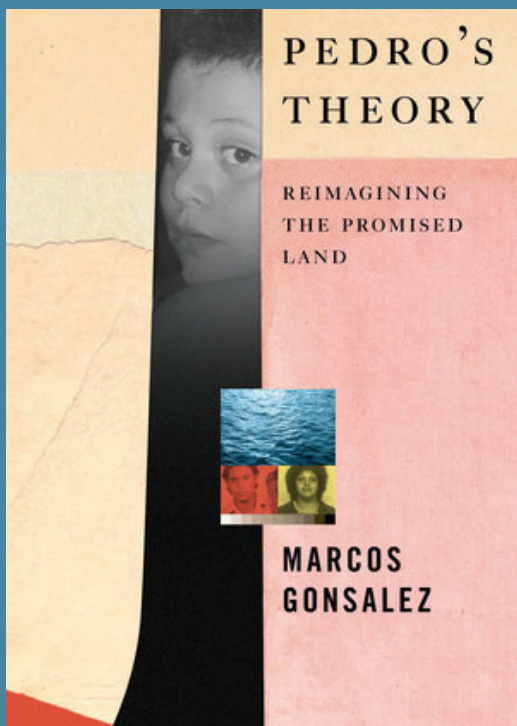


BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

PEDRO'S THEORY: REIMAGINING THE PROMISED LAND

MARCOS GONSALEZ



2021 BROOKLYN PUBLIC
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

There are many Pedros living in many Americas...

One Pedro goes to a school where they take away his language. Another disappears in the desert, leaving behind only a backpack. A cousin Pedro comes to visit, awakening feelings that others are afraid to make plain. A rumored Pedro goes missing so completely it's as if he were never there.

In *Pedro's Theory*, Marcos Gonzalez explores the lives of these many Pedros, real and imagined. Several are the author himself, while others are strangers, lovers, archetypes and the men he might have been in other circumstances. All are journeying to some sort of Promised Land, or hoping to discover an America of their own.

With sparkling prose and cutting insights, this brilliant literary debut closes the gap between who the world sees in us and who we see in ourselves. Deeply personal yet inspiringly political, it also brings to life those selves that never get the chance to be seen at all.

AUTHOR: MARCOS GONSALEZ

Marcos Gonzalez is an essayist and assistant professor of English living in New York City. *Pedro's Theory*, Gonzalez's book of autotheory, literary criticism and cultural analysis, is out now with Melville House. Gonzalez's essays have appeared in *Literary Hub*, *Public Books*, *Inside Higher Education*, *Ploughshares*, *Catapult*, *ASAP/Journal*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The New Inquiry* and elsewhere.



LEARN MORE ABOUT MARCOS AT MARCOSGONSALEZ.COM & IN SELECT INTERVIEWS:

PRISM MAGAZINE - "Interview with Our Epic CNF Judge Marcos Gonzalez"

ELECTRIC LIT - "There Are as Many Americas as There Are Pedros"

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

- ① **White privilege and superiority play an early theme in *Pedro's Theory*, especially with regard to language. How have these themes shaped the author's experience? What can be learned from the interaction Gonzalez's teacher has with him ("Do not speak that language here. Am I making myself clear?") at a very young and impressionable age?**
- ② **Much of Gonzalez's writing is an attempt to understand his younger selves and possible other selves he could have been. Does he succeed in portraying these various selves? Do you see his understanding of himself change over the course of the book? What does "identity" mean in *Pedro's Theory*?**
- ③ **How does the concept of "absence," physical or emotional, affect Marcos's upbringing and his relationship with his family?**

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- ④ How is language treated as a means of cultural eradication in *Pedro's Theory*? Are there ways in which acquiring a new language can be harmful? Alternatively, can language acquisition be a way to free oneself from one's past? What can we learn today about the way in which language and culture should be taught? How has Gonzalez been impacted by his ties to Spanish and English?**
- ⑤ Photographs are important to Gonzalez and recur throughout *Pedro's Theory*. But they are not always an accurate depiction of life, such as when Gonzalez notices how there are no photographs of his mother and grandmother together. What does Gonzalez's writing reveal that the photographs do not?**
- ⑥ Who does David symbolize? How does David's theory leave its subject in a never-ending cycle of "damned if you do, damned if you don't"? In a general sense, how does it unfairly stereotype and shame people of color?**

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- 7** Gonzalez writes, “The cultures we live in create the bully. Bullies are not some miraculous thing that emerge from the void. They are products of a greater evil.” Where do bullies come from? Is there something to be learned about the art of parenting in *Pedro's Theory*? How could future generations benefit from this book?
- 8** When Gonzalez talks about how his town robbed him of a childhood, what does he mean? How do you define childhood? How does a physical location connect and shape a person's perspective of the world as they grow up?
- 9** Themes of appearance and queerness also play a role in *Pedro's Theory*. Gonzalez writes of his arrival in New York, “I don't have to be that everyday Pedro anymore.” What does he mean by this? How has Gonzalez's metaphor of “Pedro” shaped his outlook on life, especially in regards to assimilation?

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- 10** Is the idea of a “Promised Land” fluid? Can it change over time? Why or why not? Where do you believe Gonzalez’s Promised Land is, if it exists at all?
- 11** What is it that finally changes Marcos’s mind about giving up on and distancing himself from his father? By the end of *Pedro’s Theory*, what has Gonzalez come to believe is best in its place?
- 12** By the end of *Pedro’s Theory*, how has Gonzalez reconciled with his identity and his family?

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CULTURAL CONNECTION IN NEW YORK CITY

- El Museo del Barrio / 1230 5th Ave.
 - El Museo del Barrio, New York's leading Latinx cultural institution, welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic landscape of Latinx, Caribbean and Latin American cultures.
- José Julián Martí Statue / W 59th St. & Center Dr.
 - Sculptor Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington (1876–1973) created this larger-than-life bronze equestrian statue depicting Cuban patriot and author José Martí (1853–1895). [nycgovparks.org](https://www.nycgovparks.org).

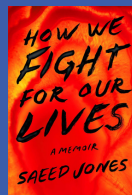
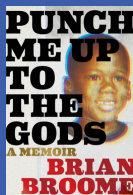


Exterior of El Museo del Barrio. Photo by Luis Camnitzer ©

BKLYN BOOKMATCH READALIKES

Did you enjoy *Pedro's Theory*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below:

- *Somewhere We Are Human: Authentic Voices on Migration, Survival and New Beginnings* edited by Reyna Grande and Sonia Guiñansaca
- *Punch Me Up to the Gods: A Memoir* by Brian Broome
- *The Argonauts* by Maggie Nelson
- *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel: Essays* by Alexander Chee
- *High-Risk Homosexual: A Memoir* by Edgar Gomez
- *How We Fight for Our Lives: A Memoir* by Saeed Jones



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