

## Dreaming the Nation: René Marqués's *Los soles truncos*

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[En] la vida pública puertorriqueña actual . . . el hombre [ha quedado reducido a la] triste figura de ex *pater familiae* ante el avance agresivo de la mujer en todas las esferas en que él fuera una vez – ¡nostálgico pasado! – dueño y señor.

(Marqués *Ensayos* 171).

A review of Marqués's political writings reveals a desire for an independent nation with a centralized government and a man as chief of state.<sup>1</sup> His nostalgia for strong male leaders is evident in his contention that Puerto Rico lost its "last cultural bastion" of male prowess known as *machismo* to the adoption of a type of Anglo-Saxon matriarchal system in 1940.<sup>2</sup> Marqués believed that with *machismo* – a Creole version of the fusion and adaptation of Spanish honor and Roman *pater familiae* – it would be possible to combat the collective docility that invaded Puerto Rico in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> For him Puerto Rico, as a Commonwealth of the United States, was a psychological synthesis of the weak, timid and docile man,<sup>4</sup> and he argued that the docility would not disappear until Puerto Rico obtained its independence. What Marqués longed for was a country that could be defined within the confines of nation, that is, a country with a single pure language, economic self-sufficiency, and a family structure where Man reigned supreme.

The language Marqués considered autochthonous to Puerto Rico was that of Spain, his motherland. As Juan G. Gelpí-Pérez points out, Marqués was obsessed with founding a pure discourse that negated and disdained all types of linguistic contamination and barbarisms.<sup>5</sup> For example, he finds that

in Marqués's short stories there are neither *guaguas* nor *grama*, but rather *autobuses* and *céspedes* (Desorden 178). The first two are terms Puerto Ricans generally use for buses and grass, whereas the other two conform to a more "standard" Spanish.<sup>6</sup> I argue that because of its conservative view of reality, Marqués's rigid adherence to the notion of linguistic purity mirrors the characters' loyalty in *Los soles truncos* (1958) to aristocratic notions of lineage and skewed views of pure blood. Marqués is aware of the importance of language as he shapes his new Puerto Rico for, as Benedict Anderson has shown, "a defining feature of the nation is the standardisation of one unitary language" (McLeod 72). However, Marqués remains blind to the fact that opting for a standard form of Spanish over a more organic development of the language denies Puerto Rico its self-creation and adheres to a colonial mentality that values the foreign and the elite over the indigenous.<sup>7</sup>

My reading of *Los soles truncos* shows that Marqués lays out this hegemonic political ideology through a mistrust of women in leadership positions. This is evident in his depiction of the Burkhart sisters in two different moments of their life: first as the three privileged daughters of a European gentleman farmer,<sup>8</sup> and then as three orphans attempting to hold on to the vestiges of a system no longer in place. These familial moments coincide with Puerto Rico's political status first as a Spanish colony and then as a Commonwealth of the United States, which sets up the Burkhart family as a metaphor for Puerto Rico.<sup>9</sup> During the colonial period the Burkharths represent a semi-ideal version of the family / nation with the male still as head of household, while as a Commonwealth – with the father and mother no longer present – what is depicted is a grotesque, emasculated residue of a family. The monstrosity of this portrait is the effect of a familiar concept of nationhood as a "virile" institution, a brotherhood of men" (Irwin 13).

In *Los soles truncos* the family's past is presented through the eyes of three women who have an idealized memory of a time when "life was secure."<sup>10</sup> Their memory portrays the Burkharths as an aristocratic family made up of a "Nordic god," his beautiful Andalusian wife, and three daughters properly educated in Europe, in Strasbourg to be more specific. The portrait's backdrop includes sumptuous real estate and family heirlooms suitable to their class. The family unit mirrors a distorted concept of nation in which man still rules, albeit within a colonial system, and with a wife who challenges his decisions.<sup>11</sup> While Marqués's politics confirm his advocacy for a patriarchal model of nation, his criticism of the flaws within the lineage system indicates that he objects to the racialized aspects of the social structure. In an essay

on a different play by Marqués, Margot Arce de Vázquez highlights this concern for racial issues: “el problema de la soberbia racista lo preocupaba desde el comienzo de su vocación dramática y se manifiesta como causante del destino trágico en *El sol y los MacDonald*” (69). And Luis Rafael Sánchez reconfirms Marqués’s loyalty to a patriarchal idea of nation by defining his politics as “*patriología*,” which comprises: “la armonía de unas costumbres asentadas en el señorío respetuoso y noble; la clarificación y propuesta del nacionalismo como una pulcra reflexión del cristianismo y, sobre todo, el viraje trágico hacia el pasado, empeñado en el rescate de la utopía quebrada por la llegada de los ‘bárbaros’ extranjeros” (Caballero 24 y Barradas 80).

The family portrait that replaces the previous one depicts a degenerated family and prophesies its demise. In its metaphoric representation of a nation, the end of the family reveals a desire for the end of Puerto Rico’s political status as a Commonwealth. According to George McMurray, Marqués was “an outspoken advocate of independence, [who] abhorred the domination of his homeland by the United States, which has led to the industrialization of the island’s agricultural economy and to the contamination of its Hispanic culture” (209). Trapped in this new political reality, the three sisters seclude themselves and attempt to hold onto a past that no longer exists outside the walls of their mansion. As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that the mixed marriage of the “Nordic god” and his “Moorish queen” produced three defective daughters. Hortensia, who possesses a stunning external beauty, is filled with rancor, pride, and a cancer that kills her. Emilia, although spiritually beautiful, is stigmatized by a limp. And, Inés, the oldest of the three sisters, is both physically and spiritually ugly.<sup>12</sup> However, her strong character allows her to assume the role as head of the household after their parents die.

A patriarchal definition of family and nation does not include in its list of possible meanings the current configuration of the Burkhart household, yet, the three sisters live under the pretense of making time stand still and manage to live off their inheritance for more than forty years. To create the illusion that time has stopped, Marqués endows his characters with crippling features and conservative ideals about race, gender, and class as well as a warped sense of lineage. Furthermore, he had to create a space conducive to the fostering of such ideals, therefore, the house is adorned with worn-out objects that epitomize a family’s fantasy of European monarchical glory. The furnishings consist of a Louis XV armchair, a Viennese rocking chair, and an Empire-style chair. Other signs of past grandeur include candelabras, a

rosewood baby grand piano, and a marble console. Surrounded by their family heirlooms and their memories, the women remain trapped in a fairy tale that thwarts their imagination and inhibits any possibility of change.

When the three characters first appear on stage they have already lived a full life, and in fact, one of them has just died. The play conforms to the traditional unities of time and place by limiting the main action (Hortensia's death and the funeral arrangements) to the dilapidated mansion on the *Calle del Cristo*. However, through the use of temporal displacements,<sup>13</sup> the play simultaneously adopts Brecht's concept of epic drama by covering a 70-year historical span.<sup>14</sup> A trinity of two being theologically and mathematically impossible, forces the survivors to give up their mission of defying the pernicious effects of time. Moreover, since the number two is associated with the 'Magna Mater,' who represents life and the whole earth as a holy being, keeping the two sisters alive would go against Marqués's masculinist political project and against the tripartite structure of the play (Cirlot 232).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the two sisters must set the house on fire and follow Hortensia to the other world. This decision, and Marqués's description of the living room at the end as a "purifying inferno," has allowed critics to read the play as "an allegory of Puerto Rico's collective guilt and expiation after centuries of domination by foreign powers" (McMurray 210; Dauster 110). However, a reading based on Marqués's politics, which equates the family to the nation, reads the sisters' resolution to die as their only option rather than as an act of atonement.

No longer able to preserve the house and pay their taxes, the sisters burn themselves, the house, and their remaining belongings to the ground rather than surrender their last piece of property to the government. Inés describes a bleak future for the house in order to convince Emilia that they have but one choice. When Emilia wonders if the new government will take the house and destroy it, Inés responds:

Peor, Emilia. Conservarán la casa, profanándola. [. . .]  
 Reconstruir, dicen ellos. Como si tuvieran el poder del tiempo.  
 Jugarán al pasado disfrazando de vejez nueva la casa en  
 ruinas de los soles truncos. [. . .] Y el tiempo de ellos entrará  
 en la casa, y la casa se llenará de voces extrañas que  
 ahogarán las palabras nuestras, todas las palabras de nuestras  
 vidas. Y sobre el dolor de Hortensia, y el tuyo, Emilia, y el  
 mío, se elevará la risa de los turistas, la digestión ruidosa de

los banqueros, la borrachera sucia de los que gritan . . . (52-53)

Although this scene supports Lydia Gil's assertion that the sisters' fight was against the profanation of their sacred space (43), I would contend that without the triumvirate system in place, the sacrosanct residence at the *Calle del Cristo* could no longer stand erect. The three sisters are parts of a whole that cannot exist independently, even though each of them has distinctive features. The combination of the physical and spiritual characteristics of the three women can be read as the recreation of the mythological Pandora. Each woman has one of the attributes with which Pandora was endowed. Emilia, the youngest, possesses the artistic talent that Athena bestowed on Pandora. Inés is willed Hermes's sagacity and sense of humor. And Hortensia inherits the beauty that Aphrodite bequeathed Pandora. Moreover, the house occupied by the three sisters represents Pandora's box in that it contains the world's ills and is an object of curiosity. Like Pandora's box, the interior is filled with envy, jealousy, rancor, pride, and misery, while its exterior, because of its architectural beauty, attracts tourists and possible buyers.<sup>16</sup> Even though Emilia, forever the dreamer, asserts that the problems exist beyond the mansion's walls, Hortensia retorts that the ugliness is inside: "No, en nosotras mismas, Emilia. Celos, envidia, soberbia, orgullo. Rencor" (34).

While the history of literature allows us to consider the three characters as the representation of a single mythological figure, textual analysis uncovers ancestral traits that distinguish the characters from one another.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the play oscillates between familial qualities that grant particularity and symbolic images that allude to the interdependency of the three women. José Juan Beauchamp finds a similar co-existence of disparity and resemblance in the three sisters: "En cuanto 'soles esmerilados,' deslustrados, esta tríada de objetos idénticos y a la vez distintos (son tres colores diferentes) expresa una analogía con la decadencia del grupo familiar y de la ya mencionada capa social, pero también la condición particular de cada una" (16). A description of their physical traits underscores their individuality: "Inés tiene setenta años: alta, fea, seca, enérgica" (14), while "Emilia [. . .] tiene sesenta y cinco años: pequeña, frágil, rostro que aún conserva cierta remota belleza espiritual, ademanes y gestos indecisos se le escapan con frecuencia, revelando timidez de niño o de corza asustada. Cojea del pie izquierdo" (15). Under a dreamy blue light, Hortensia appears on stage during three past moments of her life: at age nineteen, at thirty, and at twenty-five. At nineteen she is described as possessing "un espléndido tipo

de belleza nórdica, con porte altivo de reina” (22). At thirty “Está aún más hermosa que en sus diecinueve años. Pero hay ahora algo frío y lejano en su belleza” (31). At the end of the play she appears in a coffin, and the text indicates: “Hortensia, muerta, tiene sesenta y ocho años. Las huellas del tiempo y el cáncer no han podido borrar del todo la pasada belleza de la más hermosa de las hermanas Burkhart” (54). The description of their attributes (beauty, ugliness, indecisiveness and spirituality) highlight normative ideals of femininity, which, along with their familial inheritance, keep them trapped in fixed social identities.

The protagonists’ notion of beauty subscribes to an ideal that Latin American letters inherits from the Spanish baroque,<sup>18</sup> and reveals a mentality that highlights racial prejudices and class differences still in place today. Emilia’s assertion that Hortensia was the most beautiful of the three advocates a social ideal that equates beauty with light skin and blonde hair. Hortensia gets her privileged features from their father, whom Inés describes as “a handsome Nordic god.”<sup>19</sup> Inés, however – who is at the opposite end of the beauty scale, and is convinced that her ugliness has brought shame to the family – is compared to their mother. Inés has the mother’s hair and, thus, “the same demeanor of a Moorish queen.”<sup>20</sup> The racial tension that this analogy creates is assuaged by Inés, whose role within the family is that of mediator. She clarifies that they do not carry any Moorish blood in their veins, to which Hortensia half-heartedly replies that she knows they are Celtiberian on the Málaga side of the family.<sup>21</sup>

Emilia, too, associates their mother with a background loftier than one to which she in fact belongs. She claims, “mamá Eugenia trajo de su Andalucía un tipo de belleza que perteneció a los griegos. [Era . . .] una verdadera reina en palacio” (18). The discussion about blood is twofold: on the one hand, it is about race and on the other about class. The sisters proudly trace their lineage back to the Greeks and to Nordic gods, and use blue blood epithets to describe each other. Their attachment to Europe and everything European as well as the denial of one half of their racial makeup prevents them from integrating into their new world and accepting change.

The interdependency of the three sisters is evinced once again through the symbolic use of the fanlights, or truncated suns, which is how Marqués described them.<sup>22</sup> The fanlights are located above each of the “shuttered, double doorways that face the balcony” and are “made of three panes of colored glass, one red, one blue, and one yellow” (Wiezell 5).<sup>23</sup> The association sisters / fanlights / truncated suns is established in the play when Inés recalls

their father's death: "Aquí estábamos las tres, llorando. Reunidas como siempre en la gran sala. Las tres puertas de dos hojas cerradas como siempre sobre el balcón. Los tres soles truncos oponiendo al sol sus colores: azul, amarillo, rojo" (47-48). In her reading of the short story on which the play is based, Esther Rodríguez Ramos assigns a specific primary color to each of the sisters.<sup>24</sup> While each color marks their individuality, their contiguity conflates the three of them into a semi-circle, which, according to Cirlot is made up of three points that comprise birth, zenith, and descent. Moreover, the number three symbolizes spiritual synthesis and represents the solution of the conflict posed by dualism (232), which Marqués clearly wants to avoid. Rodríguez sets up the following correlations:

Hortensia, a quien por su belleza hubiera podido corresponder el rojo evocador de la sensualidad, se asocia más bien con el amarillo, el color al que ella se adelanta con su muerte. A Emilia . . . corresponde el azul o el tiempo del ensueño. A Inés, la hermana fea . . . corresponde el rojo del fuego que las consume a las tres y en el que, casi póstumamente, adquiere su máximo enaltecimiento. (73)<sup>25</sup>

Some critics have interpreted the fanlights as "setting suns," as a symbol of the end of the lives of the three sisters, which coincides with Cirlot's interpretation of the a semi-circle. For Howard M. Fraser "the lights acquire symbolic meaning during the play as the eldest of the sisters prophetically interprets them as setting suns. This metaphor establishes a connection between the fanlights and the sisters whose lives, in decline, move inexorably toward a final descent" (7). Arce de Vázquez asserts: "El semicírculo con su abanico de cristales evoca la figura del sol poniente cuando se hunde en el horizonte y lanza sus últimos rayos luminosos. Representa a las tres hermanas en su frustración amorosa, vejez y ruina, decididas a hundirse voluntariamente en el mar de la muerte" (66). Gil concurs that the sun's appearance and disappearance is always represented as a semicircle and that the sun in *Los soles truncos* is the setting sun.<sup>26</sup> However, Gil reads this setting sun primarily as a reference to the end of a social class, that is, of the European aristocracy that ruled in Puerto Rico during Spanish colonial times.<sup>27</sup> For me, the relevance of the sun is also tied to the gender tensions in the play and specifically the gender roles the three sisters perform. Even though the play does not present many opportunities to see male / female interactions, the women's identities remain defined in relation to the two males in their past: papá Burkhart and the *alférez*.

The adoration the three daughters had for their father first and then for the *alférez* – the only suitable bachelor on the island – alludes again to the trinity formed by the sisters. By having the three sisters fall in love with the same man, and by preventing Hortensia from marrying him, Marqués keeps the triad intact. Marriage would have diluted further the purity of their “blue blood,” a blood already tarnished by the couple’s racial mix and the mother’s “anemia perniciosa” that caused her death (33). Also by not marrying the man who deceived her with a woman from a much lower class, Hortensia avoids rivalry with her sisters. And by deciding to go into seclusion, the three of them manage to guard, for over forty years, against the invasion of their hermetic world. Thus, they preserve the values and beliefs of an old patriarchal system, which ultimately was no less male-centered than the new one that threatened them. These aspects of the play – the sisters’ decision to go into seclusion and their desire to preserve old values – enable Efraín Barradas to make the following assertion:

Marqués se aísla para añorar de la autoridad – o para angustiarse por haber perdido ese mundo estable y seguro en el cual él, como hombre, sería el heredero del poder. Por desgracia, también cree, como lo demuestran sus ensayos, que su conservadora mirada hacia atrás resolverá los problemas futuros de la colectividad. Esta es la falla ideológica mayor de su obra. Lo personal en Marqués domina lo social y lo transforma en elemento funcional de su mundo privado (80).

The secure past, for which the sisters pined, however, was not as idyllic as they remembered it, and Marqués is aware of this. Two seemingly trivial domestic incidences highlight the parents’ differences and their territorial instincts. The first one entails a disagreement about the appropriate place for a piece of furniture. While *mamá* Eugenia has reserved the living room exclusively for her Louis XV pieces, *papá* Burkhart wants his favorite Viennese rocking chair in the same room. Every evening, out of respect for his lordship, the maid brings the chair into the living room before he gets home (42). The sisters follow the maid’s example, and after *mamá* Eugenia dies, the rocker finds a permanent place in the living room. The reconciliation of the disparate pieces of furniture can only occur after the death of their owners, and alludes to the sisters’ desire to construct a world of unity and peace, which evokes the unified imaginary community of nation builders, a community otherwise at odds. Juan G. Gelpí makes a similar point when he



asserts: “los discursos nacionalistas, pretenden contrarrestar todo tipo de dispersión, dislocación o desintegración; usualmente lo hacen invocando una retórica que apunta a un origen o espacio común nostálgico y utópico” (Crisis 136).

The blinds and shutters is the other point of contention between the couple. While *papá* Burkhart insists on opening the window shutters to let the sun in, *mamá* Eugenia demands they be closed, arguing that the sun fades the furniture’s upholstery (19). Their domestic bickering as well as their different racial backgrounds signals political instability within the family / nation. After the parents die, the shudder / sunlight conflict continues to be played out between Emilia and Inés: while Emilia maintains that the sun will fade the rugs, Inés, like her father, insists that the sunshine must be let in. Therefore, the most frequent actions in the play – the opening and closing of shutters and the lighting and putting out of candles by the two sisters – replicate the gender difference and racial tension between the parents. These actions also call attention to the disparate effects of the sun; on the one hand we have its deleterious effects on the furnishings and on the other the positive outcome of its natural light.

Precisely because the author includes these small tensions in an otherwise superficially perfect family portrait, I disagree with Sánchez’s assertion that Marqués was determined to rescue a utopia broken with the arrival of the foreign barbarians as well as with Barradas’s one to one correspondence between the sisters’ act of preservation and Marqués’s yearning for an idealized past whose “power he was in line to inherit” (80). Marqués is aware that the world the sisters possessed is not perfect, therefore, what he wants is not to continue the previous system, but rather to create a nation he never knew, but for which he yearned. The sisters’ past is only a caricature of a nation. It may possess many of the necessary characteristics, but it is still a system set within a colony. And the second part of their lives, without a male figure as head, describes a system that was designed to fail from the beginning, a system that was destined to destroy itself from within, like the cancer that kills Hortensia. For Juan G. Gelpí the cancer functions as a multiple metaphor that includes the U.S. invasion of 1898 and the subsequent industrialization of Puerto Rico (Crisis 131). He also sees the transformation of the house into a hotel as “una *mutación del núcleo* de la “gran familia puertorriqueña” (132).

In order to move toward the creation of a new nation, the current tripartite political positions must be demolished; therefore, it is not only

necessary to kill Hortensia, but her sisters as well. Scrutiny of the sisters' politics reveals a correspondence with Puerto Rico's internal political structure. Hortensia, because of her refusal to give up the land she inherited and her stern decision not to marry the man who betrayed her, can be associated with the steadfast position of the members of the Independence party, who seek total separation from the United States. Emilia, wrapped in her world of make-believe, could be considered pro Commonwealth since she leaves the running of the household and all the major decisions of everyday life to her sister Inés. Her *laissez-faire* attitude recalls that of the individual who votes *status quo*. Inés, because of her practical demeanor and thus her willingness to negotiate with the outside world and to sell off the Burkhart estate to the invaders, could be considered as pro Statehood.<sup>28</sup> Only through the elimination of these political positions would it be possible to begin anew, otherwise, the three continue to feed off each other and to sanction the structure in place.

The play makes it clear that to be able to resist and hold on to elements of the past, the three sisters have to do it in unison. Thus, Marqués seems to intimate that it takes three women – three truncated suns – to preserve what one man (Burkhart, the sun worshipper) was able to create single handedly. However, except for the promise of an idealized patriarchal system, the world that the sisters pined for does not seem to be the answer for Puerto Rico, but neither are the pledges of renewal offered by the United States. Therefore, the final act of destruction seems to be more a statement in favor of erasure in order to begin again. This time, however, with a man in charge. The process of renewal suggests the myth of the phoenix, which, as its end approached, built a nest of fragrant boughs and spices, set it on fire, and was consumed in the flames.<sup>29</sup> In ancient Egypt and in classical antiquity this bird was associated with the worship of the sun and was apparently as large as an eagle, with bright red and gold feathers and a melodious cry. From the blaze was born a new phoenix, which sealed its predecessor's ashes in an egg of myrrh and flew to Heliopolis to deposit them on the altar of the sun god.<sup>30</sup>

If the phoenix is the final image that Marqués wanted to invoke, what he then advocates is the return to a patriarchal form of government, even though the eagle has some of the qualities that Marqués attributes to his female characters: red and gold feathers and the melodious cry. The description evokes the symbolic association of the colors of the fanlights with each of the sisters, reserving the "melodious cry" for Emilia, the poet. Nonetheless,

the “strange glow of papá Burkhart’s diamond ring” among the burning flames alludes to the return of a patriarchal structure. The red and gold feathers also evoke the colors of the Spanish flag, which floated freely in Puerto Rico until the U.S. invasion (33), and indirectly refer to Marqués’s nostalgia for a “pure” language.

The confluence of the male figure with the female characteristics suggests that a nation needs both in order to reproduce and secure the continuation of the new society that conforms to the traditional image of a national household. While the Burkhart sisters managed to extend the life of a pseudo monarchical system by secluding themselves, they stunted the growth of their new nation by refusing to procreate. As three truncated suns they formed only a semblance of a whole that could not be sustained once Hortensia died. Hence, their destiny is extinction by fire so that out of their ashes a new sun / family / nation can be born, so that a new independent system can be reinstated with man in the center and woman as the faceless other that guarantees the continuation of the species.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marqués presents his male-centered politics in *Ensayos*, particularly in his often-cited “El puertorriqueño dócil (literatura y realidad psicológica).”

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the young writers of the time, Marqués claimed that they were the only Puerto Ricans who had rebelled against “la desaparición del último baluarte cultural desde donde podía aún combatirse, en parte, la docilidad colectiva: el *machismo*, versión criolla de la fusión y adaptación de dos conceptos seculares, la *honra* española y el *pater familiae* romano” (*Ensayos* 171).

<sup>3</sup> Marqués claims that in the 1920s Puerto Ricans classified themselves as *aplatanados* and *ñangotados*. The first term means morally squashed, submissive and the second, spiritually debased (*Ensayos* 152, notes 8 and 9). He adds that these terms changed to “resigned” and “fatalistic” in the 1930s and finally reached their current hypocritical status of “pacific” and “tolerant.”

<sup>4</sup> The original reads: “Es [. . .] el Estado Libre Asociado [. . .] síntesis psicológica del hombre débil, tímido y dócil” (165).

<sup>5</sup> The original reads: “Marqués está obsesionado por fundar un discurso puro, un discurso que niegue y desdeñe todo tipo de contaminación ligüística o barbarismo” (177).

<sup>6</sup> Gelpi-Pérez also notices an archaic linguistic phenomenon that consists of attaching the pronouns to the verbs: “Luego *volvióse* hacia Inés y *quedóse* en actitud de espera.” Finally, he notes another idiosyncrasy in Marqués’s use of “leísmo,” which appears in certain regions in Spain but does not occur in Puerto Rico (“Desorden” 178). *Leísmo* is a linguistic phenomenon that uses the third-person indirect object pronoun *le* in place of the direct object pronoun *lo*.

<sup>7</sup> Caballero points out that writers from the next generation, such as Luis Rafael Sánchez and Ana Lydia Vega, abandon the use of standard Spanish, which is associated with the ruling class. She claims, “Tanto él como Vega parten del plebeyismo callejero para elaborar una lengua literaria ‘puertorriqueña’ que escape el purismo de la élite intelectual” (29).

<sup>8</sup> Hortensia describes her father as “un naturalista alemán metido a hacendado del trópico. . .” (23).

<sup>9</sup> As far back as the 1790s, if not earlier, writers have been making a distinct correlation between family and nation. Susan Allen Ford quotes Mary Wollstonecraft as saying in 1792 that “a man has been termed a microcosm; and every family might also be called a state” (Ford 15). It is important to keep in mind that the families depicted have usually been from the upper classes, which imposes on readers the voice and views of the ruling class.

<sup>10</sup> Inés makes this remark after their father’s death. The often-cited phrase reads: “Y el tiempo entonces se partió en dos: atrás quedóse el mundo de la vida segura. Y el presente tornóse en el comienzo de un futuro preñado de desastres” (48).

<sup>11</sup> According to Hobsbawm, before 1884, the word *nación* did not appear in the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, and after 1884 it “simply meant ‘the aggregate of the inhabitants of a province, a country or a kingdom’ and also ‘a foreigner.’” Therefore, we presume that Marqués would accept either the 1934 edition that defined nation as “‘a State or political body which recognizes a supreme centre of common government’ and also ‘the territory constituted by that state and its individual inhabitants, considered as a whole’” or even a more recent Brazilian definition that described *nação* as “the community of the citizens of a state, living under the same regime or government and having a communion of interests; the collectivity of the inhabitants of a territory with common traditions, aspirations and interests, and subordinated to a central power which takes charge of maintaining the unity of the group; the people of a state, excluding the governing power” (14-15).

<sup>12</sup> Frank Dauster considers “la cojera de Emilia, la fealdad de Inés, [and] el cáncer de Hortensia” physical symbols of guilt (109).

<sup>13</sup> According to Charles Pilditch, the memories or references to the past “are not pure flashbacks since mention is often made during them of facts or events in the present time of the play; . . .” (cited by Dauster, 108).

<sup>14</sup> Because Brecht was interested in drama as a social and ideological forum for leftist causes, his goal was to destroy the illusion of reality in the theatre. Therefore, he created an ‘epic’ theatre that was strictly historical and which “constantly remind[ed] the audience that it [was] merely getting a report of past events.” It was important for him that the spectators were aware that they were “listening to an account (however vividly presented) of things which have happened in *the past* at a certain time in a certain place” (Esslin 115).

The play alludes to historical events such as the Spanish American War of 1898, the invasion of San Juan by US forces, the 1928 storm that destroyed agricultural fields, and the establishment of the Democratic Popular Party in the early 1940s with the subsequent creation of the Ministry of Tourism and Industry. Also mentioned are the Nationalist Revolution of 1950 and the 1955 restoration program in Old San Juan (Arce de Vázquez 58). There are references to World War I and Germany’s loss of Strasbourg to France as well.

<sup>15</sup> Almost every ancient mythology includes a female Mothergoddess known as the “Magna Mater” or “The Great Mother.” She either represents the earth or the bearer of the

planet and other beings, which makes fertility a female power. During the Stone Age she alone represented life and the whole earth as a holy being (<http://inanna.virtualave.net/mother.html>). Thus, this description makes it clear why the number two is not an option in Marqués's play. "Magna Mater" was also the Roman name for the Phrygian goddess Cybele, and of Rhea. "The full name was Magna Mater deorum Idaea: Great Mother of the gods, who was worshipped on Mount Ida. The cult spread through Greece from the 6th to 4th century, and was introduced in Rome in 205 BCE" ([http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/magna\\_mater.html](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/m/magna_mater.html), from *.Encyclopedie van de Mythologie*).

<sup>16</sup> I owe this specific reading to Kimberly Sayoc, an undergraduate student who took my suggestion to research the myth and thus wrote a short paper in which she carefully outlined the affinities between *Los soles truncos* and the Pandora myth. In Alexander S. Murray's *Who's Who in Mythology: Classic Guide to the Ancient World* I found the following variation: "Athene instructed her in the industrial occupations of women, Aphrodite gave her grace of manners, and taught her the arts of a beauty, while Hermes qualified her for the part of flattering and soothing. With the help of the Graces and Horae, Athene robed her with costly, beautiful robes, and decked her with flowers, so that, when all was done, Pandora, as they called her, might be irresistibly attractive to gods and men" (207-208).

<sup>17</sup> In his study of *Los soles truncos*, Juan G. Gelpí provides a detailed list of characteristics that relate the sisters with each of their parents ("Crisis" 125-26).

<sup>18</sup> Poetry from Spain's Golden Age, which acknowledges Petrarch as an important influence continuously, associates beauty with light complexion and blonde hair. See for example Garcilaso de la Vega's "Soneto XXIII" and Góngora's "Soneto CLXVI."

<sup>19</sup> The original reads: "Es hermoso como un dios nórdico" (23).

<sup>20</sup> Hortensia says to Inés: "Tienes el mismo de mamá Eugenia. [. . .] Y el mismo porte de una reina mora" (23).

<sup>21</sup> Celtiberian refers "to the Spanish race and culture resulting from the mixture of Iberians and Celts in North East Spain during Roman times" (Simon and Schuster's 1040).

<sup>22</sup> Marqués has declared that he did not know the proper name for this architectural construction, which he could have called by the popular name of *medialunas* (half moons). Instead he significantly chooses to refer to them as "truncated suns."

<sup>23</sup> The original reads: Al fondo, tres puertas persianas que dan al balcón. Las puertas están cerradas. Sobre cada una de las puertas hay un semicírculo de cristales en tres colores alternados: rojo, azul, amarillo.

<sup>24</sup> Bonnie Hildebrand Reynolds, however, finds that the colors are "linked to a spatial / temporal realm." She associates the color yellow with the outside world, specifically the sunlight; blue with Hortensia's past, and red she places at the end with the flames that "spread throughout the house" (25-26).

<sup>25</sup> Arce de Vázquez concurs with Rodríguez regarding the significance of the colors: "Los cristales amarillos corresponden a Hortensia muerta, los azules a la soñadora Emilia, los rojos a la enérgica y decidida Inés" (66).

<sup>26</sup> This reading reminds us of Louis XIV who was known as the Sun King. According to this web site source, "the sun was associated with Apollo, god of peace and arts, and was also the heavenly body which gave life to all things, regulating everything as it rose and set. Like Apollo, the warrior-king Louis XIV brought peace, was a patron of the arts, and dispensed his bounty. The regularity of his work habits and his ritual risings and retirings (*levee* and *couchee*) were another point of solar comparison. Throughout Versailles, decoration combines images and attributes of Apollo (laurel, lyre, tripod) with the king's portraits and emblems (the double LL, the royal crown, the scepter and hand of justice). The Apollo Salon is the main room of the

Grand Apartment because it was originally the monarch's state chamber. The path of the sun is also traced in the layout of the gardens" (<http://www.chateauversailles.fr/en/210.asp>).

<sup>27</sup> The original reads: "El sol se presenta en semicírculo al amanecer y al atardecer, que son las metáforas convencionales para la juventud y la vejez, siendo éste último el caso de *Los soles truncos*. Este ocaso no es sólo referente a la vejez individual sino a la vejez de una clase social: la clase aristocrática europea que 'reinaba' en Puerto Rico durante la época colonial" (44).

<sup>28</sup> We might also interpret her eagerness to let the sun in as a symbolic gesture of her willingness to accept the outside world, a world that otherwise threatens their "secure" past.

<sup>29</sup> In fall 1999, Maria de Francesco made the following observation in a graduate response paper: "La escena del incendio nos hace recordar y relacionar el ave mitológica el fénix – con la circularidad de la historia presentada. Según el mito, esta ave poderosa rendía culto al sol y se asociaba con la inmortalidad. Los egipcios creían que, en cualquier momento histórico, sólo un fénix podía existir. Al entregarse uno a la muerte, iba a su nido y se quemaba. De la ceniza de éste nacía el siguiente. Con relación al drama, se entiende que cada nuevo centro de autoridad tiene que rendirse a otra autoridad . . . otra autoridad conquistará al orden político y social actual."

<sup>30</sup> This particular version comes from The Britannica Concise.

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