descanso, para asistir en su alumbramiento a una mujer que no ha podido recibir la sanción matrimonial de la Iglesia qué hubiera sido de ella”(237).

¿Pecadora? is a vital text for the exploration of late nineteenth-century dynamics of gender power relations, as well as the professional elite’s political perspective. Although it could be read mainly as a critique of the Catholic Church, ¿Pecadora? reveals gender, race, and class ideologies present at the time of its publication that responded to a changing political agenda that sought to better the lives of the lower-classes. Scholars such as González, Manrique Cabrera, Beauchamp, Quintero Rivera, and Lewis have stated that the work of Brau was the cornerstone of Puerto Rican sociology. His texts deeply influenced his contemporaries, and in particular Manuel Zeno Gandía’s seminal work La charca, which I discuss in the next section.

Manuel Zeno Gandía’s La charca (1894)

It is commonplace in Puerto Rico to assert that Zeno Gandía’s La charca characterizes the mature expression of late nineteenth-century national literature: “se constituye en nuestro principal acontecimiento novelístico de todo el siglo” highlights Rivera de Alvarez (Visión histórico...31). In Literatura y paternalismo en Puerto Rico, Juan Gelpí
points out that in the 1930s a group of intellectuals called “La Generación del 30” defined the Puerto Rican literary canon. The consensus was that Zeno Gandía’s *La charca* had the aesthetic merits and the political ideology to be recognized as the first national novel (6-7). In *La charca*, a rural community is represented as a sick and anaemic body which symbolizes the island’s colonial stagnation. Gelpí argues that, historically, the Puerto Rican literary canon has insistently privileged “la enfermedad” as the recurrent metaphor for colonialism (8-9). The fact that Zeno Gandía was a doctor of medicine, just like many other writers in Latin America, seems to have endowed him with the authority to diagnose the entire country: “la profesión médica de Manuel Zeno Gandía le permitió palpar de cerca la miseria y dolor físico de nuestro pueblo, fuentes a su entender de los males espirituales y morales que igualmente lo aquejaban” (Rivera de Alvarez, *Visión histórico*… 31). Gelpí argues that it is part of the naturalist literary ideology to empower the narrator as the “specialist,” the one who is scientifically informed and has the pedagogical skills to teach the readers. The naturalist narrator is likely to be a physician, as “el médico exhibe … conoce los antecedentes familiares y puede hacer brillar la verdad en la herencia … otorga nombre a las enfermedades y explica síntomas” (Josefina Ludmer, qtd. in Gelpí 14). It is not a coincidence that in Del Valle Atiles’s *Inocencia* it is the physician who solves the intrigue by his diagnosis of Inocencia’s disease, and in *¿Pecadora?* the doctor is the one who advocates in favour of the peasants confronting the Catholic Church.

Zeno Gandía compiled his four major novels—*La charca* (1894), *Garduña* (1896), *El negocio* (1922), and *Redentores* (1925)—under the title *Crónicas de un mundo enfermo*. *La charca* and *Garduña* are both tragic and depressing analyses of the peasantry’s misfortunes at the end of the nineteenth century. The other two, *El negocio* and *Redentores*, show Zeno
Gandía’s shift of interest from the problems of the rural areas to the urban merchant class under the new colonial order. These later novels place their action in urban settings which portray the ideological and political disappointment of the Creoles caused by the United States occupation after 1898. Puerto Rican literary criticism agrees that in *Crónicas de un mundo enfermo, La charca* is Zeno Gandía’s finest achievement.

According to Beauchamp, “en Zeno Gandía, la interpretación del jibaro y de la vida campesina se apartará de la de Alonso y Fernández Juncos… no es producto del jibarismo literario, sino del realismo y el naturalismo” (30). Interestingly, Beauchamp recognizes that the early contribution of Tapia’s novel *Cofresí* (1876) was an exceptional antecedent of what he calls “el movimiento naturalista puertorriqueño” (29). Zola’s Naturalist precepts, laid out in *Le roman experimental* (1880) has an influence on Puerto Rican literature, as world wide. However, Puerto Rican literary critics such as Cesareo Rosa-Nieves, Josefina Alvarez de Rivera, Francisco Manrique Cabrera, and José Juan Beauchamp point out that Zola’s Naturalism was too extreme for the conservative Catholicism on the island, and writers opted for the “moderate Naturalism” laid out by la Condesa Pardo Bazán in *La cuestión palpitante* (1883). Its influence found expression in the work of a group of writers including Zeno Gandía, Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo, Francisco del Valle Atiles, Matías González García, Francisco Degetau, Ramón Juliá Marin, and José Elías Levis.

Puerto Rican writing was evolving into a creolization of styles or *mestizaje de estilos*, that is, an autochthonous literary expression that was not strictly Realism or Naturalism, but a Hispanic Caribbean Creole literature. In the body of Puerto Rican critical work regarding this specific literary period, it seems that is unavoidable to make reference to European writers and literary trends in order to situate Zeno Gandía’s narratives. For example, in *Apuntes*
sobre la novelística puertorriqueña, Julia M. Guzmán states that Zeno Gandía “permanece entre el naturalismo de Emilio Zola y el de Emilia Pardo Bazán y los realistas-naturalistas españoles, en una posición intermedia mirando en ambas direcciones” (68). In the wider context of Latin America, the aesthetic attitude adopted by Zeno Gandía is neither casual nor isolated. Rather, it is part of the general spirit that dominated literary circles as a consequence of the broad diffusion of the Realist and Naturalist trends. Still, this influence does not necessarily place Zeno Gandía in an “intermediate position, looking in both directions” as Guzmán implies above, in a sort of lost, confused gaze that seems to lack a solid foundation.

The problem with the observations of Guzmán and of other critics lies in the absence of a theoretical approach that would explain the creolization of the European literary movements in the local literature. The intertextuality of Zeno Gandía’s novels is found in French writers such as Balzac and Flaubert, and Spanish ones like Pardo Bazán, Valera, and Pérez Galdós. The same can be said about other Latin American writers such as José Eustasio Rivera (1882-1928), Rómulo Gallegos (1884-1969), Ricardo Guiraldes (1886-1927), and Ciro Alegría (1909-1967). As Rosa-Nieves notes:

Fue Zeno Gandía, como hemos visto, un eclectico que tomó de lo galo, de lo hispano y de lo nativista, creando dentro de su propia personalidad, un estilo estético original, una novela criolla de honda preocupación terrígena, por donde cruzan paisajes, tipos, flora, fauna y sicología, todo en plan isleño, todo huele en ellas a isla, a tierra adentro y a montaña boriquense. (261)
La charca belongs to a group of Puerto Rican novels by both men and women writers written between 1894 and 1895. The novel’s sociological content and poetic language captures the tragic beauty of the tropical landscape where the colony’s social drama unfolds. It has been properly called “la primera novela de cafetal” (Manrique Cabrera 184-85; Beauchamp 34), for its setting is in two major coffee plantations, one owned by the greedy and unscrupulous Galante, and the other by Juan del Salto, a benevolent landowner. The narrative consists of a series of subplots, but the main story is that of Silvina, a fourteen-year-old girl who lives with her mother, Leandra, in a poor hut on the edge of a cliff overlooking a river. Leandra is one of Galante’s several concubines. In order not to loose his protection, Leandra offers up her virgin daughter to him. Galante, in turn, arranges Silvina’s marriage to his friend Gaspar, a fifty-year-old compulsive gambler and alcoholic.

Gaspar and his cousin, Deblás, who is an outlaw, plan to kill and rob the merchant Andújar and they implicate Silvina as an accomplice. Silvina is in love with Ciro, a young peasant who lives with his brother, Marcelo. One night, by mere coincidence, Marcelo overhears Gaspar and Deblás’s monstrous plan. Marcelo warns, Andújar who quickly takes his money and leaves just before the robbery. The criminals’ plan is thus foiled and confused. In the dark, Gaspar kills Deblás by mistake, thinking he is Andújar. Later, Silvina finds the body of Deblás and some of his blood gets on her clothes. Desperate, she runs to find Ciro and they spend the night in hiding in the wilderness. Gaspar flees the plantation and nobody hears from him again.

8 Among them are: Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo’s La muñeca; Ana Roqué’s Pasatiempos and Sara, la obrera; Matias González García’s El escándalo; Federico Degetau’s Juventud; Jesús M. Amadeo’s Una plaga social y la plegaria de una virgen; and Un pétalo de una rosa blanca; and Abelardo Morales Ferrer’s Idilio funebre. Of these titles, with the exception of La charca and more recently, La muñeca, none of these narratives have been critically studied or republished.
The town police cannot make sense of Deblás’s murder, since he was found stabbed in Andújar’s store but nothing was missing and there is no apparent motive. They believe Ciro is guilty, because they have proved that his clothes were stained with Deblás’s blood. Ciro realizes that he got those stains from Silvina. Yet nothing can be proved against Ciro, and he is released shortly after. Silvina and Ciro live together for a short, happy time, until one day Marcelo gets drunk and stabs Ciro in the heart. Silvina, driven by hunger, becomes the concubine of Inés Mercante, but he only abuses and humiliates her. Tired of her misfortune, the girl decides to go back to her mother’s hut. While Silvina walks by the narrow pass, hearing her mother washing clothes in the river, she suffers an epileptic attack and falls down the cliff onto the river’s bedrock, “muerta en el despeñadero antes que en el paroxismo.”

The title *La charca* has a special meaning in the context of Puerto Rico. The noun charca appears only once: “aumentando con veneros sedimentos la inmensa charca de la podredumbre social.” According to Manrique Cabrera, the noun charca in the Puerto Rican *vox populi* conveys the idea of putrid stagnant water. Manrique Cabrera makes the distinction between the gender of the word: the masculine charco connotes a small pond of rain water, pure and clean, in which children enjoy playing, whereas the feminine charca has negative meanings (185). Perhaps this idea of decomposition inspired later titles, such as José Elias Levis’ *Estercolero* (1900) and its sequel *Mancha de lodo* (1903) which, following this idea of stagnation and malodorous fetidity, represent the barrenness of the colonial condition.

The formal organization of *La charca* is a series of scenes divided into eleven short chapters. The narrative flow follows a linear order of events, although there are chapters that stand by themselves, independent of the main story. Juan del Salto, the compassionate
landowner, is not the main character, rather he represents the consciousness of the benevolent
and paternalist Creole elite. The main character is Silvina, and the intrigue revolves around
her ill-fated life. Her sordid story is woven into a broader textual frame of anecdotes and
characters that might not add much to the central plot, but shows Zeno Gandía’s intention to
depict the social reality of the Puerto Rican campesinos.

The first chapter offers a kaleidoscopic view of the rural setting of Vegaplana. Silvina
is strategically positioned in a high place, at the edge of a cliff by a river, where she is
holding onto two trees so as not to fall. She has a panoramic view of del Salto’s and
Galante’s farms, the scenario where La charca’s plot unfolds. Through Silvina’s panoramic
gaze the reader witnesses the surrounding landscape and the people who live in it:

Desde aquel sitio se divisaba un mundo de verdura . . . Cuando miraba al frente,
descubría, en lo alto de la montaña, la mancha obscura formada por el opulento
cafetal de Galante, y un sentimiento de repulsión, de reprimido rencor, se le revolcaba
en el pecho . . . Debajo y también a la distancia, contemplaba el valle en donde se
escondía el caserio de Andújar . . . Silvina siempre sujeta a los árboles, recorrió con la
mirada el panorama . . . meciase el bosquecillo de la vieja Marta . . . Después a la
derecha, vio otro campo de plantaciones, otra finca grande: la propiedad de Juan del
Salto. Y al fijarse en aquellos lugares, pensó en Ciro, en el hombre que amaba . . .

Galante, Gaspar, Andújar, Juan del Salto, Leandra, la vieja Marta. (2-3)

The omniscient narrator describes Silvina’s gaze in the first four pages of La charca. It sets
the plot by introducing the setting and the characters, as well as psyche Silvina’s. The last
chapter comes back to this same space where Silvina dramatically falls, dying dismembered
on the river bedrock.
As González has noted, it is peculiar that in *La charca* the term *jibaro* is never mentioned (*Literatura y sociedad* 198). The body of mountain people is frequently alluded to simply as “campesinos” or “pálidos,” and they comprise an ever-present collective character. According to Enrique Laguerre, the term *pálidos* was to designate the rural people who contracted uncinariasis, a wide-spread disease that turned people pale and anaemic (Prologue, *La charca* xx). The narrator’s voice emphasizes: “El globo rojo, combatido por la sangre blanca, había huido para siempre de aquella gran masa de pálidos” (18). The peasant mass is thus described as “turba de pálidos” (26), “la gran plebe pálida” (59), and “tropa de pálidos” (133) which is also revealing of the attitude of superiority that the intellectual elite had toward the rural class. Juan del Salto gives advice to the *campesino* Marcelo in the following terms: “Estás flaco, pálido; procura alimentarte bien: come carne. El domingo ve al pueblo y consulta al doctor Pintado” (24).

Some of the characters embody decadent extremes of society, for example “la vieja Marta.” Marta is an old woman, greedy and miserly, who lives in severe poverty in spite of the immense riches she has buried in her backyard: “su avaricia era sórdida, anhelosa, capaz de llegar al crimen” (30). In a way that recalls Brau’s portrayal of Padre Calendas’ double ugliness of body and spirit, Marta is represented as “una campesina arrugada, añosa, con fama y hechos de miserable avara, residiendo en la umbría de un cerezal, en una choza pordiosera, sin más compañía que un nieto flaco, emaciado, casi esquelético, imagen viva de la miseria y del hambre” (3). Marta’s avarice and obliviousness are taken to a most pathetic extreme when her grandson dies of starvation. The heartless old woman does not even care: “La piedad de los vecinos recogió los despojos. Envuelto en los jirones de una sábana blanca colocáronle en un ataúd … Enterraronle… Nadie lo supo, nadie lloró” (143). The presence of
Marta in the story is actually not necessary for the plot; rather it reflects an underlying naturalist intention to represent supposedly essential vices and social evils connected to an intrinsic biological determinism (Beauchamp 36).

Galante is the negative representation of the landowner. He is a dishonest, greedy, and sexually abusive man who, in order to fulfil either his material desires or sexual whims, does not hesitate to resort to crime. The reader learns about some of Galante’s crimes through the voice of Marcelo, Ciro’s older bother, in a conversation with Juan del Salto. Marcelo tells del Salto how Galante killed Ginés, a young landowner whose property bordered on Galante’s. The evil man committed his crime in such a way that it seemed an accident, as the autopsy later reveals. In addition to wanting to own Ginés’s lands, Galante always desired his young and beautiful wife, Aurelia. Thus, by killing Ginés, Galante is able to seduce her, live with her, and finally, take over her lands. Later, Galante and Aurelia become estranged, and he chases her away with her son, his own son whom he refused to recognize. Aurelia ends up abandoned and in the most abject misery.

This example of Galante’s crimes testifies to how men were empowered to deprive women of their real estate in the nineteenth century. Similarly, the story of Andújar, the local merchant and owner of the only store with provisions for the peasants, shows how this legal advantage that favoured men worked when it came to matters of business and property. Andújar arrived in town a few years earlier “sin otro capital que la ropa que le cubría y su sed de riquezas a todo trance” (41). He was lodged in the house of a seventy-year old man who lived with a woman of twenty. Andújar was welcomed in their home and soon became the right hand of the household, until the old man died: “la manceba viuda del muerto, a nada tenía derecho, y Andújar vio un camino abierto a su ambición . . . Al fin, Andújar cansóse de
ella y dio el golpe. Un día con admirable descaro, la despidió, colocándole el baúl en el camino” (42). By means of paying witnesses who swore that the former owner verbally gave Andújar his property, he initiated “un expediente posesorio” (42) and he was successfully accredited as the lawful heir. Aurelia and the young widow that Andújar seduced represent women’s vulnerability in a world ruled by men’s laws. Zeno Gandía treats the same problem in *Garduña*, where the young girl Casilda who is a rich heir is dispossessed of all her properties by a deceitful lawyer.

*La charca*’s characters are considered in Puerto Rican literary criticism as representations of essential human passions and vices, illustrated by Andújar’s unscrupulous ambition, Montesa’s iron hand, the lascivious Galante, the avaricious Marta, the wicked pair Gaspar and Deblás, and the irresponsible Marcelo. The characters are predictable and oscillate between extremes of good or evil. Nothing good can be expected of Galante or Gaspar, they are epitomized villains, and their acts will always be involved with crime and immorality. Both characters, Galante and Andújar, embody the corrupted merchant class and represent the extremes of colonial exploitation. They have both acquired their lands and riches through embezzlement, unlike Juan del Salto who is the legal heir to his property, and therefore a legitimate, good character representing “los hijos del país.”

Zeno Gandía attempts to determine the primary causes that affect the island’s backward condition through analysis of the political, social, and economic situation of the colony, as voiced in the reflections of Juan del Salto. However, as Beauchamp asserts: “este examen está plagado de la ideología naturalista que lleva a Zeno Gandía a descubrir falsas causas fundamentales en el cuerpo biológico humano y no en el cuerpo social como tal” (36, italics in the original). As a matter of fact, the narrator’s voice is constantly diagnosing a
disease, caught in a biological determinism that fails to point out the causes of this collective disease. For example, the narrator’s voice often refers to the peasant mass as a big stomach: “raza inerme que sucumbe bajo la acción selectiva de la especie; gigantesco estómago que parece exhausto, atónito, sin nutrición” (18). The omniscient narrator is the authoritative medical voice, who, from his privileged position, observes the peasants’ behaviour in their wild environment, and formulates his diagnosis—rural Puerto Rico is a sick body: “En las gentes de la montaña estudiaba Juan las convulsiones evolutivas de una raza. Su prehistoria, su obscuro origen, sus migraciones, y luego, al contacto de los europeos, sus mezclas y sus transformaciones” (16). And, he adds: “Jamás sobre la piedra nació el rosal y jamás sobre el organismo degenerado y enfermo de un pueblo se produjo con todo su esplendor la civilización. Sobre cuerpo agobiado no reacciona vida lozana” (17). Through the voice of the narrator, the benevolent hacendado, Juan del Salto, echoes in his reflections the anxiety of the double-life that tormented professional Creoles: “Aquellas abstracciones formaban para él una segunda vida, y, en ella, con frecuencia, una lucha formidable se entablaba. Los viajes y el estudio le habían enseñado a pensar, y su cultivada inteligencia le había elevado sobre el montón social que veía en torno” (16). Del Salto represents the contradictions of the hacendado class, to which Zeno Gandía belonged.

According to Quintero Rivera, Brau’s essay, “La caña de azúcar,” documents that most of the young professionals came from the hacendado class or from families that used to be hacendados and lost their lands due to the process of change from a natural agrarian subsistence economy to the development of the organized plantation economy. But within the hacendado and the nascent professional class there were many discrepancies, contradictions, and antagonistic views (195-96). Slavery facilitated the hacendados’
concentration of wealth and enabled them to send their sons to study abroad, mainly medicine or law. While abroad, these young men were exposed to the "modern" ideas prevalent in Europe at the time, such as the abolition of slavery and the championing of women’s rights, and they brought back these ideas that challenged the colonial system.  

_La charca_ illustrates the crisis of the _hacendado_ economy in a binary way, embodied in the conflicting characters of Juan del Salto (the positive side) and in Galante (the negative side). Juan del Salto is the middle-aged professional who administers and preserves the farm he inherited from his family. Del Salto is portrayed as a worldly, educated, and sensitive man forced to cope with a hostile environment stuck in the backwardness of colonialism. In a trajectory similar to that of Zeno Gandía’s own biography, del Salto grew up in opulence and comfort, “_en el rico ingenio de cañas dulces donde nació_” (15). Years later, his father sends him to Europe to study, but he is forced to return to the island without finishing his degree because of his family’s financial hardship: “_pensaba en aquel triste regreso, efeméride de tantos males íntimos_” (15). Del Salto suffers because of his family’s financial ruin, but he saves his social status and becomes a rich landowner thanks to his own hard and honest work. It is significant that Juan del Salto has a young son, Jacob, studying law in Spain, an instance that was the norm among the _hacendado_ class. This biographical antecedent reveals Zeno Gandía’s own political position, leaning toward a conservative _Autonomismo Reformista_ that melancholically gazes at Spain, desiring for the island the same sociopolitical infrastructure as the one enjoyed by the metropolis: “_Era cultura, mucha cultura lo que faltaba…¡Escuelas … escuelas!_” (16). Since Del Salto is an educated man aware of the misery that surrounds him, he lives a double life that torments him constantly: 

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9 This essay, “La caña de azúcar,” (1906) is included in the more extensive work _Disquisiciones sociológicas_ (Quintero Rivera 195).
Se daba cuenta exacta de la situación que aquellas clases ocupaban en la colonia. Las veía descender por línea recta de mezclas étnicas cuyo producto nacía contaminado de morbosa debilidad, de una debilidad invencible, de una debilidad que, apoderándose de la especie, le había dejado exangüe las arterias, sin fluido nervioso el cerebro, sin vigor el brazo, arrojándola como masa orgánica imposible para la plasmación de la vida, en el plano inclinado de la miseria, de la desmoralización y de la muerte (16).

The good landowner is simultaneously the judgmental observer of the mountain people, the benevolent administrator of his hacienda, and an urbane educated man. He spends long hours reflecting on his own life and the peasants’ condition. Over and over, del Salto formulates to himself different hypotheses—be they psychological, philosophical or physical—to explain the problems of the peasant mass that he sees as a sick body: “No, no era el espíritu... El contaminado, el raquitico, el deformado era el cuerpo” (16). This negative view of the Puerto Rican masses as ill, weak, and deflated of energy was commonplace among the Liberals. As Gelpí asserts, “la enfermedad” has functioned as the paternalist metaphor to denounce colonialism since the late nineteenth century, and it is still present today (15). Interestingly enough, Alejandro Tapia qualified not the rural peasantry but the elite itself as sick and degenerate: “Mis compatriotas están enfermos. La inercia moral, la indiferencia, el egoísmo se los comen” (Mis memorias, 82).

The racist ideology of the Puerto Rican elite against the African component that dominated in the sugar plantations is pinpointed by setting the plot in a coffee plantation. The coffee plantation, unlike the sugar plantation, did not rely on slave labour but on contracted labour from free independent jornaleros or day-workers. In fiction, writers showed their
preference for depicting this particular sector of the population rather than addressing the
denigration and horrors connected with slavery. Unlike slaves, Puerto Rican peasants worked
whenever and for as long as they wanted, as del Salto complains to one of his workers:
“¿Crees que los propietarios disponemos del personal a nuestro gusto? Eso dilo a tus
compañeros; a los que no trabajan los lunes . . . a los que pasan la semana mascando tabaco y
tendidos en la hamaca” (11). Despite the depiction of the day-labourer as lazy and prone to
working infrequently, the historical reality was that the “free” mountain people were actually
forced to work by the Libreta Regime, something that Zeno Gandía does not mention
directly, but that Brau, more realistically, pointed out in ¿Pecadora?

Setting the background of La charca in a coffee plantation was a crucial aesthetic
decision that also helps us understand the Liberal elite’s political ideology. Antonio Pereira,
René Marques, and Manrique Cabrera10 agreed that the coffee plantation was a site for free
thinking and conversation that both inspired and promoted liberal ideas. Sugar producers, in
contrast, favoured Spain’s domination over the colonies and supported the institutionalized
slave trade. Unlike the owner of a sugar plantation who lived abroad, the coffee landlord
lived on his land with his workers.

Juan del Salto embodies the exemplary paternalist landowner, portrayed as racially
and morally superior to the peasant mass that lives and works on his hacienda de cafeto. The
paternalist representation of del Salto presupposes the white Creole’s superior capability to
administrate the land effectively through his organized, hard and honest work. It also
emphasizes his role as both a protector and supervisor of the peasants, portrayed paternally as

10 These three intellectuals are considered the leaders of “La Generación del 30” (González,
El país... 60-61; Gelpí 8-9).
his children: "visitaba las plantaciones que constituían su riqueza con el acendrado cariño del padre que acaricia las cabecitas rubias de la prole" (12).

Distanced from the bitter world inhabited by the peasants, the hacendado and professional class seem to be simple spectators of the rural drama that unfolds before them. The landowner, Juan del Salto, the priest Esteban, and doctor Pintado represent three important institutions over which the Creole Liberals and Autonomistas had some power: the educated landed class, the clergy (here portrayed from a favourable perspective, as opposed to Brau's negative criticism), and the medical institution. As a politician and activist of the Partido Autonomista, Zeno-Gandía set forth the political ideology of a moderate a Autonomista. In his fiction he does not offer or find an immediate solution to the historical problems of colonialism: "¡Es terrible tener que aguardar a los siglos futuros para resolver problemas!" trumpets the priest, and del Salto adds: "En la vida de los pueblos, un siglo es un minuto... Si ese problema ha de ser resuelto, vendrán olas de nueva vida... los alientos, la vitalidad que aquí faltan, el medio ambiente de libertad sincera y honrada que no se tiene" (36).

Doctor Pintado, padre Esteban, and Juan del Salto are represented as a happy, paternalist trio, who get together in animated colloquia while they feast: "Bebieron un moscatel que, aunque muy alcoholizado, pasaba por bueno en la comarca. Y así, en cordiales expansiones, esperaron la hora de almuerzo" (33). Their conversations mirror the concerns of the Creoles with the life in the colony, the need of reforms for socio-economic progress:

Pintado argumentaba, discutía. Habló de un régimen económico que diese anchura al movimiento mercantil, que fomentase la agricultura engrandeciendo el comercio, que abriesen caminos a la aspiración industrial, que explotase con beneficio del suelo
productor los veneros de la espléndida comarca. Eso, eso era lo positivo. Lo demás, pataña. Oro, dinero; tal era la palanca. (138)

González observes that the doctor’s progressive arguments anticipate the ideology that will dominate the colony under the administration of the United States (Literatura y sociedad 199). On his behalf, the priest claims that what is needed are more churches than banks, and del Salto thinks that there should be more gyms: “Para aquellas gentes, el primer esfuerzo redentor debía ser físico. Constituían un gran estómago que parecía exhausto por la falta de nutrición” (139). Thus, the three men pass the time examining possible theoretical solutions, but without giving up their privileged positions and without a deep identification with, or affiliation to, the materiality of the socioeconomic causes that afflicted the masses. For this, Beauchamp calls this trio “lenguas sin manos,” since they argue a lot but do very little (35). Their conversations also throw light on the position of the moderate reformist elite and the hacendado class to which Zeno Gandía belonged and in which he actively participated, as Laguerre asserts:

Zeno Gandía era hombre de inclinaciones burguesas, y quizá hasta un poco aristocráticas; es decir, fue sobre todo espectador dolido, sin que en su ánimo hubiese mayor disposición de involucrarse activamente en el asunto. Respetaba la religión tradicionalista y mantuvo fueros de una clase privilegiada a la que él mismo pertenecía. (xxvi)

In their philosophical and intellectual reflections, del Salto, the doctor, and the priest conclude that the life of the peasants is determined by the environment and heritage (diseases, famine, extreme poverty), but nonetheless there is always a margin of hope that if those negative factors are corrected their living conditions would then be improved.
The male characters are the ones who run the socio-economic system to which the campesinos, both men and women, are absolutely subordinated. Approaching La charca from the point of view of the female characters, the plot denounces the difficult lives of the Puerto Rican campesinas who depend on exploiting their own sexuality for survival, as in the case of Leandra, Silvina, Aurelia, and the young widow deceived by Andújar.

Within this world dominated by men and exploitation, Silvina, a fourteen-year-old girl, carries in her delicate feminine body the stigma of subalternity and domination. Perhaps Silvina's body, rather than "la enfermedad," is a more suitable metaphor for colonialism. Her young, tender, and vulnerable body is the perfect target for domination by male sexual rapacity, symbolizing the conquest of a virgin space by unwanted violent forces: "Cuando los primeros encantos de la adolescencia embellecieron a Silvina . . . Galante, con amenazas de abandono, obligó a Leandra a un tráfico inicuo . . . Y Galante, bajo las sombras, al fulgor de los relámpagos, derribó a la virgen" (4-5). Despite Silvina's protests over this unspeakable trade of her body in exchange for economic security, Leandra firmly believes that "las mujeres solas no sirven más que para dar tropezones, para sufrir abusos" (4), when ironically, they are both constantly abused by Galante and Gaspar. It is a double standard, because while the male figures are supposed to provide some kind of protection to the female characters, they simultaneously constitute a threat. Leandra lives under the threat that Galante is going to abandon her, and Silvina lives with the constant fear of Gaspar's violence. Silvina is dominated by her despot-husband more out of fear than anything else: "la voluntad de Gaspar la hizo más esclava, y el despotismo de su temperamento la dominó por completo" (5). Her body—similar to Virginia's in Póstumo el envirginiado, and to a certain extent to Cocola's—represents an available space to be conquered and dominated, leaving death as the only
option for freedom. Although Silvina is dominated by Gaspar, she possesses a rebellious spirit but succumbs to the power of this abhorrent man and suffers the martyrdom of a miserable existence:

Gaspar abusaba de su dominio . . . y ella, junto a su tirano, tenía siempre la compunción de una virgen al conceder al señor de su feudo el derecho de pernada. Ella no comprendía el origen, el misterio de aquel dominio. Cuando en horas de enojo se prometía a sí misma rebelarse, experimentaba un desasosiego, un miedo indecibles: como si con solo pensarlo Gaspar hubiera de enterarse de su rebeldía. (55)

Critics have applauded the well-defined “psychological treatment” of Silvina’s character as one of Zeno Gandía’s best literary achievements: “to present in the figure of the young peasant woman Silvina a complex personality that anticipates the new theme of feminism” (Lewis 270). Perhaps Lewis exaggerates in his assertion, but the fact is that Zeno Gandía endowed Silvina’s character with an awareness that, to a certain extent, questions her own existence and shows a certain rebellion against her fate. It may “anticipates the new theme of feminism,” but this pioneering attitude is more appropriately aplicable to Tapia rather than to Zeno Gandía. The feminist critic María M. Solá argues, nevertheless, that Silvina challenges the bourgeois stereotype of “la mujer ángel:”

Así parece suceder con el personaje Silvina, aparentemente construida en contraste con los signos estereotipados de la cultura en cuanto a la niña o joven mujer. Los catorce años de Silvina nada tienen que ver con los de cualquier hija del privilegio o con algún tipo literario de damisela: es otra víctima rebajada al nivel de objeto de trueque. (Solá 206)
For Solá, Zeno Gandía challenges the literary codes that represent the angelical woman:

"Silvina, por supuesto, dista mucho del ángel y además es una víctima muy renuente, casi rebelde" (207). The literary metaphor of woman as the “angel of the home” is so strong in the cultural imaginary that it provides a counterpoint to the literary representation of Silvina as a fallen angel. For other critics, such as Rosa-Nieves, Silvina represents “el problema de la psicología sexual” (265), and for Laguerre, Silvina is comparable to Melibea, however “una Melibea sumida en la miseria y el abandono” (xxxiii). From a patriarchal perspective it is not surprising to see Silvina reduced to “el problema de la psicología sexual,” thus reinforcing the gendered dichotomy man/culture vs woman/nature, since the priest, the doctor and the landowner are representatives of culture, while Leandra, Silvina and Aurelia are positioned in the sexual realm of what is “natural.”

The literary representation of Silvina does not convey a realist picture of how a campesina would actually look, and even though she has to struggle for survival in a tough environment, she is still depicted with traces of the pure and angelical romantic representation of the feminine: “Su semblante muy fino, muy bello y eternamente languido, recibía el encanto de sus ojos negros” (48). Her physical description is probably closer to a romantic heroine of European literature, rather than to a Puerto Rican mountain girl. The description of Silvina is saturated with a sensuality and voluptuosity that titillate the masculine imagination:

Aquél día, descalza, mostraba sus pies pequeños y delicados, no bien endurecidos todavía por la aspereza del suelo. El trajecillo, muy usado, no tenía ni un doblez superfluo: escasamente lo necesario para ceñirla, y como la camisa sólo le llegaba a las rodillas, podíase descubrir al trasluz el contorno de sus piernas, hechas en el suave
torno de la voluptuosidad y robustas en fuerza de tanto correr por las veredas. Cenido a la cintura, sin oprimirla, aquel traje contenía formas blandas como si el morbido desarrollo, aún no completo, saliera triunfante en lucha con las torpezas de lascivia prematura. (48)

Her physical features correspond to those of a white girl more in tune with a romantic representation of fragile female beauty than to a naturalist description of a farmworker. Her features all speak to an idealized representation of a Puerto Rican campesina that only inhabits Zeno Gandía’s imagination. As Solá reminds us, literature is not at all a faithful representation of reality, and the representations of characters and human types offered by authors are subject to the creative process and the intertextuality that feeds the author’s imagination (202). In another description, it even seems as though Zeno Gandia is actually talking to himself as he imagines his character:

Silvina está sencilla, muy sencilla. De su atavio, cenido con gracia, desprendíase aura atrayente de juventud. Su cuerpo delgado, esbelto, lucía galas encantadoras, mostrando el atractivo de finas líneas curvas en el dorso, en los brazos y en el cuello, en donde la redondez despertaba la tentación de los besos. (60)

Silvina’s youth (she is only fourteen) raises the question as to why male writers had a certain preference for the depiction of adolescent girls who display a disturbingly adult female sexuality: “[Silvina] Moviase con elegancia, con innato donaire, como mujer que sabe que es hermosa y se complace en mostrarlo” (60). By the same token, Charnon-Deutsch, in her analysis of gender representation in Pepita Jiménez (1874) by Juan Valera (1824-1905), also draws attention to this disturbing representation of the young girl that seems to please the masculine imagination: “She [Pepita] is the teenage virgin, the beauty sold to the beast (Don
Gumersindo) in a somewhat dishonourable fashion by her mother” (21). In addition, Don Gumersindo is Pepita’s 80 year old uncle, which makes this trade even more disturbing, from a woman’s point of view, of course. Pepita’s mother, just like Leandra, plays the role of a type of Celestina, as both of them instigate the trade of their daughters for material well-being. According to Charnon-Deutsch, the reader follows Pepita’s own transformation from girl to woman in a process that shows ideal gender-linked behaviour. Silvina, unlike Pepita, will never grow old and will die a victim to her epileptic disease and in part to the circumstances surrounding her. Thus Silvina will remain an eternal adolescent, a girl who never fully develops and whose body will be destroyed: “el cadáver de Silvina, destrozado sobre la piedra, parecía un alto relieve tallado en granito” (163). In this respect, Silvina shares some traits with the main character of Maria (1867) by the Colombian novelist Jorge Isaacs (1837-1895). Both heroines suffer epilepsy, and María will also die a teenager just like Silvina, although the former represents the Colombian hacendado class and Silvina is a mountain girl from Puerto Rico’s Vegaplan.

In conclusion, women roles in literature must be viewed in relation to their fictional men counterparts: “In nineteenth-century fiction women’s roles either are paired with or derive their function from their male counterparts . . . women exist functionally as the proof that men are men” (Charnon-Deutsch 18). In the case of La charca the representation of women is entirely defined in terms of sexual relations and the reproductive function. Their economic survival is totally linked to their sexuality, making of concubinage a sexual practice impossible to avoid. The women in La charca are subjected to the males’ sexuality, represented as bestial, predatory and abusive. With the exception of del Salto, doctor Pintado,
padre Esteban, and Montesa, and to a certain extent Ciro and Marcelo, the rest of the male characters are devoid of moral fibre.

The exploitation that oppresses the peasant woman is the same one that destroys the life of the peasant man. Both women and men of the lower rural class are the victims of an exploitative socio-economic system. The Liberal elite that Zeno Gandía represents failed to recognize that the only way for the rural masses to protest against their overt exploitation was to resist work, to be indifferent, as Beauchamp asserts: “Por eso el jibaro desarrolla una hostilidad que se manifiesta en irresponsabilidad social . . . Es una forma enmascarada de resistencia a la explotación inicua” (51). The partial solution proposed by the Liberal elite toward the well-being of the country is the peasants’ compliance with the social contract, and the fiction of writers such as Brau and Zeno reflects this attitudes.

The gender representations in Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s works illustrate the sexual and class dichotomy prevalent in their time. These writers identified the rural masses as the origin of the social problems of Puerto Rico, and believed that the education of the peasant woman was the key to improving and bettering their lives. The economy of subsistence agriculture and the hacendado class values inspired the intellectuals of the late nineteenth century to analyze the precarious social conditions of the impoverished rural class, where peasant women were subjected to a hostile environment submerged in exploitation. Women of the peasant class (and also the middle class) had no options but to rely on their own sexual wiles for survival. The “leprosy of concubinage,” fiercely attacked in theory by the Liberals, was the only form of subsistence for many women of the lower classes, and for this reason the Liberals’ denouncing of women’s immorality was in open contradiction with the social reality.
De selva de caoba, de canela, de miel...
De la uva exhausta de mis cinco sentidos exprimo
En tu honor, Pardo Adonis, esta gota de vino...
¡Mi orgullo rancio en él te doy!
Tú, que quisieras ser lo que yo soy
¿no adviertes de mi estrella el menoscabo?
Tú, que fuiste mi esclavo:
¿no palpas la carcoma de mi raza?
Tú... a quien yo quemé la piel y di mordaza
¿no gozas en el rictus de mi alma quebrándose,
el espasmo salvaje de tu alma vengándose?
--Clara Lair, *Pardo Adonis* (excerpt)

*Pardo Adonis*, by the Puerto Rican poet Mercedes Negrón Muñoz (1895-1973), better
known by the pen-name of Clara Lair, reverses the traditional representation of the female
body as an object of desire. More daringly, Lair portrays a racialized representation of
feminine sexual pleasure in which the object of desire is a black man. Lair’s lyric voice is
that of a white Creole woman of the upper-class who passionately describes her erotic
encounter with her black lover. *Pardo Adonis* represents the ever-changing dynamics
between erotic desire and race that permeated Puerto Rican society in the early twentieth
century, which was to a large extent inherited from the nineteenth century.

It is commonplace to assert that the nineteenth-century literary arena was a male
dominated space. Only a few privileged female personalities were able to inscribe their
voices in what was considered an eminently masculine intellectual practice. Typically, the
few women intellectuals who overcame the social restraints before and during the nineteenth

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1 This excerpt from *Pardo Adonis* transcribes lines 21 to 31. The date of the poem is
unknown. *Pardo Adonis* is included in the complete works of Clara Lair, *Obra Poética*,
published posthumously in 1979 (qtd. in Mercedes Solá 213-14).
century belonged to the upper-class elite, and they were regarded as exceptional in the social life of their time. Jean Franco points out that in most cases critics have focused more attention on these women’s atypical behaviour than on their literary work.\(^2\) However, in the context of my study it is difficult to separate biographical information from the literary work of lesser-known women writers, as in the case of Ana Roqué. Roqué’s life illuminates the ways in which intellectual women of her time had to negotiate their double standard, that is, to insert their voices into the public sphere while simultaneously being marginalized. The problem, as Franco asserts, was not necessarily that women in the nineteenth century were denied the right to write. The real problem resided in what this activity meant in terms of social practices and gender roles that excluded women or discouraged them from writing:

However, it was not only a question of whether women had access to literary life. Rather, the problem was the separation of the public from the private sphere and the incorporation of national literature into the former, leaving women primarily with a duty to the hearth and to the expression of private feeling. There is no doubt that Latin America’s lowly place in the world system led to a compensatory “virilization” of literature and a high valorisation of those genres that responded to what were perceived as important national questions. (*Plotting Women* 94)

Even though Latin American women writers had access to the intellectual life, they occupied a differentiated space which limited their writing to the domestic sphere and to problems assessed as “women’s matters,” such as family, marriage, and maternity. On the

\(^2\) In her essay “Opportunities for Women’s Studies in the Hispanic Field,” Jean Franco refers to this very problem, citing as exceptions the isolated achievements of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (the seventeenth-century Mexican nun), and Gabriela Mistral (a twentieth-century Chilean Nobel Prize winner) as exceptions (160-61).
other hand, male authors were empowered to address more "virile" matters such as the wars of independence and the construction of nationalism, topics whose treatment led to the creation of "la gran literatura nacional." The Latin American novel was conceived as a genre committed to politics, and the act of writing was identified as a masculine activity. Women's writing was often regarded as of inferior quality and importance, on the fringes of the great national literary projects, and limited to sentimental serial novels and melodramatic genres.

This gender hierarchy in literature and the arts was not a trait exclusive to the Latin American dominant patriarchy. In "Mass Culture As Woman," Andreas Huyssen notes that in Europe the modernist aesthetic associated "mass culture" with the feminine when describing the massive consumption of pulp and serialized feuilletons as inferior:

In the age of nascent socialism and the first major women's movement in Europe the masses knocking at the gate were also women, knocking at the gate of a male dominated culture. It is indeed striking to observe how the political, psychological, and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities. (191)

In his conclusion, Huyssen argues that the gendering of mass culture as feminine and inferior is historically located in the late nineteenth century, and that such exclusion is "hopefully forever, a thing of the past" (206). Although women in Europe as well as in Latin America had access to the intellectual life, they were positioned in a differentiated space from which

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3 Mary Louise Pratt provides an insightful discussion of the ways in which in Latin American nationalist literary projects excluded intellectual women and placed them as marginal social subjects within the national culture. See "Las mujeres y el imaginario nacional en el siglo XIX," Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana 38 (1993): 51-61.
they articulated an ambiguous and often contradictory discourse due to their own social
double standard (Pratt 60). However, it must be emphasized that male writers also practiced
the “devalued” genres of serial novels and melodrama, articulating a contradictory discourse,
and more importantly, the great national literary projects were fictionalized following the
models of Romanticism and the sentimental novel.

In the specific case of Puerto Rico, the general lack of critical attention to the island’s
literary development has particularly affected the dissemination of nineteenth-century
women’s writing. Ana Roqué de Duprey wrote serial novels that can only be found in the
newspapers in which they appeared, as well as collections of short stories and novellas that
are unknown to the general public. It is not surprising, then, that the scarcity of literary
studies of Roqué’s fiction reveals the overt neglect of her work and that of other women
writers, which has kept women’s literary contributions on the margins of the island’s literary
history. The reasons for this marginalization or neglect are perhaps to be found in Roqué’s
texts themselves. Her prose fiction shows that Puerto Rican women writers “did not passively
reproduce patriarchal social codes” (Findlay 20); rather, they challenged them by positing
their own interpretations of female sexuality and the role of women in society.

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4 Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel, in “Sujetos femeninos en Amistad Funesta y Blanca Sol”
and Nina Gerassi-Navarro in “La mujer como ciudadana” also point out this very problem of
the ambiguous position of women writers in the nineteenth century. Both critics discuss how
intellectual women had to articulate literary strategies to accommodate their discourses to
avoid an open break with patriarchal moral codes and values.
Ana Roqué de Duprey: A Biographical Outline

In 1920, when Roqué was 67, she wrote a brief autobiographical sketch for one of her students as a record of her life's achievement. This document is a unique source of information that tells us about her restless life as an assiduous student and teacher. In addition to examining her short autobiography, I have consulted the biographical works by Concha Meléndez (1970) and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (1991), along with a number of dispersed newspaper articles and interviews. These sources add more details to what we know of the multifaceted life of this Puerto Rican teacher, journalist, writer, entrepreneur, and suffragist. In her autobiography, Roqué stresses the crucial role that education played throughout her life and the encouragement provided by both her father and her grandmother: “Both my father and my grandmother taught me from the time I was very young that education was the most important thing in the world” (Bliss n. pag.). She remarks that her father looked up to the United States as a model of liberty and progress: “he gave me an American education, instilling in me the love of sport and freedom, which no other little girl in town had. When I was eight years old he presented me with $200 worth of magnificent books” (Bliss n. pag.). Roqué states that at the time of the American military occupation in 1898, her father hung a copy of the American Declaration of Independence on his office wall along with a picture of George Washington. Like other Puerto Ricans of the time, he believed

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5 In 1935, Angela Negrón Muñoz published Roqué’s brief autobiography in the anthology of biographies Mujeres de Puerto Rico: desde el periodo de colonización hasta el primer tercio del siglo XX. In 1975, it was published in English by Peggy Ann Bliss in the newspaper The San Juan Star. There is nothing to indicate whether the English version is a translation from the original in Spanish, or whether Roqué wrote it herself. The two versions differ in the narrator’s voice—the Spanish is in the third person singular and the English in the first person singular, and the latter contains more details than the Spanish. All the quotations in English are from Bliss’ article.
that the United States presence in Puerto Rico would bring a positive change to the economic and educational progress of the island. This anecdote is quite important in the context of Roqué’s intellectual life, for she was well-read and knowledgeable about English literature. Her own fiction and moral ideals, albeit tinged with unique Creole tones, are closer to Anglo-Saxon Victorian models than to Spanish models.

Despite the educational limitations of Puerto Rico and the reluctance of most fathers to provide the same education to their daughters as to their sons, Ricardo Roqué insisted on formal instruction for his daughter, which was not the norm at that time. Upper-class young men had the opportunity to study overseas in Europe or the United States, a privilege not often extended to young women. Perhaps because Ana was his only child, Ricardo Roqué urged her to study hard and demanded more from her than other parents would demand from their daughters. Also, since Ricardo Roqué’s own mother was a teacher by profession, he felt compelled to give his daughter the best education possible.

Roqué’s didactic legacy to Puerto Rico began when, at the age of fourteen, she wrote *Geografía universal* for her students, in collaboration with the well-known scholar Alejandro

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6 My research has shown that Roqué never travelled abroad. The reasons for this are not fully clear. I have found no evidence of travels to Europe or to the American countries. It is of interest that even though she admired the United States as the model of education, freedom, and progress, she never set foot on the continent. As an example of her expressed admiration of the United States, she wrote: “La bandera americana es una promesa halagadora. Ella nos está enseñando a saber ser libres... Mientras no se eduquen nuestras masas analfabetas, y aprendan a respetar la libertad, gracias podemos dar al cielo de estar bajo la egida de la noble y humana nación de Estados Unidos de América, a la que aprenderemos a amar tanto como hoy la admiramos y respetamos” (“Algo de política,” *Album Puertorriqueño* [San Juan] 1918: 4).

7 It should be noted that the women in the paternal line of Ana Roqué’s family were all teachers. Ricardo Roqué’s mother, doña Ana María Sapia, taught for over 30 years and she managed the elementary school in Aguadilla together with her sisters Antonia, Catalina, and Cecilia Sapia.
Infiesta. According to several sources, Infiesta was only in charge of the section on Puerto Rico, and Roqué of everything else. In 1887, *Geografía universal* became a required elementary text in the local schools. Moreover, during her early years in her hometown of Aguadilla, Roqué started writing *Explicaciones de gramática castellana*, which was published in 1889. The text *Explicaciones de pedagogía*, addressed to teachers and published in 1894, was the fruit of her lifetime teaching experience. These didactic texts became fundamental in the teaching system of the island. In 1908, Roqué was awarded a silver medal during the celebration of “El centenario de la colonización cristiana” of Puerto Rico for her essay “Estudio sobre la flora puertorriqueña.” This study was part of what is probably her most extraordinary scientific work, *Botánica de las Antillas /Botany in the West Indies*, which was left unpublished. It is a bilingual compendium (Spanish/English) on the Antillean flora, a unique treatise that includes 600 colour illustrations of the rich variety of plants and flowers native to the West Indies, along with explanations of their history, origin, scientific characteristics, chemical composition, medicinal properties, and industrial uses (Negrón Muñoz “La primera mujer feminista…” 5).

Roqué states in her autobiography that in 1878 she and her husband, Luis Duprey, moved from their farm in Isabela to the capital of San Juan. This move was a consequence of the economic crisis of the *hacendado* class after the abolition of slavery in 1873. In San Juan, Roqué soon became a salient figure amid the intellectual elite. Concha Meléndez, in *Figuraciones de Puerto Rico*, suggests that Roqué’s intellectual achievements made Luis Duprey jealous. He did not understand his wife’s scholarly interests and it became a cause of

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8 When it was published in 1887, Manuel Fernández Juncos commented that it was the best elementary geography text available in Spanish in Puerto Rico at that time (Negrón Muñoz 1927).
discord between them (42-43). In 1884 Roqué separated from Luis Duprey, who left her financially ruined and in charge of their three children. From then on she began her real life struggle, teaching in schools and writing for newspapers to support her family, and later starting her own entrepreneurial initiatives.

There is a gap in Roqué’s autobiography regarding her married life, which raises questions about the reasons behind her voluntary silence. It is known that she decided to relinquish her husband’s last name, to be identified solely by her maiden name. Though she never divorced, she lived separated from Luis Duprey for the last forty years of her life. Roqué’s grandson, Luis Valldejuli Duprey, revealed in an interview that Luis Duprey had extramarital affairs, but that nevertheless, Roqué “never married again, nor had affairs. She was always serious and her books filled the vacancy her husband left” (Bliss n. pag.) This image provided by her grandson and by other people who knew her, represents an eminently serious and studious woman enclosed and protected by the written word. It is in her writings that one can find interesting hints that may illuminate Roqué’s private life. She was herself a victim of the most common social problem that women of all classes faced—their husbands’ infidelity and their own eventual financial need. This problem was one of the main incentives that caused Roqué to devote the rest of her life to teaching women trade skills or pedagogy so they would be prepared to earn an income in hard times.

Roqué’s literary activity has been overshadowed by her vocation as a teacher, her work as a journalist, and her political activism. Even though she began to publish fiction when she was over 40 years old, most of her literary works were written earlier. Among them are two collections of short stories—Pasatiempos: colección de novelas (1894), and Cuentos y novelas o Sara la obrera y otros cuentos (1895). That same year, Sara la obrera was
published separately as a novella. Her last published work is *Un ruso en Puerto Rico: treinta años atrás*, which appeared in the weekly review *La Novela Azul, Revista Semanal Literaria* (1919). Roqué also wrote serial novels in the newspaper *El Buscapié* (circa 1880-1890), namely, *El sueño de la Esmeralda del Atlántico; Una clase de astronomía;* and *Sin alma*. In 1897, *La Revista Blanca* published “La hija del Atalante,” which, according to Otto Olivera, is “una alegoría de ambicioso estilo colorista en la que Boricua o Puerto Rico, hija de América y Atalante es amada por el genio español” (340). Of her prose fiction, *Luz y sombra* is the only work that has been published twice—first in 1991, and again in 1994.

Today *Luz y sombra* is part of the national literature curriculum in the high school system of Puerto Rico.

Roqué’s two collections of short stories, and her novel *Luz y sombra*, explore topics of interest to the Liberal bourgeoisie from a racialized gender perspective. In her fiction, Roqué is able to advance for the white Creole elite her singular theory about female sexuality—that the wife’s happiness depends on the equilibrium between her sexual satisfaction and economic well-being. In her short stories, Roqué attacks male infidelity and interracial relations, as well as the sexual abuse of lower-class women. Her fictional claims

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9 Some surviving issues of *La Revista Blanca* are available only at the “Colección Puertorriqueña” at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras, as well as other rare texts from the period under study. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to visit Puerto Rico while I was writing this dissertation.

10 In 1991, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert published a second edition of Roqué’s novel, thanks to a grant from the Social Science Research Council, the Research Foundation of the Professional Staff Congress of the City of New York, and the CUNY Scholar Incentive Award Program. Paravisini-Gebert wrote the Introduction and a biographical sketch. Olga Torres-Seda compiled the pertinent bibliography. The work was reprinted in 1994.
reflect the bourgeois feminists' demands for male monogamy, since men's sexual drives are the ultimate cause of the alleged female immorality (Findlay 73).

Although Roqué deals with the taboo topic of interracial relations, her fiction follows the same contradictory gendered discourse on race and class superiority as that of her male counterparts. Her work, however, in some cases subverts the masculine prescription, but in others confirms it. This contradiction is at the core of the double discourse of the Puerto Rican proto-feminists—on the one hand, it contains morally charged stereotypes of class and race; and on the other, it attacks male infidelity, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. It condemns miscegenation while keeping intact the honour codes imposed by the patriarchy, based on women's virtue, honour, and self-sacrifice.

This Chapter focuses on Roqué's two collections of short stories Pasatiempos: colección de novelas and Cuentos y novelas o Sara la obrera y otros cuentos, and on her novel Luz y sombra. I pay special attention to her novella Sara la obrera because it has been regarded as one of Roqué's most important works of fiction together with her novel Luz y sombra (Chen Sham 168). By the same token, I analyze in detail the short stories “El rey del mundo” and “El secreto de una soltera” (included in Pasatiempos) because of their treatment of unusual topics and because of their length in comparison with the rest of the stories. “El rey del mundo” reveals interesting insights for its socio-historical context and for the ways in which Roqué articulated gender representations marked by race and class assumptions.

**Representations of Gender, Race, and Class in Roqué's Fiction**

There are two main concerns to keep in mind when reading Roqué's fiction. First, we must recall the influence that the nineteenth-century Liberal political and cultural milieu
exerted upon her ideas. She defined her proto-feminist position within the prevalent male conservative discourse in terms of class and race. Second, her fiction corresponds to the mainstream literary trends, which Brau and Zeno Gandía followed as well, influenced in part by Zola’s ideas on Naturalism, as enunciated in *Le Roman Experimental*, but mainly by the Countess Pardo Bazán in *La cuestión palpitante* (Laguerre xxiv).

*Pasatiempos: colección de novelas (1894)*

*Pasatiempos: colección de novelas* is comprised of three short stories, namely, “El rey del mundo,” “El secreto de una soltera,” and “La fiesta de reyes.” The book, published in 1894, bears a short “Dedicatoria” dated October 1893 in which the author dedicates her work to “la galante y entusiasta juventud puertorriqueña,” showing her ever-present didactic intention and nationalist sentiment. The “Dedicatoria” is actually a foreword in which Roqué justifies her intellectual position as a novelist, for she makes clear that she is aware of the incipient stage of the novelistic genre on the island:

La novela es un género que apenas se cultiva entre nosotros y por lo tanto no es hora aún de que pueda presentarse con la necesaria perfección que da el estudio constante.

... He procurado que mis sencillas producciones escritas sin pretensión alguna, y sólo por mero pasatiempo, retraten un poco nuestras costumbres, y en cuanto sea posible nuestro país. (Dedicatoria 3).

Roqué’s unpretentious statement is clear evidence of her nationalist sentiments as it expresses her desire to portray Puerto Rican customs. As she implies, the ultimate purpose of

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11 I have read *Pasatiempos* and *Cuentos y novelas* in their original editions of 1894 and 1895 respectively; for the sake of consistency, I have modified the original orthography of the texts to conform to modern Spanish usage.
what she calls her “simple productions” is to amuse her readers as a mere pastime, hence the
title of the book.

“El rey del mundo”

“El rey del mundo” is structured in twelve short chapters with subtitles that anticipate
the action, and it includes a “Prólogo” and an “Epílogo.” The story follows a linear sequence
of events. Briefly, “El rey del mundo” conveys a social-moral lesson marked by the white
Creoles’ assumptions about race and class. The title of the story refers to the power of
money: “el dinero es el rey del mundo y con él se compra las conciencias, y hasta el alma de
los hombres” (55). The plot revolves around the sentimental life of a young lawyer, Leopoldo
Aromal. He is engaged to marry his cousin Luisa Bernet, but he falls for a beautiful
Quadroon girl, Rosita, who passes as an aristocratic white woman. By means of lies and
deceit, Rosita ruins Leopoldo’s engagement and marries him, but they end up hating and
disdaining each other.

In my assessment, the value of “El rey del mundo” lies in the historical content of its
“Prólogo,” which constitutes one of the best examples of Roqué’s ability as a narrator. The
author vividly depicts the dramatic landscape of the northern coast of Puerto Rico. It sets the
historical background for the narrative, which takes us back to the 1840s, and traces the
lineage of Rosita, the main character. The “Prólogo,” which could very well stand as a
separate story, is divided into an “Introducción: El Pozo del Diablo,” and two brief chapters,
“Costumbres y escenas de antaño,” and “Fatalidad.” The fifteen pages of the “Prólogo”
contain a powerful story that blends Romantic and Realist styles to narrate an aspect of the
regional history of slavery in a legendary place called *El Pozo del Diablo.*
Combining the voice of the narrator with descriptions and dialogues, the “Prólogo” conveys strong emotions to the reader, such as the tremendous suffering of the slaves, their intense love and hate, and the terrible cruelty, injustice, and avarice of their master. The language utilized is simple and straightforward, with none of the affectation or extravagant vocabulary characteristic of much of this type of literature. The narrative force of the “Prólogo,” however, is lost in the main plot of “El rey del mundo,” which follows the model of the sentimental novel and bears a racialized moralistic intention.

The geography surrounding El Pozo del Diablo, the place where the prologue’s plot unfolds, is carefully described throughout three pages. It is furious, resounding, and abysmal, a vivid landscape that foreshadows the terrible events that will take place:

“El Pozo del Diablo” era uno de los paisajes más abruptos de la costa norte de Puerto Rico . . . una playa peñascosa, formada de arena petrificada, que en el transcurso de los tiempos habiéase endurecido como una roca, y en algunas leguas a lo largo de la costa habiéase formado como una pared natural cortada a pico, de modo que el que llegaba hasta su borde, veía a sus pies el mar, como un abismo insondable, el cual agitado siempre . . . se revolvía furioso, y sus olas altas como montañas, chocaban con estruendo contra la muralla natural. (7)

The narrator’s voice painstakingly describes both the beauty and the dangers of this dramatic natural scenario. Real referents abound in the description, such as the shallow lagoon called “La Sardinera,” which in times of high tide provides enjoyment to the local people, though they always run the risk of falling into the deep surrounding crevasses: “veíanse hendiduras profundas, rasgaduras del terreno, no verticales, sino oblicuamente hacia el centro de la tierra” (8). This peculiar beach leads to an immense crater: “como de sesenta metros de
circuito, cuyo fondo, entrando también en el terreno oblicuamente, no se distinguía ¡tan profundo era!" (8). This is the *Pozo del Diablo* into which the people who had the misfortune to fall were never to be found. Nature itself is the main character, represented as a dangerous living entity whose wild and unpredictable forces function as a metaphor for the inhumane system of slavery. The images of the churning sea with its gigantic crashing waves, and the inhospitable rocky beach with bottomless windy crevasses and caverns evoke a psychological setting in which to narrate the horrors suffered by the slaves who belonged to the sugarcane *hacienda* "Buen suceso," the property of the rich landowner Don Celedonio Robles.

This threatening landscape is the only access to and from the sugarcane plantation: "Todos aquellos lugares tenían algo de salvaje y extrañ... y alguna cruz perdida entre los hicacales y uveros de playa indicaban que también en aquellos agrestes sitios se habían cometido crímenes" (9). The daring visitor would have to scale a narrow path bordering the rocky cliff, and a mountain from which a small valley of wild fig trees and grapevines was distantly visible, "pero que en algunos puntos era tan profundo con relación al camino, que producía una sensación poco agradable para el que lo atravesaba por primera vez, al verse suspendido entre la montaña y el abismo" (9). The path leads to a fertile plain entirely planted with sugarcane and followed by the *cuarteles* of the slaves, ending at the house of Celedonio. It is on Celedonio’s vast property that “van a tener lugar los acontecimientos que constituyen el prólogo de nuestra novela” (10). The careful description of this historical site informs the reader of its origins and offers a real referent in which the events that will be narrated seem absolutely believable.
In the same way as in her other short stories and novels, Roqué combines the technique of the omniscient narrator and the narrator-witness, establishing a dialogue with the reader that is characteristic of the serial novel tradition. The prologue’s section entitled “Costumbres y escenas de antano” focuses on the avarice and cruelty of the master, Celedonio, and the inhumane management of his property under the merciless whip of Juan de Dios, the hacienda’s iron-handed capataz. Celedonio represents the ambitious immigrant of obscure origin: “Nadie conocía el origen de Don Celedonio; unos le creían isleno, otros francés criollo, pues hablaba patué casi siempre” (10, italics in the original). Reference to his dubious origin is an interesting way to voice Creole’s society discontent with immigrants who came to the island in the early 1800s, acquired lands, exploited the locals and became rich planters, as opposed to the honourable Puerto Rican families who inherited their lands thanks to their historical lineage: “después de hacerse dueño de una buena extensión de terreno... había fomentado aquella hermosa hacienda de caña que le producía grandes redimimientos” (10). Celedonio resembles La charca’s characters, Galante and Andújar, who have acquired land by questionable means and also show unscrupulous behaviour and lack of moral principles.

These male characters never marry, and therefore lack the moral responsibility of a legitimate family. Celedonio is an old single man, to whom: “le bastaba para satisfacer sus apetitos brutales su harén de negras, las que de grado o por fuerza tenían que sucumbir a sus caprichos” (11). His constant sexual abuse increases the population of mulatto slaves, which he keeps as livestock. Yet Celedonio did fall in love with a mulatto girl from another farm, whom he bought in gold and who died a year later giving birth to a boy. The boy, Panchito, is the only one Celedonio recognizes as a son, and he is as cruel and despotic as his father.
Celedonio is described as the embodiment of greediness and avarice. Similar to “la vieja Marta” of La charca, Celedonio has no remorse, and the only thing that brings him happiness is thinking of his gold, which he keeps in his bedroom, where he spends most of the time: “[E]n una gran caja de hierro escondía su tesoro y por eso no salía apenas de su habitación, lo vigilaba” (13). Celedonio’s cruelty is well supported by his capataz Juan de Dios, who is prompt to punish the slaves with a minimum of fifty whips for any minor transgression, real or invented. The procedure is to tie up the naked victim into an “escalera” and force the victim’s loved ones to watch the punishment:

Por la menor falta cometida Don Celedonio o el bello Panchito condenaban a un infeliz a sufrir cincuenta foetazos, que aplicaba con fruición el cruel capataz; dejando al desgraciado exánime, con las carnes cortadas y cubiertas de sangre . . .

¡Cuántas veces veía una madre a su hija desnuda, atada a la escalera y su cuerpo destrozado a latigazos por el solo delito de demostrar repugnancia al viejo, cuya madre había sufrido igual castigo por idénticas causas algunos años antes! ¡Cuántas un pobre negro se ahogaba en pena al contemplar a su infeliz madre sufriendo el bárbaro suplicio! (12-13)

In the midst of these horrors there develops the love story of Rita and Jacinto, two young slaves. Rita is a beautiful mulatta, one of the many illegitimate children of Celedonio. Antonia and Simona, the mothers of Rita and Jacinto respectively, are pleased with their children’s love. The capataz Juan de Dios soon sets his lascivious eyes on the young slave girl, and since she constantly rejects him, he falsely accuses Rita and Simona before the master in order to take revenge against the young lovers. Both women are condemned to be whipped at la escalera, and Jacinto and Antonia are forced to watch:
Era el mes de Septiembre; desde la mañana percibíase en la hacienda el ronco bramar del *Pozo del diablo* que irritado presagiaba cercana tormenta. . . .

El cruel capataz después de saciarse en su vista con lúbrico deseo zajo sus bellas carnes con el foete; otro negro hacía lo mismo con la infeliz Simona.

El tiempo seguía amenazador; la cerrazón era completa; los truenos se sucedían, y los relámpagos con su cárdena luz iluminaban a intervalos la desgarradora escena. (15)

The narrator’s voice questions whether Celedonio has any kind of remorse for his greediness or for the horrors perpetrated upon the slaves: “¿Tendría remordimientos? No, en aquella conciencia endurecida no cabía el remordimiento: lo que él hacía y dejaba hacer, *era muy natural, solo seguía el curso de la costumbre*” (13, italics in the original). Popular customs are thus inserted in the realm of what is “natural.” In this case, the overt injustice and sexual abuse exerted upon the slaves is the “custom.” It was considered “natural” to exercise a position of power over the black enslaved people, and therefore it was also “natural” to subjugate enslaved women. The use of italics is probably intended to emphasize, with a certain irony, the ambiguity of what was considered “natural,” subtly revealing Roqué’s dislike of such a system. It is perhaps for this reason that Roqué gave this section the unassumingly subtitle “Costumbres y escenas de antaño”(10), which effectively hides the horrible scenes of the slave system under the innocuous image of customs and scenes of traditional life.

The prologue’s final chapter, “Fatalidad,” narrates how Jacinto, blind with rage, takes revenge. That same night he makes his way into Juan de Dios’s quarters and starts a fire. The *capataz* sees him, and Jacinto runs through the wilderness with Juan de Dios chasing him.

This is the climax of the prologue’s narrative: the slaves’quarters are on fire, and the stormy
night provides a dramatic and frightening background to the chase of Jacinto by Juan de Dios: “Mucho tiempo corrieron a través de los sembrados, hasta que al fulgor de los relámpagos uno y otro se vieron sobre el abismo, en el angosto desfiladero que conducía a la Sardinera y por consiguiente al Pozo del diablo” (17, italics in the original). In the light of a powerful bolt of lightening, Juan de Dios sees Jacinto falling into the abyss. This awful scene causes him to realize the danger of the situation. He starts walking back, but is knocked unconscious by the limb of a huge grapevine. Meanwhile, at the hacienda, Celedonio is busy trying to control the fire. Realizing that Jacinto and Juan de Dios are missing, he sends out search parties. When they finally find the capataz, he explains to the others the fatal end of Jacinto. A few days later, Panchito goes away on a trip, and both Celedonio and Juan de Dios fall ill, thus leaving the hacienda unattended.

This is the most propitious time for Antonia and Rita to escape from the “Buen suceso” and they head toward the south of the island. There, they find protection in the household of a somewhat benevolent English landlord. Back in the “Buen suceso,” Celedonio soon dies of an old ailment, and Juan de Dios seizes an opportunity to steal everything, leaving Panchito poor, since his father never wrote a will: “Otro amo más humano vino a hacerse cargo de la hermosa hacienda y desde aquellos sucesos la gente dio en llamar al pozo del diablo Pozo Jacinto con cuyo nombre se le conoce hoy, y se halla en el pintoresco pueblo de Isabela fundado unos años antes de los sucesos que narramos. FIN DEL PROLOGO” (21, author’s emphasis).

The prologue’s interesting historical tone is lost in the central plot, which is more concerned with presenting the author’s racial and moral agenda than on pursuing a historical narrative about the saga of the slaves and the transformations of the hacienda “Buen suceso.”
The author’s unaffected language bestows power to the narration in the Realist tradition, which I believe is the best literary achievement of *Pasatiempos*. The representation of gender in the “Prólogo” is marked by the sharp binary opposition of master/slave, leaving the variable of gender subordinate to it. Within the slavery system, both men and women are subjected to the same type of humiliation, and those who acquire some power (such as Panchito and Juan de Dios) become as immoral and merciless as their white master. Enslaved women have absolutely no options but to succumb to the whims of their master, and their only power is linked to their sexuality in the same manner as the peasant girls portrayed in ¿*Pecadora*? and *La charca*. Despite the subordinate gender role of Rita as a totally vulnerable young slave, she possesses “virile” endurance, and is defiant to the capataz’s sexual advances: “Las negras lloraban, y la joven con varonil entereza desafía las iras de aquel repugnante sátiro que le inspiraba repulsión y odio” (14). Like Silvina in *La charca*, even in her subaltern position, Rita is a rebel.

The male characters of the prologue are all despicable, with the exception of Jacinto; his act of vengeance, however, is still censored by the moral voice of the narrator: “como el ángel malo corrió hacia la habitación de su rival y la incendió . . . el pobre negro poseído de un vértilo de venganza, que enardecía el recuerdo de su madre y de su Rita, contemplaba satisfecho con sonrisa de imbécil el estrago que iba haciendo el voraz elemento” (17). The fear, the hate, and the act of revenge dazzle and confuse Jacinto, driving him crazy so that he runs and falls into *El Pozo del Diablo*.

Fiction provides an ideal space for Roqué to launch her moralistic and racial claims against men who behaved like Celedonio, remaining single but procreating illegitimate children, thereby increasing the mulatto population: “Muchos hombres al procrear una
familia no atienden más que a la satisfacción de sus pasiones, sin considerar el mal que les sobrevendrá a los hijos el no haberles elegido una madre, y si sólo una hembra que los echará al mundo” (25). This statement reverses the actual lack of a father for a supposed lack of a mother, and attacks concubinage and miscegenation. The ambivalence illustrates how Roqué’s discourse follows the Liberals’ political agenda about race and gender. Celedonio absolutely denies his paternity, though this does not mean that his children do not have a mother; on the contrary, the only thing they have is a mother. The quotation above indirectly refers to Celedonio, and is actually referring to Mister Kulper, the benevolent English landlord who protects Rita and her mother when they escape from the “Buen suceso.” Kulper has a daughter with Rita, Juanita Kulper. And later, don Jaime Riosco, without marrying Juanita Kulper, engenders Rosita, the heroine (or anti-heroine) of the central story. Roqué equates motherhood with marriage, and the problem she points out is the procreation of children outside the bonds of matrimony; thus, like Brau and Zeno Gandía, she is condemning the widespread practice of concubinage and its consequence of miscegenation. In this respect, the male’s bestial sexuality is recognized the main cause of concubinage, a reflection of Roqué’s proto-feminist agenda that monogamy was the answer to the social problem of adultery that affected Puerto Rico. However, elite women also condemned plebeian women’s sensuality as the cause of much of the adultery committed by the men of their class, as is the case in “El rey del mundo.”

“El rey del mundo” is a sentimental story about honour, decency, and respectability in society, the basic values that the Liberals advocated in their writings. The moral of the story is that money cannot buy honour and respect for a person or a family. Roqué’s preoccupation with the social position, education, and respectability of the Creole women is
clearly reflected in this story as well as in “El secreto de una soltera” and in Luz y sombra. In “El rey del mundo,” Luisa Bernet, the cousin and fiancée of the young lawyer Leopoldo Aromal, represents the ideal, white, educated Creole girl: “Diez y ocho años acababa de cumplir la bellísima hija del Sr. Bernet y era una criatura adorable; blanca, alta, de ojos negros en que se dejaba traslucir el fuego de un alma vehemente y tierna; su andar era majestuoso, su sonrisa celestial, su educación distinguidísima” (22). Luisa’s social position is defined by her father: “El padre de Luisa era bastante acomodado, aunque no rico” (23). Thus, Luisa represents the petty bourgeoisie and Leopoldo the professional class. Leopoldo has just graduated as a lawyer, and his economic well-being is not yet consolidated: “no era rico, su profesión de abogado no le producía . . . esto se comprende, por que era novel, aun no tenía clientela” (23). Luisa and Leopoldo represent the ideal young white Creole couple that has the possibility of succeeding in life by combining their economic status—the wife’s dowry and the husband’s profession. Therefore, they represent the new economic order based not on agriculture, but on professional work.

Luisa and Leopolodo’s lineage is clearly European: she is of English and he of Spanish descent, and, in addition, both have been educated in Madrid; yet this does not guarantee imperviousness to misfortune: “nada se oponía a la felicidad de los jóvenes; sin embargo, la fatalidad lo dispuso de otro modo como veremos más adelante” (23). Their families live in San Juan, where the young couple will get married. Thanks to the influence of Luisa’s family, Leopoldo obtains a promising position as an interim judge in the small town of Isabela. This would provide the couple with the economic means to get married. It is in Isabela that the action takes place. The story introduces the family of Don Jaime Riosco
under the subtitle of “Una familia ilegal,” which denotes that Jaime and Juanita Kulper are
not married; their daughter Rosita will become Luisa’s rival.

The male figure, Don Jaime Riosco, is from Catalunya, again a foreign element that
marks him as a dubious individual. He is the landlord of a magnificent *hacienda de azúcar*
partly inherited and partly expanded by its own profit and development. Even though the
cream of the town’s society assiduously surround and flatter the Riosco family, they murmur
about the illegality of Jaime and Juanita’s union. However, since they are so rich and
powerful, the people’s gossip does not represent a threat. At this point, one can easily deduce
that Rosita is the granddaughter of the former slave Rita, but the reader will not know all the
details until later in the story.

Rosita is represented as a beautiful and seductive woman, but she is also vulgar,
frivolous, and ill mannered. As the narrator implies, it is Rosita’s African blood and
illegitimate origin, coupled with her lack of education, that makes her a socially dangerous
and hateful person:

Ni Rita la vieja ama de llaves, ni su madre, podían darle esa educación especial, que
formando al corazón, inspira o hace nacer la bondad, dignidad, aprecio de sí mismo, y
la infinita delicadeza de las almas puras. Para eso hubiera sido necesario que Rita no
se hubiera criado en la abyección de la esclavitud, ni Juanita hubiera nacido como la
misma Rosita, en la hediondez del concubinato. (25)

The author leaves no hope for the vindication of Rosita, she is simply the representation of
everything that is considered wrong for a young woman of the upper-class. Even her beauty
is so extremely sensual that it is repulsive: “no le faltaba hermosura, aunque un tanto
repulsiva por lo sensual” (25). Her father’s riches empower Rosita to do as she pleases.
Rosita has everything a girl could desire, except a good moral education: “su educación moral era deplorable; como sabía que era rica se permitía toda clase de abusos contra la decencia y contra las costumbres” (25). Here the emphasis on education is a strong point. While Luisa possesses “una educación distinguidísima,” Rosita totally lacks any.

Rosita’s favourite way of amusing herself is to dress like a man and carouse in the town’s streets after midnight, without her father’s knowledge. Through the author’s conservative eyes of the author, Rosita’s transvestism is a degradation of the representation of femininity, since a girl dressed like a man transgresses the social-moral codes. She not only cross-dresses, but also uses questionable language: “Su lenguaje era siempre de lo más soez y vasallescó que pudiera emplearlo cualquier mujer de mal vivir; y tenía tan poco pudor que se divertía diciéndole insolencias a los jóvenes del pueblo” (26). Consequently, Rosita is a nineteen-year-old girl whom none of the young men in town wishes to marry. She is represented as devoid of morality, fitting the negative imagery of Africanness as excessively sexual and degenerate.

The narrator’s voice is sententious and judgmental about this characters’ behaviour, just as in Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s novels. The omniscient narrator interrupts the flow of the narrative at times to make moral statements, give explanations, or judge characters and events. These interpolations of the author’s judgmental voice reduce the narrative force and distract the reader from the main events of the story. The “Prólogo” does not have these frequent interruptions, and for that reason the narrative flows more smoothly than in the main story.

There is another woman character, Mondari’s widow, who represents the irreproachable moral of Creole women, to which Creole men also suscribed. Mondari’s
widow and her family are the only ones who do not frequent the house of Jaime Riosco, since they morally disapprove of the Rioscos’ way of life. Mondari’s widow warns Leopoldo that he must avoid socializing with the Riosco family: “esa familia a quien todo el mundo adula porque posee grandes riquezas, no vive conforme a las reglas de la moral” (27). She particularly warns him about Rosita:

Rosita es una joven digna de lástima; ella no tiene la culpa de su mala educación; es el mosto corrompido, la levadura de una miseria social, la consecuencia precisa del modo de vivir de sus progenitores. Es tan detestable la educación de esa chica que en el pueblo no hay un joven que se atreva a solicitarla para esposa. (28)

The character of Mondari’s widow speaks with Roqué’s own voice, which reflects her strict Victorian morality. With regard to moral and racial attitudes, Roqué’s ideology corresponds to Brau’s social Darwinism and biological determinism. Rosita’s mestizaje is categorically represented as a genetic defect, a degeneration by which her immoral behaviour and overt sexuality is determined, thus making her social and moral redemption impossible.

The plot’s intrigue leads Leopoldo to meet Rosita and he cannot resist her extreme sensuality. They inevitably fall into a fatal and passionate love-affair. Rosita’s moral degeneracy and sexual availability function as the necessary counterpoint to underscore Luisa’s angelical purity and respectability: “No podía olvidar a su angelical prima a quien tan de veras había amado, y cuya imagen plácida y suave se aparecía a sus ojos en las horas de insomnio como un remordimiento” (29).

Soon Leopoldo is the victim of his own desires and suffers acute moral decay, nervousness, and depression, a cliché of melodramas and sentimental novels that recurrently appears in Roqué’s fiction. The young lawyer becomes extremely pale and nervous, and his
fiancée Luisa also falls into a depressive state as she has the presentiment that Leopoldo loves someone else. Luisa’s health deteriorates until she is on the verge of death. Leopoldo receives a letter with the terrible news and he returns to San Juan to Luisa’s side, promising her his eternal love. Luisa soon recovers and the happy couple set the date of their wedding. Then Leopoldo goes back to Isabela, and as the voice of the narrator predicts, the “fatalidad” will strike again.

Now Rosita is the one who suffers moral decay, when she learns about Leopoldo’s forthcoming wedding. Again, Leopoldo cannot resist Rosita’s sexual wiles and confesses his passionate love to her: “Soy un desgraciado, no un infame! ¡La he amado y la amo con frenesí!” (51). Leopoldo and Rosita consummate their love and continue every night feeding their tormented passion. But one night Leopoldo decides to end their love affair because he has to comply with his social and moral duty to marry Luisa. Rosita feigns acceptance, but contrives to ruin Leopoldo’s engagement.

Rosita tells her father that Leopoldo has dishonoured her, and then she tells the same to Luisa. Rosita’s plan works successfully and Luisa sends a letter to Leopoldo breaking off the engagement. Don Jaime Riosco arranges the marriage of Rosita with Leopoldo, honestly telling him that: “Mi hija es mestiza descendiente de esclavos, ya lo habría adivinado usted; pero 500 mil duros ya son bastante cantidad para purificar su sangre” (59). Leopoldo has no choice but to accept Riosco’s proposition. The racial stigma and moral deception have an impact on Leopoldo’s consciousness of his social status: “El, hijo de un peninsular distinguido e ilustrado que viniera a Puerto Rico con un alto empleó, iba a casarse con la nieta de una negra esclava. ¡A que extremo le había conducido su locura!” (65). Thus, the marriage between Leopoldo and Rosita cannot have a happy ending. Their interracial union
is doomed to fail: “su vida era un infierno, ambos se despreciaban mutuamente, y podía considerárselas presidiarios unidos a una misma cadena” (71). Luisa’s destiny is happier than that of Leopoldo. In New York she marries an English man of science, a detail that again brings to the fore Roqué’s identification with the Anglo-Saxon culture as civilized and progressive. Interestingly, the story ends without closure as, in the style of the serial novel, the narrator tells the reader: “Quizá algún día escribamos la segunda parte de esta obra, y entonces podremos entrar en detalles de la vida íntima de Leopoldo y Luisa en sus respectivos matrimonios” (72).

“El secreto de una soltera”

The negative representation of women of African descent is reversed in “El secreto de una soltera.” Now it is a young mulatto, Victor Laurent, who passes as a white man and disrupts the moral order of the Creole bourgeoisie. As the title indicates, “El secreto de una soltera” narrates the intimate lifetime secret of Amalia de Santopere, a rich and attractive forty-year old woman who never married. It is a story of “first attachment” and the romantic impossibility of a second love, told in a series of dialogues with few interventions of the narrator’s voice, a literary technique that differs from the rest of the stories in Pasatiempos and Cuentos y novelas.

The setting is Amalia de Santopere’s summerhouse in a small village in Asturias, Spain. Amalia, the daughter of rich Peninsulars, was born in Puerto Rico and educated in France: “sus finos modales y amenísimo trato, revelaban una educación exquisita, y un talento e ilustración muy superiores” (8). She confides to her niece, Ciela de Santopere, the reason why she never married. When young, Amalia was the stereotype of the femme
fatale—beautiful, rich, and well educated, but with a “corazón de mármol” (20). She confesses to her niece that she was a heartless seductress and a tease, who even provoked the death of a young and distinguished man who loved her with great passion. He died, but not without cursing her: “tú, Amalia, tú la mujer sin corazón, amarás a un hombre que será un imposible para ti, y derramarás una por una las lágrimas que has hecho derramar” (20). His curse comes true, and while visiting the Dominican Republic she falls in love for the first time with Victor Laurent, the son of a wealthy French hacendado. They live an intense romance and become engaged. However, by means of an anonymous note, Amalia learns that Victor is the son of an ex-slave mulatta. She immediately breaks off her engagement and moves to Spain, making the decision to never marry because she could only love once. This radical decision reflects Roqué’s concept of “first attachment.”

This story clearly reveals the deep contradictions in Roqué’s sexual politics, which represents those of the white Creole proto-feminists regarding both gender and race. “El secreto de una soltera” supports the idea that a woman can only love a man who dominates her and is superior to her in terms of stronger personality and will power: “¡Cuán cierto es que la mujer sólo puede amar al hombre que la domina, que le es superior en firmeza de carácter! Porque la mujer quiere siempre ser dominada y sólo así es que puede amar verdaderamente” (26). This idea of gender strength in terms of emotional stability confirms the biological determinism that the female is the weaker sex, passive and docile, in need of the male’s strength—a quite contradictory statement, since Roqué’s ultimate intention is to delineate a feminine identity as an independent subject.
“El secreto de una soltera” confirma Roqué’s racial standpoint, which, as I mentioned before, reflects the white Creoles’ thought. Through the voice of Amalia, the author formulates her justification or explanation for her rejection of men of African descent:

Ninguna señorita de sangre española se hubiera atrevido a aceptar para esposo a un descendiente de la raza negra; aunque fuera remotísimo su origen . . . A semejanza de aquellas matronas romanas que hasta se bañaban delante de sus esclavos, pues no los consideraban hombres, yo, muy lejos como es natural de ese extremo de impudor que no es de esta época, creía que un descendiente de la raza negra no era un hombre, al menos en el concepto de que pudiera ser mi esposo. (26)

A black man is not a real man in terms of his ability to be a husband. But at the same time she states that:

En cada hombre de color veía yo a un hermano, y por ningún concepto quisimos jamás tener esclavos para el servicio. Esta manera de pensar era tanto más rara en aquella época, porque no estaba conforme con la de la generalidad. Pero a pesar de mis ideas avanzadas, precursoras ya de la emancipation . . . por nada del mundo me hubiera enlazado a un mestizo. (27)

In the context of the story, Victor Laurent does not represent at all a bad choice—he has social position, money, and is a physician trained in Paris. However, the narrative illustrates how extreme the white Creoles’ racist prejudices were regarding matters of genetic lineage. In the story, Amalia even wonders if Victor was attracted to her just for her riches or her talents: “Quizás le llevaba a mí mi cuantiosa fortuna, o la fama de mujer de talento que me rodeaba” (29). Although handsome and elegant, Victor is represented as having a capricious temper: “[P]ronto conocí que el carácter de Victor era bien raro; por la menor
simpleza se ofendía haciéndome sufrir crueles tormentos. Era en extremo dominante . . . y
conociendo que me subyugaba, pretendía jugar con mi corazón como lo había hecho yo con
los de tantos que me amaron sinceramente” (25). Victor’s moody temper is attributed to his
African heritage, as the reader finds out later in the narrative. Slavery, as Gordon Lewis
reminds us, was a powerful ideological deterrent that generated a scale of values based on
skin colour. The “African Other” provided a counterpoint of self-definition to the dominant
group (240).

Following Brau’s arguments based on environment and biological determinism, “El
secreto de una soltera” unremittingly states (as does “El rey del mundo”) that “social laws”
cannot be evaded, and that individuals’ habits and morality are the direct product of their
social milieu: “La humanidad ha obedecido en todas las épocas a las leyes sociales a las que
es imposible evadirse. Las costumbres, el medio en que se vive, influyen poderosamente en
las ideas morales del individuo” (29).

Roqué’s fiction reverses the proposals by Liberal Creole men that circulated in the
1880s for the moral reform of women. Those in need of moral education are men themselves,
and educated women have the power to domesticate and tame men’s sexual immorality. This,
of course, applies only to white men of the upper-class; someone considered to come from
humble or interracial origins was automatically left outside of this equation. Still, the
ideology held by Róqué and the proto-feminists assumes the total responsibility of woman to
maintain her sexual reputation intact. In this sense, the Victorian ideas on chastity are
extreme and do not leave room for mistakes. This is reflected in the character of Amalia and
her decision never to marry, keeping, so to speak, an emotional virginity. In her real life,
Roqué also made this decision—not because of racial issues, but rather due to her husband’s
infidelity (Bliss n. page). I suggest that through her character Amalia, she is voicing her own philosophy of life based on the model of Victorian chastity, after she separated from Luis Duprey. In the story, Amalia says: “[P]rocure aturdirme con las diversiones, y cuando ya iba perdiendo mi juventud, el estudio ha amenizado un poco las amarguísimas horas de mi solitaria vida” (30). I read these words as her strong conviction about the Victorian ideal of “first attachment” which she presents as an example of women’s virtue and superior morality.

In this regard, my attention was drawn to a short story entitled “Clarividencias” published in El Album Puertorriqueno (1918) and signed with one of Roqué’s pennames “Flora del Valle.” Tinged with Roqué’s ideas on espiritismo and the Afterlife, “Clarividencias” narrates the dream of a young married woman who sees herself in Paris and discovers her husband in a bordello. The man in the dream is not her real husband, yet it leaves a deep impression in her mind. Three years later, she meets the man of her dream, who tells her: “[S]eñora, tiene Ud. mucha fama de mujer ilustrada y como soy escritor, eso me ha hecho desear su amistad” (10). They establish a friendship over many years, but in her heart she always resents the dream of the unfaithful husband. Then one day he makes her a passionate declaration of love that makes her burst into laughter: “No pude contener la más sonora carcajada que mujer vengativa podria lanzar. El se quedó atónito y se marchó confuso, dejándome a mí reír” (10). It is possible that a similar event happened in Roqué’s real life, as her house was the centre of intellectual gatherings and she indeed had the reputation of being a remarkably intelligent and cultivated woman. Her strong moral convictions would never allow a love-affair with a man who even in her dreams was
manifested as adulterous. This fictitionalized evidence left in her writing opens the window to speculation about connections between reality and imagination.

The underlying message of stories such as “El secreto de una soltera” and “Clariividencias” is the freedom of respectable single women who are in control of their fortunes and resist involvement with any man. These women characters are in their forties, they are well-educated, and have built a clear reputation of respectability. These stories represent the white, upper-class, single woman as an autonomous subject who has the economic means to be independent, thus she has control over her own life. But above all, a single woman must reassure her moral respectability to society by means of her social status and her good education. These qualities are missing in Rosita, the anti-heroine of “El rey del mundo,” who, despite her family’s fortune and social position, fails to succeed in the eyes of the upper-class on account of her immorality and lack of education, confirming the belief that a woman’s morality also depends on good breeding.

“La fiesta de reyes”

The third and last story of Pasatiempos is “La fiesta de reyes (cuadros de costumbres puertorriqueñas)” in which Roqué echoes the ideas of Brau, her friend and the the most admired Puerto Rican writer, as she mentions in “El secreto de una soltera” and in Sara la obrera. “La fiesta de reyes” depicts the traditional Spanish celebration on the sixth day of January, the “Día de los Reyes.” In the Puerto Rican countryside, the traditional activities performed during “La fiesta de reyes” are colloquially called “reyar.” In Puerto Rico this tradition is a syncretism of Spanish and African elements that developed into a colourful peregrination of groups of people through towns dancing, singing, eating, and drinking.
Small groups of people get together to sing *coplas* and go from town to town where local hosts treat them to all kinds of Creole food and festivities. “La fiesta de reyes” introduces *coplas* (songs), and typical dishes, and captures many sayings, colloquial expressions, and customs with much humour, in the best tradition of *cuadros de costumbres*. However, the author’s underlying attitude is negative. Following Brau’s ideas, Roqué concludes that these customs are vulgar and an obstacle to progress. The story ends with a sententious lesson about popular traditions for Pepita Piñoles, the protagonist.

Pepita is a well-educated girl from San Juan who has never ventured outside the walls of the city. She longs to experience the popular celebration of “reyar.” She finally has an opportunity when she is invited by some friends to the countryside. Albeit hilarious, the experience results in disaster. It constantly rains and Pepita’s entourage gets wet and muddy, suffering all kinds of accidents along the way. The parties at the host houses are amusingly depicted, but it is too much for a city girl like Pepita: “Pepita se sentia morir; su constitución delicada apenas podia resistir estos jaleos” (11). Not surprisingly, the moral of the story is to avoid this kind of popular festivity:

> Esas costumbres de *reyar* inocentes . . . tienen que desaparecer de nuestras fiestas populares, como sucederá al Carnaval que ya va perdiendo su prestigio en otras naciones.Y así todas estas fiestas tradicionales en que no toma parte la inteligencia, que es la que predominará en nuestra época . . . según vayan adelantando los tiempos, que nos acercan al siglo XX. (14, italics in the original)

Here Roqué is reflecting Brau’s secular ideas on the importance of “Trabajo y Progreso” (with capital letters) that he set out in *La danza puertorriqueña*, in which Brau states: “la
danza afeminada de la molicie tiene que desaparecer.” González argues that Brau did not belong to the Puerto Rican aristocracy but to the merchant class, and hence he rejected the *danza* which was viewed as a leisure time amusement of the upper-classes (152).

However, Brau and Roqué’s condemnation of popular traditions and customs is not just a matter of cultural clashes between aristocrats and the working middle class. As Quintero y Rivera points out in *Patricios y plebeyos*, Brau’s contradictory discourse, on the one hand, exalted Spanish culture as the source of civilization and progress, but on the other hand “se propone demostrar que las supersticiones, vicios y costumbres retardadoras del progreso las hemos heredado los puertorriqueños de España, la que en otros escritos ha presentado como fuente de civilización y progreso” (Quintero y Rivera 216). In particular, Brau’s texts *Hojas caídas*, *La herencia devota*, and *La danza puertorriqueña* criticize “fiestas patronales,” popular traditions, superstitions, and the syncretism of religious practices, as negative elements that must be erased from popular culture: “Todas estas vulgares consejas, todas esas prácticas absurdas, que sostiene irreflexiva tradición … deben desaparecer” (Brau, qtd. in Quintero y Rivera 217). Thus, Brau enunciates a critical analysis of Puerto Rican popular customs as detrimental to the progress and modernization of the island. Roqué was sympathetic to Brau’s ideas and echoes the same concerns in her writings.

*Novelas y cuentos o Sara la obrera y otros cuentos* (1895)

Roqué’s fiction explores one of the topics most avoided by Puerto Rican Creole writers, that is, the representation of men and women of African descent or mulattoes, which

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12 An essay included in *Disquisiciones sociológicas*, qtd. in González *Literatura y sociedad...* 152.
in Puerto Rico were called *pardos*. "El rey del mundo" and "El secreto de una soltera" conveys a racial definition of *pardos*—assumed as degenerate and immoral—as the necessary counterpoint to confirm the white Creole elite's moral superiority.

*Novelas y cuentos* consists of seven stories, in the following order: "Sara la obrera"; “Andina (Novela fantástica)”; “El Hada del Sorata (Cuento)”; “La virgen del mar (Leyenda)”; “El ramo de Jacintos,” “La Serenata de los ángeles,” and “Los gorros (Cuento).”¹³ *Sara la obrera* was published separately and it deserves particular attention, for it conveys strong claims about the violence of male sexuality and expands on the ways in which Roqué represented the problems of race and gender in her fiction.

The next three stories that followed *Sara la obrera* constitute a different block that I will not examine in detail. Instead of offering an individual analysis of the remaining stories, namely “El ramo de Jacintos,” “La Serenata de los ángeles,” and “Los gorros,” I will focus on *Sara la obrera*, comparing and commenting on commonalities or discrepancies with the stories already discussed. My analysis addresses issues related to the social problems with which the women of the time were faced and the moral solutions that were ideally available to them. *Sara la obrera* depicts a rural setting that can be seen as corresponding to “el ciclo jibaro,” but from a gendered perspective. The story denounces white male infidelity, domestic violence, and the sexual harassment of *parda* girls.

¹³ The parenthesis and uppercase in the titles appear in the original edition of 1895.
"Andina (Novela fantastica)," "El hada del Sorata (Cuento)," and "La Virgen del Mar (Leyenda)"

Of the short stories that comprise Novelas y cuentos, "Andina," "El hada del sorata," and "La Virgen del Mar" present different topics and styles, all linked to a fantastic romanticism and folklore distanced from the racial and class representations of gender already discussed. "Andina," which the author calls a "novela fantástica," is actually a short story (eight and a half pages). It is an allegorical tale that transports the reader to pre-historical Atlantis. King Atlante finds a beautiful princess, Andina, and they fall in love. They embark for the kingdom of Atlantis but die in the cataclysm that sank the mythical continent.

"El hada del sorata" is even shorter (five pages) than "Andina," and in the same allegorical tone is set in pre-Columbian times. It narrates the supernatural transformation of Yura, a Quechua girl, into an "hada" who sees the devastating future of the Conquest of the Americas. "La Virgen del mar" (seven and a half pages) retrieves an old legend from Roqué's home town, Aguadilla. This legend reveals yet another interest of this author, in folklore.

In "Fiesta de reyes" Roqué shows her ability to gather national customs and traditions, and "La Virgen del mar" is another example of this type of costumbrismo. This particular story records a fishermen's account of the supernatural, containing apparitions of what is said to be a Virgin and a child. The legend states that anyone who sees the Virgin will soon die. A girl happens to see the Virgin in a cave, and she is trapped by the cavern's rocks. A young fisherman, who also sees the Virgin, rescues the entrapped girl. Roqué reverses the fatal omen of the legend, and the couple fall in love and live happily ever after.
These stories are examples of the diversity of topics and styles that Roqué employed, and demonstrate that her narratives cannot be reduced to a single or fixed perspective. Roqué explored many literary venues to entertain, amuse, and educate her audience.

Sara la obrera (1895)

Looking at the novels discussed in Chapter 5 strictly from the point of view of their fictional representations of gender relations and sexuality, we see that Brau’s ¿Pecadora? and Zeno Gandía’s La charca focus mainly on denouncing concubinage as the major evil that affected rural areas, while Roqué’s Sara la obrera condemns the brutal sexual lust of white men for innocent pardas. Sara la obrera offers a different perspective from that of “El rey del mundo” and “El secreto de una soltera,” in which the mulatto characters are inherently degenerate, extremely sensual, and without morality.

Sara la obrera narrates the tragic story of Sara, a girl of African descent. The narration begins with a picturesque cuadro de costumbres—a beautiful Sunday morning in the Puerto Rican countryside. Sino Andrés and his family are on their way to Humacao for his daughter’s wedding. Sara, the most beautiful and esteemed pardita in town, and her boyfriend Mauricio are to be the padrinos of the wedding. Sara has lived with her mother since her father died leaving them penniless. She makes her living from dressmaking and embroidery, and her mother is a planchadora. The wedding banquet for Sino Andrés’s daughter is to be held at the orchard owned by Nicolás Marrero, a white merchant retailer and the husband of Sara’s best friend, Luisa.

Nicolás is a despotic man and a womanizer who physically abuses his wife. Despite his violent behaviour, Luisa loves him blindly, but also fears him. Nicolás has his lusty eyes
set on Sara, and demands that Luisa be his accomplice, betraying Sara so that he can have her. Pretending that Nicolás is going on a trip, Luisa asks Sara to spend the night with her after the wedding. Under Nicolás’ instructions, Luisa prepares a narcotic drink for Sara, and when the latter is unconscious, Nicolás rapes her. When Sara wakes up, she is horrified at the realization of the crime her best friend has perpetrated on her. Tormented by remorse and guilt, Sara falls into a deep state of depression until her boyfriend, Mauricio, confronts her asking why she does not want to marry him anymore. Sara is so ashamed that she cannot speak, so she writes down the story of her disgrace. Mauricio avenges her honour by stabbing Nicolás in the heart. Consequently, Mauricio is imprisoned, but he is released thanks to Sara’s written evidence. Unfortunately, before Mauricio is released, Sara looses her sanity, ending as a recluse at “La Beneficiencia” and dying there shortly after.

The disturbing story of Sara la obrera denounces white male sexuality as predatory and bestial, strategically practicing the sexual political reform agenda undertaken by Roqué and voiced by bourgeois proto-feminists in the newspaper, La mujer. Bourgeois women’s rhetoric turned Liberal men’s proposals for moral reform around—those in need of moral education were the men themselves, not women, or at least not the educated women of the elite. Plebeian women’s social and moral inferiority provided the necessary counterpoint for women of the elite to define their own hierarchical status. Even if a woman of African descent was in a position of power, like Rosita in “El rey del mundo,” her literary representation still functions as a counterpoint that confirms the superiority of educated white Creole women, as embodied in Luisa. Puerto Rican bourgeois feminists claimed that white Creole women were morally superior to the men of their class, and therefore they were entitled to tame male vices. The ultimate goal of the early feminists was to transform
marriage through the elimination of male extramarital affairs. They claimed that both male and female chastity and monogamy were crucial to the betterment of the foundations of Puerto Rican society (Findlay 73).

The bourgeois feminists' project—laid out in “Nuestro Programa”\textsuperscript{14}—sought to provide lower-class women with manual trade skills so that they would not depend on their sexuality for their subsistence. Patrician women believed in both sexual and class divisions of labour as a means to prevent plebeian women from competing with them for the financial support and sexual attentions of upper-class men. Sara la obrera illuminates how Roqué articulated these types of controversial issues that could not be openly addressed in the articles of her newspaper, La mujer. Thus she resorted to fiction as a safe space from which to denounce the unspeakable.

Sara, the protagonist, embodies the ideal working-class woman of color, who fits the representation of plebeian women as imagined by men such as Ferrer and Brau in their proposals for moral reform. Sara is a poor girl—una hija del pueblo—yet honest, virtuous, and hardworking:

\begin{quote}
Sara era la joven más bella en su clase que había en la población, y también la más trabajadora y entendida. Huérfana desde muy niña, vivía con su madre, a la que sostenía con su costura y sus bordados. Sína Mercé aún fuerte y sana, planchaba desde la mañana hasta la noche para proporcionarse lo necesario a fin de pagar el alquiler de la pequeña casita que habitaban; pero como muchas veces el trabajo escaseaba, las dos tenían que imponerse muchos sacrificios para sostenerse con la decencia que habían acostumbrado siempre, desde antes de morir su padre, Mister
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} See Ana Roqué “Nuestro Programa,” La mujer, Feb. 2, 1894, qtd. in Findlay 237.
Rubert, herrero tortoleño que murió dejando a su familia enredada en pleitos que dieron al traste con la pequeña fortuna que había podido reunir después de algunos años de constante labour. (11, emphasis added)

This quotation reveals many of the ideas that the author expressed in her early feminist agenda. Roqué’s hierarchical and maternal view portrays an exemplary “obrera” who strives to support herself and her mother through hard and honest work, even if it entails the imposition of tremendous sacrifices. The call to “la decencia” implies avoiding the greatest mistake that the Liberals’ rhetoric identified in its moral prescriptions for women, that is, to seek the protection of a wealthy man, either through a marriage without love or through concubinage. In this respect, Sara’s representation partially follows the rhetoric epitomized in Ferrer’s influential essay *La mujer en Puerto Rico*. For Ferrer, “las hijas del pueblo”\(^{15}\) should be provided with basic instruction in some type of skilled labour or artisan trade, so they would be able to support themselves through their own honest work. In this way, they would be self-sufficient and, most importantly, they could then be expected to protect their virtue at all costs, even if it meant to live single and in misery for the rest of their lives.

Liberal men viewed this ultimate sacrifice as the most logical answer for lower-class women’s economic problems. It was a unilateral solution that forbade these women to resort to masculine protection in exchange for sexual favours. For the Liberals, this was the most logical way to exert moral control over lower-class women and prevent them from becoming concubines or marrying older rich men whom they did not love. This unrealistic measure was

\(^{15}\) It is of interest to note that the Liberals never addressed the lower-class women as “women” but as “las hijas del pueblo” (Ferrer 7, 47) or as Findlay points out, as “campesinas” or “obreras.” The term “woman,” and furthermore, “la mujer española,” was used only for the “ladies” of the upper classes (Findlay 74).
thought to be effective to control the high level of adulterous relations, since these men saw only women as accountable for acts of infidelity:

Si nos fijamos en la modesta niña, hija de padres a quienes su posición obliga a girar dentro de un círculo muy limitado, veremos que su aspiración está reducida a ganar el sustento con el improbo ejercicio de la costura, o acudir a un matrimonio prematuramente y por especulación, creyendo encontrar en él un término a sus miserias y faenas... Nunca tendremos razón bastante para justificar el quebranto de la fidelidad prometida en el matrimonio, porque, adoradores ciegos de la honra inmaculada, no queremos encontrar argumentos que atenuen puedan la falta, el delito imperdonable de que hablamos; pero, ¿no es también una verdad, tristísima verdad por cierto, que si la mujer hallase en su ilustración los medios de combatir la miseria, el adulterio habría de disminuir notablemente? (Ferrer17)

Ferrer articulates a negative representation of gender roles in which plebeian women are blamed for the existence of adultery in society. Unlike Brau, he does not consider that the extended practice of concubinage—which constituted long-term relations—is made effective by men’s consent. Nonetheless, Brau and Ferrer agree that ending adultery is a matter of women’s moral responsibility, and can only be achieved through proper elementary Christian education for girls. In general, Liberals did not acknowledge male sexual incursions outside of marriage—men were exempted from any responsibility—and it is on this point that Roqué disagrees with the Liberals’ masculine moral prescription. We have to remember that the sexual abuse portrayed in La charca shows the immorality of lower-class men, since Galante and Gaspar are uneducated, and Galante is a landowner who acquired his lands through questionable methods. Only Juan del Salto represents a morally superior member of the
Puerto Rican landed gentry, who has no sexual contact with plebeian women. What Roqué claims in *Sara la obrera* is that the social moral problem has its roots not the plebeian girl herself—even if she is a *parda*—but in the lusty, brutal sexuality of the married white man.

In the context of the overt racism against people of black African heritage that reigned on the island, Roqué’s description of Sara is important for understanding how the reading public would accept a *parda* heroine and feel empathy for her. Sara’s father, Mister Rubert, is described as “un herrero tortoleño,” an adjectival phrase that indicates he was a locksmith from the island of Tortola, historically known as having a mostly black population. Even though the narrative does not describe Mister Rubert’s racial features, is his trade (a locksmith) and his French name (which could also indicate that he was a former slave) reinforce the idea that he was a man of both French and African heritage. Sara’s mother is a *mestiza* who, as the author suggests, may even descend from the legendary Puerto Rican Taíno Chief Loguillo: “Quizás [Sara’s mother] era descendiente del cacique Loguillo que por tantos años resistió al empuje de los españoles en las cumbres del *Yunque*, en la sierra de su nombre” (13, italics in the original). The description of Sara deliberately dilutes any features that could indicate her black heritage:

[Sara] Era esbelta y airosa, y parecía más india que parda; esto quizás era debido a que su madre no podía negar el tipo especial de nuestros aborígenes, ya un poco desvanecidos por el cruzamiento . . . Sara tenía la tez ligeramente bronceada, aunque fina, y sus ojos extremadamente hermosos y bellos, tenían un tinte supremo de melancolía, como si su alma presintiera una vida de tribulaciones y de penas crueles. Su cabello lacio y largo con ligeras ondulaciones recordaba el de la célebre Loisa,
Despite the fact that Sara is “tainted” with African blood, Roqué makes sure to emphasize that she looks more Indian than parda, thus diminishing her Africanness. This representation of desirable whiteness corresponds to the Liberals’ writings. The careful description of Sara—her slightly tanned complexion and her straight and long hair—dilutes her blackness. In addition, the representation of Sara’s mother evokes Puerto Rican Taino heritage and mestizaje, thus bestowing on the protagonist a more nationalist character, which would appeal to the Puerto Rican reader.

As a narrative strategy, the author resorts to the artifice of drugging Sara in order to denounce her rape as without any doubt a real act of violence. In this way, the narrative assures the reader that Sara’s rape is not the result of her seductive power and sensuality, which might have been seen as a mere sexual provocation. In Technologies of Gender, Teresa de Lauretis discusses the difficulty of proving cases of rape in the context of sexual power relations, and the assertion of constructs that are relatively new such as “family violence,” and “battered women” (36-37). This is what de Lauretis calls “the violence of rhetoric,” as she problematizes to what extent these acts of family violence and rape are within the realm of the social and outside of the sexual, when it comes to matters of law that require them to be defined as crimes. According to de Lauretis, the issue of “spousal abuse” or “marital violence” began to acquire importance and centrality as real social problems around the 1870s, with the increasing interest in social science and in sexual pathology, such as child abuse and incest (de Lauretis 33). While these issues have always existed, however, in the nineteenth century they were treated as a novelty, if not as an entirely forbidden topic.
In *Sara la obrera*, Nicolás Marrero represents a white man from the merchant class, "comerciante detallista hijo de un estanciero de Yabucoa" (14), who has married Luisa, a woman of black descent. Nicolás is described as "un déspota; malhumorado, amigo de faldas; y entre días solía tomar sus turquitas, maltratando entonces sin compasión a la infeliz Luisa que sufría todo aquello con resignación" (14, italics in the original). It can be inferred that there is a certain masochism on the part of Luisa, but she does not know any better, since she married Marrero when she was very young and thought to improve her social status. Luisa’s neighbour reprimands her when she sees her beaten by Nicolás: "Tú tienes la culpa, Luisa, de lo que te pasa; tú lo quisiste. ¿No querías casarte con blanco? Pues toma blanco; más vale un mulato honrado y trabajador que esos carilimpios, desvanecidos y jaraganes" (14, italics in the original).

Roqué’s fictional discourse oscillates between different racial standpoints. While in "El rey del mundo" and in "El secreto de una soltera" any trace of blackness is represented as evil and degenerate, it is vindicated in *Sara la obrera*, though with terrible consequences for the mulatto girl. White men, such as Celedonio in "El rey del mundo" and Nicolás in *Sara la obrera*, are guilty of excessive sexual lust, and while Leopoldo in "El rey del mundo" succumbs to Rosita’s sensuality, he still allows himself to be driven by his lust.

The story "La serenata de los ángeles" also portrays an extramarital affair. The husband, Joaquin, is a white man who has fallen into an adulterous relation with a Cuban mulatta. He lives a bohemian life outside the home, but in the end he is moved by the love and stoicism of his faithful wife, the qualities through which she silently redeems his lascivious heart. As Findlay puts it, "bourgeois wives’ successful domestication of men would be accomplished through silent moral example . . . The quiet, chaste perseverance of
respectable wives would eventually awaken male morality and rekindle husbands' potential for true monogamous love" (73). Once again Roqué attacks men's infidelity, and portrays white women as virtuous and capable of changing their husbands' behaviour, which was an essential part of her agenda for reform of gender relations.

The basic message of Sara la obrera is that sexual violence exists in the realm of domesticity and in the form of unwanted sex. Rape is a very complex concept imbued with social, sexual, and legal connotations. As de Lauretis puts it, following Monique Plaza, rape is intrinsically an act of sexual violence, which may not be exclusively practiced on women, but it rests on the social differences between the sexes. Even when a man is raped, the violation of his body is seen as equal to that of a woman's (de Lauretis 37). Cases of rape are hard to prove and carry with them a burden of shame and emotional stress. In Sara la obrera, her rape must be denounced without leaving any trace of doubt for the readers. That is why the author assures the reader of Sara's virtues and honesty but above all, her virginity, calling her "angelical obrera" (12) and "una joven espiritual" who has a "quid divinum" (13).

Most nineteenth-century Puerto Rican writers did not dare to represent the racial conflict between blacks and whites in their writings, and authors such as Brau and Zeno Gandia limited themselves to portraying the tribulations of the white peasantry. Not surprisingly, when Puerto Rican writers sought to represent racial social conflicts between blacks and whites, they resorted to setting their plots in Cuba. Cuba was a place whose devastating ten-year war mobilized the black masses to fight for independence side by side with the white Creoles. Cuba's incorporation of the black masses into the wars for independence, and therefore into the new social order, was seen as an undesirable and violent
step by the Puerto Rican Creoles, who were suspicious of interracial relations between whites and blacks, as they thought blacks would bring about moral degradation and corruption.

A case in point is Tapia y Rivera’s drama *La cuarterona* (1867) [The Quadroon Girl], set in Havana, the most acceptable background against which to stage an overt racial intrigue for the Puerto Rican white Creole audience. Arguably, *La cuarterona* is the earliest creative work in Puerto Rico that dared to represent the racial and social conflicts arising from the impossible love between a girl of African descent, Julia, and a white Creole aristocrat, Luis. Even though they love each other, Julia commits suicide to not harm the reputation of Luis. The antagonist, Luis’s mother, sees Julia as a threat to her aristocratic lineage. This idea of portraying people of African descent as sexually dangerous also appears in Roqué’s “La sereneta de los ángeles.” As I previously mentioned, “La serenata...” uses an interracial relationship to portray the problem of male infidelity, depicting a married white Creole man trapped by the sexual wiles of a Cuban mulatta: “aquella cubana que tenia el poder magnético de la boa, y en los labios la voluptuosidad de las odaliscas de oriente, cuya ocupación única es el placer” (69). These literary representations of blackness do not necessarily portray black people. Rather, these characters are diluted with white blood and defined as *cuarterones* or *pardos*, who embodied a negative sensuality and uncontrollable lust seen by the Puerto Rican elite as a threat against morality and the reproduction of “pure” white Creoles.

*Luzy sombra* (1903)

In the preceding section I have shown that Roque’s fiction is inscribed within the broader nineteenth-century moralistic discourse, offering to a Puerto Rican readership
models of behaviour to follow or discard. Roque's didactic message was not addressed only to a feminine audience but to all Puerto Ricans who could read and understand her stories. This was not an exclusive attribute of Roqué’s fiction; her contemporaries, such as Francisco del Valle Atiles, Salvador Brau, Matías González García, Manuel Zeno Gandía, and Federico Degetau, also conveyed a didactic message addressed to a general audience.

Even though it may appear that Roqué’s literary project was positioned outside the politically committed discourse that dominated mainstream fiction in the 1890s, close reading and analysis show that this is not necessarily true. Roqué articulated her own peculiar agenda about sexual politics, which constructs a feminine subject able to exercise her individual autonomy in terms of sexuality in the same way as men do. The Creole Hispanic woman in Roque’s fiction is an individual subject not different from men in terms of her intellect and sexual capacities, although still constrained within the bonds of matrimony and dependent on the husband’s economic support and shelter. If we look at Roqué’s literary work overall her political project is clearly placed within the ideology of the dominant Creole class from which she does not want to break away. Like Tapia y Rivera, Brau, and Zeno Gandía, Roqué confirms her class and racial position with a paternal/maternal attitude that sees the Puerto Rican masses as children in need of guidance and moral education.

In “Las sombras de la escritura,” Lucia Guerra-Cunningham argues that nineteenth-century Latin American women writers strategically appropriated masculine models for literary representation: “en su posición de término subordinado, la experiencia femenina y sus posibles modelizaciones estéticas está forzada a ocultar sus zonas disidentes” (129-30, my emphasis). I have tried to demonstrate that Roqué’s literary strategy is to insert her proto-feminist claims into her fiction—“sus zonas disidentes”—as she reverses the masculine moral
prescription addressed to women, while contradictorily, remaining within the values of the patriarchal honour code. Such a strategy allows Roqué to articulate her own gender agenda namely, the representation of a feminine identity through the confirmation of woman's active sexuality. Moreover, by portraying a behavioural model of woman as the potential mother of the future generations, Roqué also manages to inscribe \textit{Luz y sombra} within the Puerto Rican nationalist project.

The original edition of \textit{Luz y sombra} includes an “Advertencia” from Roqué to her audience: “hemos de advertir al público en general, que esta obra fue escrita el año 1894, y que se refiere a las costumbres de aquella época” (3), referring to the last decade of the nineteenth century. This statement can be read as the author’s disclaimer for the content of her narrative, which she situates as non-contemporary. Roqué’s preoccupation with political matters is also expressed in her “Advertencia,” as she states that 20% of the sales of \textit{Luz y sombra} will be donated to the funds for a monument in honour of the Spanish soldiers killed in the Philippines: “Esto, como un recuerdo simpático y cariñoso de la autora a su antigua y nunca olvidada metrópoli” (3). This confirms her loyal empathy with Spain under the new political order of the United States.

\textit{Luz y sombra} was received with much reservation by the readers of the time. The severe moral restrictions of the early twentieth century would not condone the sexual allegation of a young woman who collapses because her husband does not consummate his marital obligations in bed. The only review of \textit{Luz y sombra} that I have been able to locate was published by the educator Manuel Fernández Juncos (1846-1928) in his newspaper \textit{El Buscapié} in 1903:
Es esta la primera novela que se ha escrito en Puerto Rico y quizás en las Antillas, en la que hay un drama interno, bien visto y bien estudiado, en un delicioso tipo de mujer. Este es mi parecer en cuanto al alma de la obra. La envoltura es elegante y graciosa por lo general, y se nota bien en donde se ha detenido la pluma de la dama, por consideraciones de prudencia social y de decoro literario, que soy el primero en aplaudir. Por más que digan y piensen los jaleadores de la crudeza naturalista, hay y debe haber columnas de Hércules en el campo de la novela destinada al gran público. De lo contrario habría que poner siempre en la portada aquello “para hombres solos y mayores de edad” (qtd. in Angelis 1927, 82; author’s emphasis).

The first thing that stands out in this review is the use of italics. It is interesting to note that Fernández Juncos stresses that Luz y sombra is the “primera novela” in Puerto Rico that depicts a woman who is the protagonist of a well-studied internal drama. I read his comment as an early attempt at psychological criticism, that is, the analysis of Julia’s internal drama. In the story, Julia is a girl whose innate sexual desire is not properly satisfied by her older husband, and this dissatisfaction leads her into a manic-depressive state. Despite the fact that the novel revolves around the life of two young women, the main plot focuses on the melodrama represented by the beautiful Julia. She is completely alienated by an unhappy marriage that almost pushes her into adultery.

Fernández Juncos attacks “la crudeza naturalista” that was flourishing at that time, considering it improper for a lady’s pen to directly address such topics. He is enthusiastic about the “consideraciones de prudencia social y de decoro literario,” which, according to him, reveal that Roqué is an exemplary “dama,” able to write a novel about such an uncommon subject without going beyond the limits of decency and morality. This attitude
reflects the moral severity of the time. The warning proposed by Fernández addresses not only gender—"hombres solos"—but also marital status. Married men have to be excluded, since Fernández's moral warning clearly indicates that if the novel had not been written within the limits of social prudence and literary decorum, it would have been suitable only for *mature single men*.

In my approach to *Luz y sombra*, I examine the contradictions generated by Roqué's twofold feminine discourse. On the one hand, it claims women's right to satisfy their sexual desire, while on the other hand it keeps "female virtue"—virginity and chastity—intact, and restricts sexual satisfaction to the bonds of matrimony. As in her other stories, Roqué seems to agree with the patriarchal honour code that prescribed women's virginal virtue, yet *Luz y sombra* questions the role of woman as the angel of the home: "Hay que convencerse de que la mujer no es un ángel; es un ser lleno de pasiones lo mismo que el hombre" (103). The novel shows the confluence of Romanticism and Realism as well as characteristics of the sentimental serial-novel. It is narrated in a Puerto Rican setting that illustrates the author's nationalist intentions, and depicts the social life of the Puerto Rican petty bourgeoisie in the 1890s. The novel forms part of the mainstream discourse that either neglected the African presence in fiction or represented it as ill and degenerate, illustrating the exclusionist ideas of the white Creoles on race and class. Not surprisingly, the only black character portrayed in

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16 Critics Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel (1996) and Nina Gerassi-Navarro (1997) point out that the literary production of Latin American women writers in the nineteenth century is often characterized by a contradictory double discourse. Due to the ambiguous condition of women as a subject/object and their being situated simultaneously inside and outside the nation, the woman writer has to moderate her voice and strategically accommodate her discourse so as not to openly break with patriarchal values.
Luz y sombra is Simplicio, a servant boy, whom Matilde describes as: "[A]quel negrito feo y travieso . . . que parece un gorila escapado de los bosques del Africa" (27).

The plot can be summarized thus: two teenage friends, Matilde and Julia, become engaged through arrangements carried out by their families. Matilde is promised to Don Ramón, an old friend of her father's, and Julia is engaged to the retired Spanish Colonel Sevastel. Matilde falls in love with her cousin Paco, refuses to marry Don Ramón, and despite her father's initial opposition, marries Paco. Julia marries Sevastel for social convenience, but on the day of the wedding she falls in love at first sight with young Rafael. Matilde and Paco live a happy and modest life in the countryside, while Julia lives surrounded by luxury in the city but tormented by her unhappy, loveless marriage, her passion for Rafael growing. At the very moment that Julia and Rafael are about to consummate their affair, the Colonel surprises them and kills Rafael in a duel. When Julia finds out, she goes mad, though she is later restored to sanity. Matilde defends Julia before Sevastel and makes him recognize that his egocentric behaviour and lack of sexual interest pushed his wife into adultery. Consequently, Sevastel forgives Julia. Their marriage is thus restored, but they both die of illnesses, while Matilde and Paco find happiness.

Concerning its formal aspects, Luz y sombra is divided into an "Introducción," "Parte Primera," and "Parte Segunda." The novel's stylistic organization breaks with its structural unity. In the "Introducción," Roqué utilizes a commonplace technique in the nineteenth century, that of the witness narrator. The narrator assures the reader that the story she or he is about to read is based on true facts. The "Parte Primera" adapts the epistolary genre. It consists of nine letters exchanged by the protagonists over a period of six months. The "Parte Segunda" is subdivided into eleven chapters of unequal length that break with the epistolary
style of the first part. It introduces the voice of the narrator in the first person plural, inserting dialogues, descriptions, _cuadros de costumbres_, and only two letters: one from Matilde to her husband Paco (which constitutes Chapter Eight), and another one from Julia to Matilde, inserted into the last chapter. The formal introduction and interruption of the epistolary genre, in my opinion, shows Roqué’s intention to experiment with different narrative techniques in search of an innovative form of literary expression.

In the “Introducción,” Roqué explains her concept of love, which prevails throughout the narrative, and is based on the feelings of a woman who followed “los impulsos de su hermoso corazón” (20). Her thesis is immersed in the subjectivity of the sentimental sphere. To follow the heart means to be under “luz vivisima,” whereas to follow the social conventions means to be relegated to “obscuras sombras.” The premise thus stated stands in open contradiction to the social norm. The novel’s perspective is opposed to the patriarchal rationale that is rooted in arranged marriages to attain a social position and economic well-being. With this simple binary opposition between “luz” and “sombra” Roqué establishes the basic love conflict that will unfold throughout the text between the superficiality of “costumbres frívolas por una sociedad muy pagada de apariencias” and sentimental love, which represents true happiness. As Beatriz Sarlo observes in _El imperio de los sentimientos_, this type of “narración de felicidad” tells the stories of women between adolescence and adulthood, who live a tedious and monotonous existence, deprived of adventures and change (Sarlo 11).

Beginning with the title _Luz y sombra_, a series of binary axes unfold throughout the narrative. The polarity of the plot is represented by the main characters, Matilde is “la luz,” and Julia is “la sombra. The friendship between Matilde and Julia represents a feminine
alliance, which culminates in Matilde’s defense of Julia’s illicit passion. Paco and Rafael are the male objects of the protagonists’ romantic love, while Sevastel and don Ramón represent the opposition to it. The couples Matilde/Paco and Julia/Sevastel provide the central axes around which the plot revolves.

The dichotomy city/countryside serves to show the protagonists’ class differences: Matilde lives with her parents on a modest farm, and Julia enjoys a life of luxury and leisure in the capital city of San Juan. Matilde represents Puerto Rico’s rural life, a national space in which Roqué is going to locate the happiness of the Puerto Rican family. Matilde and Paco embody an ideal love the young Creole couple that reaches happiness through hard work, the same type of happiness that was available for Luisa and Leopoldo in “El rey del mundo,” but was destroyed by Leopoldo’s weakness in the face of the sexual wiles of Rosita.

Julia’s lifestyle, by contrast, is placed in the urban upper-class: “tú vives en esa hermosa capital rodeada de adoradores, frecuentando el teatro, los bailes, los paseos” (26). The city of San Juan is an urban and cosmopolitan space where the marriage between a Creole woman and a Spanish man (a foreign element) will not succeed. The plot’s intrigue revolves around the sentimental relations of the two main characters, delineated by two love triangles. The first triangle, Matilde/don Ramón/Paco, is solved by eliminating the opponent, don Ramón, and by the consequent marriage of Matilde to her cousin Paco. The second triangle, Julia/Sevastel/Rafael, is resolved with the death of the potential lover—Rafael—thus restoring the collapsed marriage.

The exchange of letters between Matilde and Julia gives a private tone to the narrative, immersing the reader in the intimate world of the two young women. The epistolary genre was commonly used in serial novels, and Roqué also utilized it in “El rey del
mundo.” Letters constitute a vehicle to communicate private matters, and the subjectivity of the characters. The epistolary genre was widely used in the nineteenth century to convey a private and personal level of communication that often revealed the characters’ secrets, leading the reader into their emotional lives.\(^\text{17}\)

A common thread found in nineteenth-century fictional texts is that women are portrayed as inexorably destined for marriage. This unavoidable fate, the only goal around which the existence of the protagonists revolves, is confirmed from the beginning in *Luz y sombra*: “También parece que me casan con un coronel del Estado Mayor, bastante rico por herencia, muy tiento, y muy correcto aunque creo que pasa de los cuarenta y tiene muchas arrugas en el rostro y muchas más en el alma, pues dicen que ha tenido una vida bastante borrascosa” (30). Such a destiny is determined by the social rules and financial convenience of the social contract and with the utter exclusion of issues of age or feelings. The gap between generations is something that is particularly distasteful to Matilde, who protests because she is sixteen years old and engaged to a man who is more than twice her age: “pocas veces se hermanan la juventud y la edad madura” (25). Matilde, then, is portrayed as opposed to arranged marriages, thus setting out a social claim. Julia, in turn, represents the social norm that values arranged marriages of convenience as a way of obtaining a powerful position in society, but she will regret it later, thus ratifying the novel’s moral and social critique.

17 For example, the novel *Dolores* by Colombian writer Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913), tells the story of a beautiful woman consumed by leprosy. The story is narrated through letters and intersecting notes from Dolores’ diary. *Dolores* was published as a serial novel in the newspaper *El mensajero* in Bogotá, Colombia, 1867. In 1869, *Dolores* was included in *Novelas y cuadros de la vida sur-americana*. According to Monserrat Ordoñez, it was translated into English and published as *Dolores: The story of a leper* (17).
The “Parte Primera” is centred on Matilde’s sentimental struggle, represented in the triangle Matilde/don Ramon/Paco. In her letters, Matilde confesses to Julia that she is in love with her cousin Paco and that she does not wish to marry don Ramón. Matilde represents the triumph of true love, as her relationship with Paco, after some struggle, is approved by her father. Julia, on the contrary, wishes to marry the Colonel just to satisfy her frivolity and vanity. Matilde warns Julia about her false pretences, trying to make her see that is a mistake to marry merely for material interest, thus forseeing prognosticating Julia’s destiny: “¡Julia, querida Julia, no hagas eso; porque el día que tu corazón despierte, te verás ligada para siempre por lazos sagrados que no podrás romper, y te harás desgraciada para toda la vida, pues sé que tienes nobles sentimientos y jamás serás criminal!” (34). Here, Matilde expresses the religious and moral values represented in “los lazos sagrados,” confirming the sacramental nature of holy matrimony according to Catholic precepts. Roqué portrays a feminine morality of “nobles sentimientos” according to which adultery would constitute a criminal act. In this way, Matilde announces the events that will unfold.

The tension of “Parte Primera” rests on the apparently impossible love between Matilde and Paco: “hace mucho tiempo que tengo concertado tu matrimonio con mi amigo Ramón” (41). The father’s decision is a grave matter that weighs on Matilde’s conscience. The motif of young lovers who cannot consummate their relationship for the sake of the family’s social position is a well-known romantic cliché, a melodramatic scenario widely used in nineteenth-century novels. The consequences of this sentimental frustration provoke the same clichés of the characters’ extreme sadness, excess of paleness, constant weeping, and blue circles under the eyes.
Matilde’s father tries to impose the patriarchal mandate that prescribed marriage as a social contract, love being of no importance:

Eso del amor apasionado que nos pintan las novelas, son tonterías en las que una joven juiciosa jamás debe parar mientes. Ese amor loco pasa al mes de matrimonio, y si las personas que se han unido no tienen bastantes cualidades morales para estimarse mutuamente, acaban por aborrecerse, luego que la pasión se extingue y la venda cae de los ojos (46).

However, the father’s warning against “amor loco” will not prevail. It is here that Roqué opens a transgressive space or “zona disidente” that breaks with the patriarchal mandate:

Matilde will not follow the paternal advice or the social mandate. Her father’s advice will be rejected, for the novel defends “la esencia hermosa y pura de este amor divino” (48) between Matilde y Paco. The narrative allows Matilde to transgress the patriarchal mandate by means of a women’s alliance between the girl and her mother. The mother acts as the mediator in favour of “el amor purísimo” that exists between Matilde and Paco. Woman is thus portrayed as an influential mediator in the decision made by the father. This strategic intervention illustrates a subterfuge which successfully avoids the patriarchal mandate.

The solution to Matilde’s amorous drama seems to be in the men’s control. The father agrees to dissolve his daughter’s engagement, and provides Paco with a job as the manager of a small farm. The former break with the patriarchal mandate is thus repaired through the masculine alliance between the father and Paco, which consolidates the moral, social, and economic order. In this way, Matilde’s dilemma is solved, and she becomes an example. She marries the man she loves with her father’s consent, and the young couple comes to be part of the working middle-class, which is ultimately the novel’s expected readership. Thus,
Matilde's refusal of the norm of arranged marriages is strategically hidden, and it does not appear as a transgression of patriarchal authority. Roqué displays her contradictory double discourse: on the one hand, it condemns arranged marriages, favouring woman’s choice, but on the other hand it unfolds within a moralistic and didactic narrative that highlights the value of virginity and matrimony, thus validating the core of the patriarchal moral and religious mandate.

The second part of the novel focuses on the love triangle constituted by Julia, Sevastel and Rafael, in which the social norm seems prevalent, but sentimental love breaks with the arranged marriage for the sake of social convenience. Matilde voices the idea of marrying for love, not for convenience. Matilde’s advice to Julia is what will triumph and not the patriarchal norm. After Julia marries the Colonel and lives an unhappy life, she reflects on Matilde’s advice: “Me decías también que antes de casarme lo pensara, pues podía luego sentir una pasión irresistible y encontrarme sujeta. Tu consejo me hizo reflexionar, y aquella tarde cuando vino Sevastel a verme, procuré hacer la enamorada” (51, emphasis added). She confesses to Matilde her frustrated attempt to try to sexually arouse Sevastel, her future husband:

su sonrisa de hombre de mundo, de hombre de exquisita educación, me alentaba a enamorarle...! Quería hacer una prueba. Quería saber si podríamos amarnos algún día. ¡Qué triste decepción! No logré conmoverle, y eso que dicen que soy hermosa: ni yo tampoco me conmoví (51-52, emphasis in the original).

This confession of attempted seduction, thought and told by a seventeen-year-old girl, facilitates the imaginary transgression of the moral prescription. The young Julia finds herself in the presence of a man sexually worn out and tired, a corpse: “Sevastel es un
hombre gastado a los cuarenta años . . . ¡Qué pasiones terribles habrán abrasado ese ser convirtiéndolo en cadáver!” (52). Julia’s claims would scandalize a nineteenth-century audience, but to counter her complaints, the conflict between her sexual desire and the social-moral norm is resolved by emphasizing women’s chastity. Regardless of Julia’s behaviour as a seductress, she assures the reader of her virginity, which places the narrative within the logic of the patriarchal norm. Julia’s confession to Matilde justifies the passion that she will feel later for Rafael. Indeed, the very day of her wedding, Julia falls in love at first sight with Rafael “Tengo la mirada profunda y sostenida de aquel hombre clavada en el corazón... ¡qué palpita al fin!!” (54). As a consequence, Julia becomes sad and pale, and blue circles appear under the eyes, once again, all the characteristic signs of depression caused by unrequited love. Through Julia’s moral suffering, caused by the lack of love in her marital union, Roqué shows the limitations of marriage as a social contract and justifies Julia’s illicit passion. In this justification is embedded the claim that sexual desire is the same for men and women, a strategic break with the myth of passive feminine sexuality and this myth’s double standard. The social norm, however, will not allow the protagonist to consummate her adulterous love. In order to spare Julia any guilt, the potential adultery will be stopped, and she will suffer mental derangement.

Sevastel’s indifference and egotism compels Julia to feel attracted to Rafael. The contradictory double discourse is clear. On the one hand, Julia has it all—youth, beauty, and money—but her husband’s indifference makes her unhappy. On the other hand, Rafael is the ideal candidate with whom to establish a love affair for which opportunities abound:

Julia perdía por instantes la serenidad. El calor de aquellos labios que con tanto frenesi besaban sus manos; la soledad, el lujo que les rodeaba, la naturaleza que
despertaba en ella de un modo impetuoso, debido a su temperamento, y más que nada a su juventud, todo conspiraba contra sus buenos propósitos de resistir a aquella pasión enloquecedora. (102)

Since Julia is trying to resist her own passion, the reader is sympathetic to her. Consequently, she is not necessarily condemned for a criminal act. Rather, her behaviour is justified. She has been pushed into an adulterous passion by her own husband’s lack of sexual interest: “Lo que ocurría era lo que imprescindiblemente tenía que suceder: la esposa se abrasaba de pasión mientras que el marido dormía como un bendito” (77). These key arguments stand clearly against the nineteenth-century patriarchal premise that feminine sexuality is passive. Through the confirmation of her “normal” desire to be loved, Julia is represented as an active subject—she feels sexual desire the same as men do. However, social and moral pressures force her to restrain and control these very desires because they are outside the bonds of marriage.

This is precisely the core of Roqué’s double discourse regarding feminine sexuality: while it advocates female sexuality as equal to that of the male, at the same time this discourse invalidates its possibility by confirming traditional patriarchal values of feminine chastity and masculine honour. The narrative’s solution to “save” Julia from any guilt is to avoid the consummation of her illicit passion; thus, Rafael dies at the hands of Sevastel, and Julia suffers from insanity. Madness works as the retribution that exempts Julia from any guilt. She is in an altered mental state beyond logic and reason, and hence she is innocent. Thus, the religious and moral prescription is relaxed. The omniscient narrator considers Julia’s defence and the blame falls on Sevastel, who represents the patriarchal mandate: “Julia estaba constituida para el amor como toda mujer joven, sana y bella; pero se casó
inconscientemente, por seguir las costumbres y conveniencias sociales, con un hombre que no tenía condiciones para ser su compañero” (103).

The novel’s social critique defends the sexuality of woman and attacks the “costumbres y conveniencias sociales” that women are forced to follow. Julia married the wrong man in part to obey the patriarchal-social mandate, and in part to satisfy her own vanity. The omniscient narrator will not blame her for her feelings; rather, it is the indifference of Sevastel that pushes her into a deluded relationship. This is particularly clear in the denouement of the plot. At the very moment of his agony, Rafael confesses to Sevastel: “Caballero... voy a morir... En estos solemnes momentos, ¡no se miente! ¡Juro por mi honor que ... Julia... está pura...! Dicho esto trabajosamente, perdió el sentido” (118-19). Thus, the narrative saves the honour of both the protagonist and Sevastel; in other words, the institution of marriage is restored, and there is no apparent social-moral transgression. Roqué’s narrative project, for the sake of her melodrama, portrays Sevastel as a remorseful and forgiven man: “¡Deseo que viva para demostrarle mi perdón y mi cariño, que es hoy más inmenso que antes! . . . yo mismo tengo la culpa de lo que pasa” (123). This image of a repentent husband who feels guilty and assumes responsibility for the adulterous conduct of his wife is in overt opposition to the Liberals’ proposed moral reforms for women.

Eventually Julia is cured of her mental sickness by a foreign physician, and this may seem as if men (the doctor and the husband) are the ones who find the solution to Julia’s condition. However, Sevastel’s forgiveness is actually acknowledged through Matilde’s intervention. She is the one who acts as a mediator. Matilde utters what could be considered as a feminist speech in favour of Julia—a defence of all women:
No somos seres distintos de los demás, y por lo general se nos exige que seamos como las conveniencias sociales nos quisieran, y no como Dios o la naturaleza nos han formado. Bien es verdad que la educación modifica mucho nuestros instintos y pasiones; y que hay muchas mujeres heroinas que han sabido sobreponerse a sus sentimientos, y conservarse esclavas del deber; pero para esto se necesita una fuerza de voluntad poderosa, y que las circunstancias que la rodean la ayuden y no la precipiten al mal (123).

Matilde’s words clearly illustrate Roqué’s narrative strategy, as she accommodates her discourse on female sexuality within the dominant gender order. Matilde inscribes herself in a distinct sexual group when she states: “no somos seres distintos a los demás.” Thus, Matilde is acknowledging a group awareness that includes in her speech the general conglomerate of all women. Matilde criticizes the social burden imposed upon women, claiming that “se nos exige que seamos como las conveniencias sociales nos quisieran,” a demand that goes against a condition determined by God and nature, and which, strategically, contradicts the idea of the natural subordination of women to men.18 Matilde goes further, stating that a good education in and of itself is not enough—it only partially helps to modify instincts and passions. In addition, women must have a strong will power to restrain themselves in order to be real heroines and slaves to the moral mandate. Furthermore, they must count on favourable circumstances that will not “precipitarla[s] al mal” (123). Here Matilde refers to women’s breaking with imposed values and mores, compelled by passions

18 This argument might seem in agreement with Rousseau’s discourse about women’s inferiority and their inequality with respect to men. As we know, in Rousseau’s influential *Emile* it was stated that women’s inferior condition was “natural” and determined by God.
and instincts. If women let their passions and instincts rule their lives, they are neither heroines nor slaves to duty. They have no willpower and will therefore fall from favour. Julia is redeemed and her marriage is restored, but she will be punished in the eyes of the strictly moralistic Puerto Rican audience of the early twentieth century. Sevastel dies of an unidentified disease, and Julia dies of tuberculosis, while Matilde and Paco live happy ever after. Roqué’s narrative project represents the happy marriage of Matilde and Paco as the triumph of true love, and their union becomes a moral allegory that corresponds to Sommer’s rhetoric of love as a metaphor of the nation (7).

It is worth mentioning that Acosta de Samper wrote a short story also entitled “Luz y sombra (cuadros de la vida de una coqueta)” thirty years before Roqué’s Luz y sombra.19 Acosta de Samper’s “Luz y sombra” is also structured in a bipolar manner, represented by the friendship between two women. The narrator-witness, Mercedes, lives in the countryside and she is a close friend of the beautiful Aureliana who lives in the city. Aureliana, like Roqué’s character Julia, is a young and gorgeous woman, but cold and egotistic. However, Julia is a victim of her own passions and is not able to continue her frivolous game, while Aureliana’s inflexible ego shows no feelings towards anyone except herself. Aureliana is “punished” for her vanity and her manipulative nature—she never marries, and at the end of the story suffers from senility, ugliness, sickness, and abandonment. Acosta de Samper has a clear didactic and moralistic intention that emphasizes the ill effects of women’s lack of education:

19 Acosta de Samper’s “Luz y sombra” is included in Cuadros y novelas de la vida sur-americana (1869), but it was first published in 1864.
Acosta de Samper claims in her fiction that the lack of education in a woman is the main cause of her disgrace and of those around her. Conversely, Roqué’s Luz y sombra does not advocate women’s education as the only path to their salvation. After the duel between Sevastel and Rafael, Julia’s husband confesses: “Pensé que en la mujer era bastante una excelente educación moral para preservarla de sentir pasiones que no estuvieran conformes con su deber” (122). This statement uttered by a Spanish man puts into question the moral education that the patriarchal imagination prescribed for women, to make her the angel of the home. Thus, Roqué insists in Luz y sombra that a good moral education is not enough to prevent women from falling prey to their own passions, which ultimately are the same as men’s. Contradictorily, the argument for a good education is central in “El rey del mundo,” as Rosita’s immorality is directly linked to her lack of education.

The behaviour of the heroines in Roqué’s fiction does not necessarily concur with Sommer’s arguments regarding foundational novels that “the rhetoric of love, specifically of productive sexuality at home, is notably consistent” (6). With the exception of Matilde, Roque’s heroines analyzed here are not necessarily examples of “productive sexuality at home,” and some of them break with social patterns that determine feminine behaviour. For example, the protagonist of “El secreto de una soltera,” in a rather stoic move of self-denial (or what I call “emotional virginity”), chooses not to marry the man she truly loves because he is stigmatized by the “black stain.” Through the character of Amalia—a wealthy and
respectable single woman over forty years of age—Roqué also contests the sad reputation that single women had in the nineteenth century, particularly when they grew older. At the other extreme, however, the author does condemn single women over forty in “El ramo de jacintos” and “Los gorros.” In “El ramo de jacintos,” the forty-something single matron, even with money, is represented as vain and spiritually empty. In “Los gorros,” Roqué narrates the lonely life of a woman of forty-four who has six nieces through whose romances she vicariously re-lives her years of beauty and love, but she ends up being a lonely and fanatically religious old maid.

The conflict created by marriage alliances for the sake of economic convenience greatly affects the heroines of these narratives. In Luz y sombra Julia pays a very high price: her youth deteriorates, she loses her sanity, and finally, even though it seems that her defective marriage has been restored, she, her husband and their daughter will all die. Rosita in “El rey del mundo” represents the extreme of the rich and badly educated girl, whose egotistic lies will lead her to an unhappy marriage. Sara is probably the most pathetic example, as this girl, albeit honest and virtuous, is the object of brutal male lust that ends in violence, rape and death.

In “Deconstructing Puerto Ricanness through Sexuality,” Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel attempts to identify Luz y sombra as a counternarrative to Zeno Gandía’s La charca. Following a postcolonial argument chiefly led by Indian scholars, she proposes a reading of Luz y sombra as representing the “female body as a strategic space from which to develop a resistance to the dominant nationalist concerns of the same period’s writings that is performed through the expression of feminine sexual desires” (127-28). Rather than considering Roqué’s Luz y sombra as a counternarrative to La charca, I have chosen instead
to situate these literary texts within their rightful socio-historic context, and from there to analyze them always in reference to the literary corpus of the time. My analysis shows that *Luz y sombra* by itself is not representative of the many texts and different styles and topics that Roqué explored. Roqué’s writings—together with those of her contemporaries—are foundational narratives that mark the beginning of a series of topics and concerns that continue to develop throughout the twentieth century until the present day. I do not read *Luz y sombra* as Roqué’s intentional narrative of “resistance” to “dominant nationalist concerns.” On the contrary, through her fiction and journalistic work, she inserts her voice within nationalist concerns. There are historical and societal reasons that explain why Roqué’s fiction, like that of other women writers—such as Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo and Luisa Capetillo, was practically ignored until the 1990s. The relevant issue, in my assessment, is that Roqué was a respected intellectual and a prominent national figure who shared the public space of writing with her renowned contemporaries. It was not an easy task, but she was recognized during her lifetime.

My study has attempted a close reading of Roqué’s narratives in order to see both the commonalities and divergences with the fiction of her contemporaries—Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía—and how they complement each other, since their narratives belong to the same historical space of a specific literary discursive formation. It is unlikely that Roqué was thinking of creating a “counternarrative” to *La charca*; rather, she was exploring an aesthetic space in which to voice her proto-feminist concerns within the cultural mainstream of her time. We should remember that Roqué, Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía had an intellectual friendship, and that they were not necessarily in disagreement; rather they shared political and aesthetic points of view. Moreover, their writings were all influential in their cultural
milieu. Tapia’s ideas in favour of women’s emancipation and equal rights were the foundation that led to the later advocacy of women’s movements on the island. Brau and Zeno Gandía reflected in their writings Tapia’s sympathetic views on improving women’s social conditions and the right to access higher education. Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s literary models were based on ideas inherited from the Enlightenment as well as nineteenth-century trends such as Positivism and an interest in sexual pathology. Roqué also viewed the writer as a scientist who observes human behaviour and records the decadent extremes of society. As a writer, Roqué launches her proto-feminist agenda adapting literary models available to her in the late nineteenth century. Combining elements from Spanish cuadros de costumbres with Realism, Naturalism, and melodrama—again, a mestizaje of styles—Roqué succeeds in inserting her fiction into the mainstream patriarchal and racist Puerto Rican nationalist discourse, which she simultaneously contests and confirms.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation underscores the fact that when analyzing literary representations of gender and their socio-political implications in a colonial context, the theoretical framework of analysis cannot be separated from the historical background. One of the primary goals of my study has been to lay out the specificities of the social history and political conditions of Puerto Rico before the United States Occupation in 1898. The last two decades of the nineteenth century were propitious for the emergence and development of a national literature, in part because the control and censorship of the press waned, political parties became a reality, and the Reformistas believed that the consolidation of the Autonomic Charter was near. This particular period marks the threshold from which a Hispanic Creole literary tradition emerged.

Bringing together as a corpus selected works of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, Salvador Brau y Asencio, Manuel Zeno Gandía, and Ana Roqué y Geigel is a direct response to the lack of literary studies from the late nineteenth century using gender analysis in a comparative manner. Hopefully, such an analysis will cast some light on the ways in which Puerto Rican authors' contesting and contradictory representations of gender reflected the crisis of a country that struggled for progress and development on all fronts, without succeeding in becoming an independent nation. The tensions between colonialism, slavery, and patriarchy coupled with the eagerness of the elite for the modernization of the island, are at the core of the writings that I describe and analyze here.

Historians and scholars of literature and gender studies from Puerto Rico and abroad have guided and aided my analysis, helping to establish the necessary context and intertextuality for an interpretation of the selected writings. In particular, I build upon the
work of Aileen Sánchez-Findlay’s *Imposing Decency*, which provided invaluable historical information about Puerto Rico’s social stratification and gender power relations in the late nineteenth century. The insightful connection between history, gender, literature, and writing in general of Lyn Pykett’s *Engendering Fictions* has been central to my strategy of close reading and interpretation of the narratives examined. Pykett indicates that this kind of project has a twofold goal: “to look at historical questions through the reading of literature (defined here as the written representations of a culture), and to look at writing in general, and ‘literary’ (that is to say aesthetically self-conscious and culturally valued) writing in particular as part of history” (5). This perspective is the one behind my reading, which is not solely centred on providing historical background in certain contexts, but on defining a particular discursive formation that emerged from that very background and contexts.

The work of the authors presented in this dissertation has been traditionally analyzed in an isolated manner, without taking into consideration that they belong to a larger group of narratives also written during this specific period of literary consolidation. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, “The father of Puerto Rican literature,” was an enthusiastic promoter of theatre and the arts. My analysis of Tapia’s *Póstumos* aims to demonstrate how Tapia utilized the metaphor of the double to represent the fragmented identity of the displaced colonial subject. The idea of transmigration of souls and the incorporation of elements drawn from *espiritismo* in both of his novels, served as a literary strategy for him to obliquely criticize the Spanish government, yet simultaneously to set forth his desire to be recognized as a Spanish citizen. Benitez Rojo suggests that the importance of *Póstumo el transmigrado*, in particular, rests not on the usage of the transmigration of souls as a literary motif, but rather on the plot’s satirical projection and philosophical nihilism: “Las cómicas
perípecias de Póstumo, un empleado público madrileño en su segunda oportunidad sobre la tierra, esconden una devastadora crítica a la hipocresía tanto del carácter humano como de las instituciones, desde el matrimonio hasta el gobierno” (22). Despite the fact that the voluminous work of Tapia y Rivera holds pre-eminence in the development of Puerto Rican literature, it appears dislocated from its historical context. In addition, the scattered reviews and studies of his work are in need of being compiled and updated, while many of his novels and plays are waiting to be republished.

The literary work of Salvador Brau has been overshadowed by his role as a sociologist. Beyond ¿Pecadora? there are other narratives that explore regional topics which have not yet been analyzed within their rightful context, namely, Una invasión de filibusteros (1881), Un tesoro Escondido (1883), and Lejanías o El relicario del capitán (1887), not to mention Brau’s significant work as a playwright. Manuel Zeno Gandia’s La charca dominates nineteenth-century literary criticism, and consequently the bulk of novels and short stories that were produced by his contemporaries, both male and female writers, have been—to a large degree—basically ignored. It seems that there is a gap in Puerto Rican literary criticism from 1894 to 1930, as if there were no other literary creations with the exception of Zeno Gandía’s. Even his novels Rosa de Mármol (1889) and Piccola (1890)—both published nine years after Zeno Gandia wrote them—have received significant lack of critical attention since their romantic style is considered detrimental to the nationalist image of the author as the precursor of the Puerto Rican Criollista literary tradition. My reason for including Zeno Gandía’s central novel La charca is precisely because it carries the weight of a recognized national work, it is easily available, and therefore it speaks to the issue of representation. My study intends to show that there is a larger corpus of works—
underrepresented—that share the same historical space as *La charca*, most of which are available only on the island.

By the same token, Ana Roqué’s literary work has been overshadowed by her role as a teacher and by her political activism as a woman suffragist. Only recently has it gained some attention, especially since the second edition of *Luz y sombra* in 1991. Notwithstanding, Roqué’s work should not be reduced to that single novel, and her literary legacy to the island is extensive and eclectic. In chapter 6 I focused on the analysis of literary strategies for gender representation in selected narratives by Roqué. Her short stories and novels analyzed here illustrate the ways in which she articulates literary representations of gender, charged with racial and social codes, to proclaim her political ideas regarding the role of women in the Puerto Rican cultural nation. A better understanding and appreciation of her literary styles, topics, and concerns, emerges from the first three chapters of this dissertation which expanded on the cultural history of Puerto Rico and examined masculine proposals for women’s moral reform and education.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyzed four key novels by Tapia, Brau, and Zeno Gandía which serve to establish an intertextual dialogue with Roqué’s narratives. This substantial contextualization attempts to situate her narratives within their rightful socio-historical and cultural context, to show how her fiction was in consonance with her cultural milieu. This study has sought to demonstrate that in the late nineteenth century there was a vital feminine narrative that forms part of the literary corpus of Puerto Rico, and stands as a foundation for present-day women writers.

Among the writers of the nineteenth century, Tapia is indeed a key figure in the cultural development of the island. His ongoing struggle for representation vis-à-vis the
Spanish empire is reflected in the work of his contemporaries, as well as in the politics of the Autonomista party whose members viewed themselves as "españoles de ultramar." They thought that they should have the same civil rights as a Catalán in Madrid, or a Gallego in Valencia. The educated class realized that there was a huge contradiction between the Liberal values that proclaimed egalitarianism and progress of the Enlightenment, and the actual situation. Those lofty ideals were soon found to be just empty words in the context of a colonial system mired in an economy of slavery and political despotism. The Puerto Rican intelligentsia had to accommodate their discourses to their realities, and their fictional representations mirror these problems and contradictions. Women intellectuals, although recognized by their contemporaries, had to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by the restrictions of a colonial society, and Tapia was a most fervent supporter of women's rights.

Despite the fact that the Liberal elite advocated the abolition of slavery, the virulent Negrophobia felt by many within the white Creole elite remained unchallenged. They associated slavery with shame, moral degradation, treason, and sexual deviation. With a few exceptions, it was a taboo subject that prevented the representation of people of African descent—be they women or men—as the main topics or characters in nineteenth-century literature. It was preferable to portray blacks not as of "pure blood" but of more white and even Indian racial mix. According to the Liberal's rhetoric, the Puerto Rican family in the countryside was declared to be not morally constituted, and its regeneration depended on the proper education of plebeian women. Especially after the abolition of slavery in 1873, Liberal men insisted that women (rather than men) from all classes needed to be morally transformed so as to reinvigorate and "whiten" society.
Liberals believed that enslaved Africans aided the peasants’ moral degradation by working side by side with them, as required by the Libreta Regime. They thought that through careful monitoring and sexual regulation of the work force, they would prevent white peasant women from coupling with African men (Findlay 51-59). Thus, the white Hispanic Creole elite—*los hijos de España*—associated lighter skin with higher moral potential. As shown in my analysis, both novels, Brau’s *¿Pecadora?* and Zeno Gandía’s *La charca*, are devoid of any trace of miscegenation between African and white Hispanics, which affirms the Liberals’ imagery of an ideally white Puerto Rican peasantry, represented, however, as a weak and anaemic social body. Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s paternalist attitude and moral superiority are mirrored in the characters of Dr. Bueno and Juan del Salto, respectively.

Dr. Bueno and del Salto embody the white Creole elite men, educated and professional. Dr. Bueno is the good-natured physician, and Juan del Salto is the benevolent *hacendado* who studied in Europe. They are observers and protectors of the tragic drama that seems to be the life of the *jibaros*. Dr. Bueno and del Salto are represented as single males, and both are carefully dissociated from any sexual desire or contact with plebeian women. The antagonists, Padre Calendas and Galante respectively, have white women as their concubines. Their immoral behaviour is severely censured, for these characters represent two negative sides of Puerto Rican society condemned by the Liberals’ political ideology, namely, the corrupt clergy (Padre Calendas) and the exploitative *hacendados* (Galante). Contrary to Zeno Gandía, who was a devout Catholic and respectful of the Church, Brau advocated a secular system and wanted the Church removed from the political system that dominated throughout the nineteenth century and before. This is clear in his portrayal of the
priest as corrupt and heartless, whereas *La charca* portrays the priest, Esteban, as a good-natured man, responsible, and interested in helping the poor.

Although Brau and Zeno Gandia depicted white male sexual aggression against peasant girls and condemned the practice of concubinage, most upper-class Liberals refused to acknowledge in their writings multi-racial sexual encounters between men of their class with plebeian women, particularly if the women were of African descent.

The heroines of Brau’s and Zeno Gandía’s novels analyzed here, Cocola and Silvina respectively, are represented as white girls from the rural class. Both suffer sexual abuse, also by white men, but in different ways from those represented in Roqué’s fiction. In the case of Cocola, her seducer is a boy educated abroad, a character without a name. Interestingly, Cocola’s sexual abuse by the son of doña Mariquita, the powerful matrón who hired her, builds an archetype that will be repeated in years to come, that of the innocent peasant girl who goes to town in hope of getting an honest job as a servant, but instead finds only humiliation and sexual harassment. It seems that this leitmotif becomes an irresistible one, as it appears with insistence in melodramas and *telenovelas* throughout the twentieth- and well into the twenty-first century. The case of Silvina is even more pathetic, since Zeno Gandía uses the girl’s own mother, Leandra, as an accomplice to her rape. However, Leandra’s crime against her daughter is a desperate measure to maintain the economic well-being dependent on the protection of the powerful *hacendado* Galante. This desperate act by plebeian women of allowing sexual abuse in order to keep the interest and financial support of the male, is also displayed in Roqué’s *Sara la obrera*, where Luisa is her husband’s accomplice in the rape of her best friend. The violent act of raping the female body functions as a metaphor of colonial domination and control. These literary gender representations of peasant girls being
dominated and sexually abused by white Creole men reveal the political agendas of their authors. Brau attacks the Catholic Church, Zeno Gandía portrays the discontent of “los hijos del país” with foreign immigrants, and Roqué sets forth her proto-feminist attacks on men’s extramarital affairs and women’s financial vulnerability. All of these characters form part of the white Creole imaginary, showing the abyss that separated them from the lower-class, especially women, by gender power relations and economic control.

Roqué’s Sara la obrera is concerned precisely with denouncing not only the white men’s sexual harassment of women of colour, but also the widespread practice of domestic violence. “La clase patricia,” as nineteenth-century Puerto Ricans called the aristocratic and upper-classes, praised their women greatly for their reproductive role in the preservation of a ruling class of white Hispanic descent. Patrician women were aware of their value as wives and mothers of the upper class men and believed they were morally superior to plebeian women, mainly blacks, mulatas or jibaras. Roqué’s two collections of short stories and her novels Sara la obrera and Luz y sombra—in addition to her serial novels and short stories scattered in newspapers—are significant examples of these ideologies that pervaded the Hispanic Creole feminine narrative from this period, although they were kept at the margins of the Puerto Rican literary canon. Roqué’s short story “El secreto de una soltera” reverses the usual gender representation regarding the voracity of parda women’s sexuality, by portraying a pardo man exuding sexual power over a white Creole woman. Roqué’s Sara la obrera represents the struggle of gender and race relations between a parda girl and a white Creole, contradicting the alleged promiscuity of women of African descent.

The eclecticism and the variety of styles and topics developed by these writers, their contradictions and ambiguities, and their mixing of literary techniques all represent the
rupture of the coherent, continuous, and homogeneous discourse of European literary movements. The theatrical techniques deployed by Tapia in his novels, which built their plots through dialogue rather than through descriptions of places and characters, and his exploration of supernatural topics, produced a break with the Realist trend. His literary strategy was intended to indirectly denounce colonial oppression rather than to portray a realist plot that would have been banned by censorship. Roqué's use of the epistolary genre, intersected with the narrator-witness of the serial novel, cuadros de costumbres, and an omniscient narrator who utters a pseudo-scientific authoritarian discourse, were all strategies for literary representation of what was otherwise unrepresentable.

Martínez San-Miguel suggests that these ruptures with the coherence of the European novels show the impossibility of "narrating the nation from a single and coherent discursive form" (132). The mestizaje of styles, and the eclectic usage of literary techniques and approaches in one single novel, such as Luz y sombra for example, can be interpreted as rejecting the instability of the Creole subject, the ambiguous manner in which the island was governed, and the different political positions and lack of homogeneity in Puerto Rican society. Not surprisingly, the metaphor that predominates in La charca and in ¿Pecadora? is that of a sick and weak population, compared to a retarded child in need of paternal care. It is commonplace to say that this metaphor of sickness represents the colonized body of Puerto Rico, stagnant and backward.

Martínez San-Miguel suggests that the increasing interest in these nineteenth-century narratives since the 1990s—especially in women writers such as Luisa Capetillo and Ana Roqué—is a symptomatic reaction to a number of socio-political events that preceded the last
decade of the twentieth century, and promoted the reformulation of the Puerto Rican political imaginary:

It is in this context that texts such as Luz y sombra and Capetillo's writings provide us with an opportunity to deconstruct, by reconfiguring the canon, what has traditionally been defined as a monolithic nationalist discourse based on the constitution of a Puerto Rican subjectivity that is predominantly Hispanic, white, heterosexual, and male. (137)

Reflecting on what Puerto Rican scholars such as Martinez San-Miguel, Juan Gelpi, and José Luis González perceive as a static nationalist discourse, mainly Hispanic and paternalistic, my study tries to open new windows to look from different perspectives at this specific period of discursive formation. My analysis does not necessarily attempt to "deconstruct" the Puerto Rican literary canon; its modest scope does not aspire to anything amounting to a "reconfiguration." Rather, I intend to question the rigidity of giving preference to certain texts over others, to the extent that a whole tradition of literary works has been neglected. In the sense suggested by Pykett, I believe that what is actually important—and has, in part, motivated my research—is the focus on a particular historical moment and on the material conditions from which a specific discursive formation took shape. The analysis of gender representations offers an innovative and flexible approach to explore the contexts of late nineteenth-century Puerto Rican writing, and it helps to unveil certain mechanisms of the power relations assumed by the elite. As Findlay argues, Puerto Ricans have long defined themselves in terms of national identity, class, race, and gender, and this continues today in many different ways, as these categories are dynamic and always changing (4).
Studies that combine gender analysis and socio-historical approaches to literature, like the present one, can also be useful in answering questions about other historical periods or places, and/or in widening our present knowledge and understanding of the relationships between gender, sexuality, political power, and cultural identities. Beyond any confrontation between male and female stereotypes there is the underlying experience of humanity, and we can learn to improve our own world by studying the writings from the past: “the encounter with the otherness of earlier literature can allow us also to recognize and challenge our own assumptions, and those of the society in which we live” (Beer 80). Perhaps there is a lesson to learn from thinkers such as Alejandro Tapia and Salvador Brau, who even under the severe restrictions imposed by an absolutist political regime never stopped their ideological struggle for the improvement of social and cultural conditions of their country. Tapia envisaged an egalitarian society for both sexes, but his revolutionary gender ideas were misunderstood by his contemporaries. By the same token, much can be learnt about the discrepancies between Brau’s secular position and Zeno Gandía’s Catholic conservatism which reflects the different political positions of the Reformistas.

The body of this dissertation, ultimately, attempts to give historical depth to the literary work of Ana Roqué, hopefully promoting further research into this type of literature. It is through the analysis of literary representations of gender and the social metaphors enunciated by these and other authors that one can find a rich source of information to fill in the gaps of official silences on taboo topics that would not be publicly addressed.

Further research and analyses are needed to reconstruct the broken memory of Puerto Rico, a lingering problem, as Arcadio Díaz-Quinones states: “el problema de la reconstrucción de la memoria sigue en pie, y eso lo saben todos los puertorriqueños que se
sienten estafados por un sistema escolar que los condena al olvido de la esclavitud, de la emigración, de Betances y de Hostos” (174). Many clues to reconstructing “la memoria rota” to which Díaz-Quiñones refers can be found in nineteenth-century texts, through the exploration of forgotten voices that speak to a history of cultural encounters and clashes, of oppression and resistance, of appropriations, of negotiations over space, and of all those socio-cultural complexities whereby the Taino, the African, and the European are interwoven. Further studies and analyses of literary works which have been neglected or forgotten can bring them back to life in light of the socio-historical conditions of their production. The analysis of literary strategies for gender representation may reveal the mechanisms through which socially dominant groups conveyed their positions of power, or their desire for social change.
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