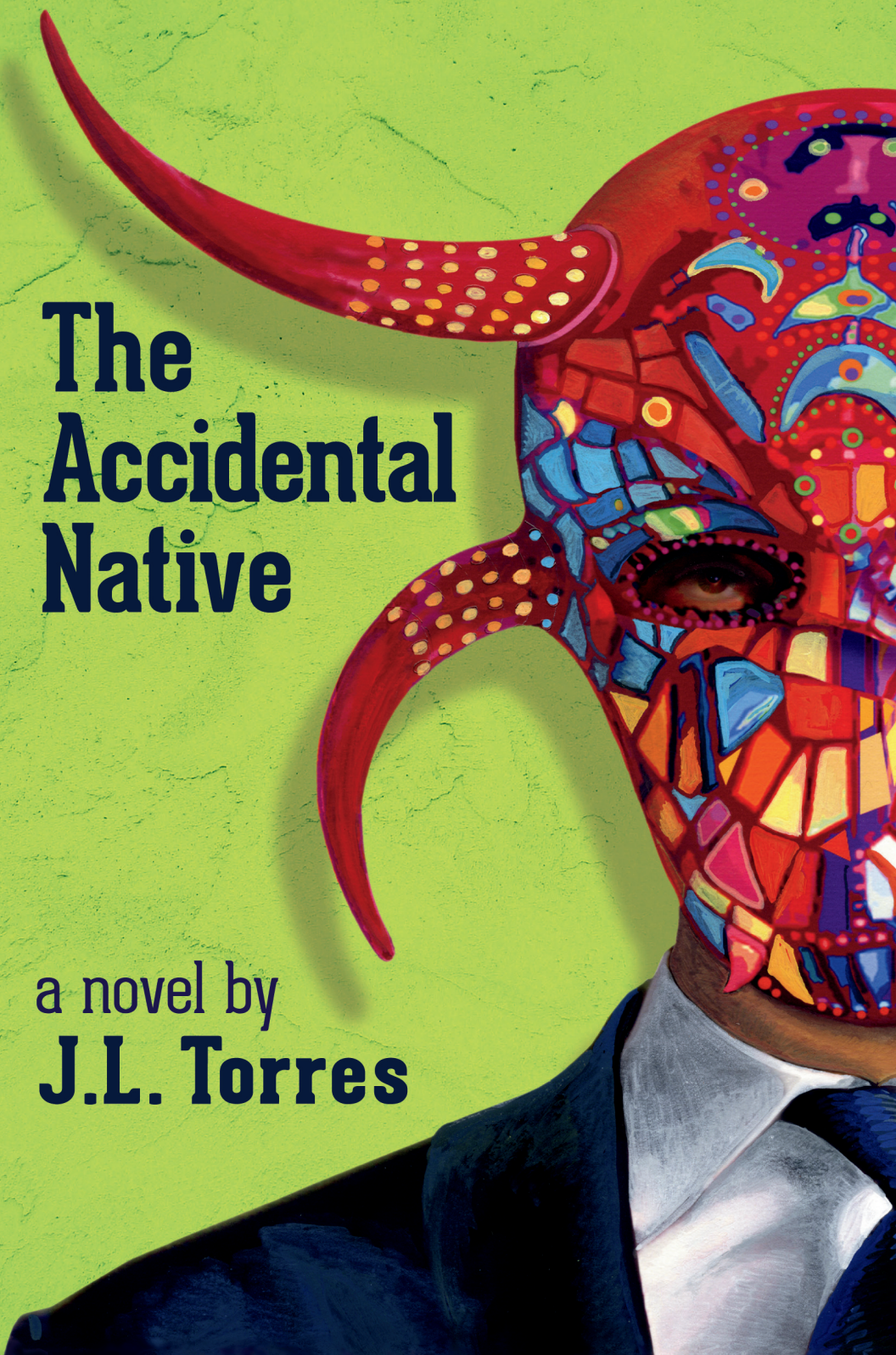


The Accidental Native

a novel by
J.L. Torres



The Accidental Native

**a novel by
J.L. Torres**



Arte Público Press
Houston, Texas

The Accidental Native is made possible through grants from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Recovering the past, creating the future

Arte Público Press
University of Houston
4902 Gulf Fwy, Bldg 19, Rm 100
Houston, Texas 77204-2004

Cover design and art by William David Powell

Torres-Padilla, José L.

The accidental native / By J.L. Torres.—First Edition.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-55885-777-3 (alk. paper)

1. Parents—Death—Fiction. 2. Traffic accidents—Fiction.
3. Birthmothers—Fiction. 4. Puerto Ricans—United States—
Fiction. I. Title.

PS3620.O62A64 2013

813'.6--dc23

2013022187

CIP

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

© 2013 by José L. Torres-Padilla
Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the Fulbright Program for granting me an opportunity to teach at the Universidad de Barcelona and Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. While on the Fulbright, I was also able to work on this novel. Special thanks to the Departments of English and German Philology in each institution. My Barcelona colleagues and friends, Cristina Alsina, Rodrigo Andrés and Raquel Serrano, I owe you so much for your hospitality, companionship and encouragement.

Thanks to my stateside friends and colleagues, Michael Carrino and Elizabeth Cohen for your insightful, thorough reading of early drafts of this novel. Your feedback helped tremendously; your encouragement and advice lifted me in moments of doubt. Thelma Carrino thanks for being such a great supportive friend. My colleagues at SUNY Plattsburgh, thanks for providing me with a wonderful, relatively sane place to work and grow.

I had the opportunity to receive encouragement and advice from Diana López and Selena Mclemore at the National Latino Writers Conference early in the process of writing this novel. Thanks to both of you and to the conference. David Powell, thank you so much for your artistic vision, designing gifts and patience. Lisa Sánchez González, Joanna B. Marshall, José Santos, thanks for your cover art feedback. My most appreciative thanks to Judith Ortiz Cofer, Ernesto Quiñonez, Ilan Stavans and Esmeralda Santiago for graciously offering their thoughts and comments on the novel.

This novel is set in Puerto Rico, not only geographically but emotionally. To my homeland and compatriots: I anguish with you until the decision that frees us. To those friends and colleagues who befriended me while living there, my warmest appreciation.

To those agents who passed on this novel but took time to offer constructive criticism, my sincerest thanks for your genuine comments that I incorporated into my revision.

My most profound gratitude to Arte Público Press for supporting Latina/o writers so they do not have to write to Peoria to be heard. To Nicolás Kanellos, your comments and edits made this novel better, and for that I am forever grateful. Un millón de gracias for having faith in my work. Gabriela Baeza Ventura, thanks for your meticulous reading of this novel and your spot on recommendations. Adelaida Mendoza, thank you for putting up with all my questions and anxieties. To the marketing and publicity crew at APP—Marina, Ashley and Carmen: you are the greatest; thanks for helping me to get out the word.

To the growing Latina/o reading population, thank you for supporting the literary voices of our communities.

As always, mucho amor y cariño to my wife Lee and sons, Alex and Julian, for your unconditional love and support, and for keeping my uprooted spirit grounded.

My deepest love to my mother, Marcelina Padilla, for always guiding me with her strength of character and moral fortitude; and my sister, Gladys and niece, Yari, por ese apoyo, siempre seguro. Thanks to my second familia: Celia López Vera, Ev, Big E, Lil and Mikey for the laughs, the big hugs and all that good food and love that goes with it.

Dedication

For every returning Puerto Rican;
and to those who remain unhomed.

Home is where one starts from.

T.S. Eliot