

DOMINICANAS UNBOUND: RELIGION, CULTURE AND POLITICS IN  
DOMINICAN AND DOMINICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE

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By

Maisha Mitchell, M.A.

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Maisha Mitchell, M.A.

Thesis Advisor: Tania Gentic, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

What is the connection between contemporary Dominican literature and Louis Althusser's theories about how the ruling classes are able to maintain power? I conclude that there is a sector of Dominican literature that gives an inside look at how groups that have traditionally been classified as marginalized, specifically women, the poor and Afro-descendants have survived within specific hegemonies since the early twentieth century on the island and in the U.S. Angie Cruz, Nelly Rosario, Maritza Loida Pérez, Julia Álvarez Marta Rivera and Marisela Rizik are Dominican and Dominican American women whose novels illustrate the daily struggles of those who do not belong to the mainstream, yet make a space for themselves in which to live despite the challenges they face in their respective eras and countries. I examine these challenges in the context of two of Althusser's best known theories, those of ideological state apparatuses or ISAs (such as religion, education, family, law, politics, culture, the media and the economy) and repressive state apparatuses or RSAs (such as the government, military, police, courts and prisons).

I utilize three main ideologies through which to analyze the literature discussed in this work: religion, culture and dictatorship, or two ISAs and one RSA. With regards to religion I argue that the novels, *Soledad*, *El tiempo del olvido*, *Geographies of Home* and

*In the Time of the Butterflies* illustrate the marginalized's ability to use their faith systems to attempt to avoid being oppressed by the dominant society whose religious system does not offer them relief. I then propose that *Soledad*, *Song of the Water Saints*, and *He olvidado tu nombre* show how subaltern subjects are affected by the culture of the ruling classes, specifically how it often causes the subaltern subject to find itself caught between its own cultural norms and those of mainstream society producing a hybrid identity or a completely new one that is forced to assimilate. Lastly, I explore the effects of the Trujillo regime upon those who opposed it in *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *Let it Rain Coffee* and *El tiempo del olvido* by discussing how the novels' characters represent Antonio Gramsci's organic and traditional intellectuals coming together to effect political change in the Dominican Republic.

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## Introduction

### **From Colony to Tyranny to Freedom: A Look at Dominicans(?) Past and Present**

Dominican and Dominican American women's literature is a rich but little studied area, one that deserves recognition because it prompts discussions about religion, society and military power among other topics. The trajectory of this work will address these three areas in particular and their connection to contemporary works produced by Dominican women on the island as well as Dominican American women in the United States. While these two groups of women occupy different physical spaces, oftentimes they have common sociocultural experiences because they share common roots. This is not only because Dominican transnationals in the States bring with them their histories and cultures from the island, but also because the United States has played such a significant and continued role in Dominican history since 1913. Thus, the study of contemporary Dominican literature demands an understanding of Dominican and United States's history in order to gain a fruitful analysis of the works produced by these authors. The connection between the two nations will be discussed later on in this chapter. It is my intention to continue the dialogue about contemporary Dominican literature in the same vein as Nestor Rodríguez's *Divergent Dictions: Contemporary Dominican Literature*. Rodríguez suggests that much of the Dominican literary tradition has lain in the hands of a favored few, an elite group of Dominicans who have had access to university education on the island, in Europe and in the United States and that recently a new generation has appeared comprised of young authors, products of a post-Trujillo Dominican Republic, and at times a hybrid nationality. This group of young authors often relates stories that give readers an inside look at the more marginalized groups in society, that is, the Afro-

Dominicans, Dominican women as well as middle class Dominicans with working class roots. It is these new voices that offer new directions for Dominican literature in the future and will hopefully begin to carve out a space within Spanish as well as Latino literature. While Rodríguez offers insightful analyses of contemporary stars of the field such as Junot Díaz, Rita Indiana Hernández, Josefina Báez and Manuel Rueda, I hope to continue to contribute to the discussion by focusing on Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido*, Angie Cruz's *Soledad* and *Let it Rain Coffee*, Loida Marita Pérez's *Geographies of Home*, Nellie Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints*, Marta Rivera's *He olvidado tu nombre*, and Julia Álvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*. While all of these novels deal with religion, mass media and military power in their own ways, they also by virtue of focusing on Dominican life introduce the questions of race and class, which will also be addressed later in this chapter. These topics are commonly found throughout modern literatures; however, it is my opinion that the representations of power systems and how the people who live within them are able to navigate them, offer a look at the subaltern that may be completely unknown to the members of the mainstream. This is not to say that Spivak's subaltern is allowed to represent itself as itself per se, but that those with subaltern roots are now creating works that introduce the subaltern to audiences to whom they may not have previously been at all visible.<sup>1</sup>

Since this work deals primarily with the theme of power, in particular the challenges of the Other in the face of religious, sociocultural and political hegemonies, a particular philosophy will be used to explore the representation of their operation. Louis Althusser proposes in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* that modern day power structures can be divided into two categories: ideological state apparatuses and repressive

state apparatuses or ISAs and RSAs.<sup>2</sup> ISAs include the following institutions: religion, culture, media, education, family, law, politics, trade union. Ideologies function primarily through their interpellative nature, that is, by their ability to “call” a subject that they themselves have created. Althusser uses the example of a policeman hailing a citizen on the street. The citizen will stop not because he has to but because his very consciousness is determined by compliance with the officer. In a similar manner the policeman himself has no power, but as a representative of the law, he has the right to call out to the citizen and expects him to stop when he is addressed. The relationship between the policeman and the citizen is by nature an *illusion* according to Althusser, one that has been created by ideology, which has a tendency to at best create an *illusion* to reality. Ideology allows subjects to “recognize” themselves in their world but this recognition is at best a misrecognition.<sup>3</sup> What ideology does then, according to Althusser, is to cause subjects who live by its tenets to relate to reality in a prescribed manner. This itself is a definition of power: the ability of a system to make subjects perceive reality in the manner that the first party wishes them to do. ISAs are able to function primarily because of this misrecognition that subjects internalize and essentially act out. RSAs include the government, army, police, courts, prisons and administration. Both RSAs and ISAs work together to maintain state power, however the main difference between them is that RSAs function primarily by violence and ISAs function primarily by ideology. RSAs exist essentially to ensure the enforcement of the ISAs of the ruling classes. Those subjects who do not adhere to the norms set down by ISAs can be punished. For instance, if a student does not follow the rules of behavior set down by their school and represented by his principal she or he may be expelled. Transgression of rules is to be met with a penalty

of some sort and this can include incarceration for those subjects who disagree with the government's legal system.

This work will analyze the aforementioned novels utilizing Althusser's ISA and RSA theories in conjunction with those of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jessica Benjamin, and Antonio Gramsci. First, I will address the theory of religion as an ISA that is used in order to legitimize the RSA of the *trujillato* Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina and how marginalized groups in Dominican society use and used their own religious systems in order to survive oppressive power structures. Second, I will explore the theory of mass media and culture as ISAs, in particular, the dominance of American culture in Dominican American communities and on the island as well. Third, I will discuss the *trujillato* as an RSA and how different types of intellectuals developed their own or adopted alternative political ISAs in order to struggle against the dictatorship and encourage others to do so too. The power systems in this discussion each have their own historical context. For instance the history of religion as hegemony in the Dominican Republic has distinct colonial roots as part of the first colonial system in the New World.

The use of the media as a means of controlling populations, in particular through movies and television is relatively new, but the idea of a few deciding what is and is not promoted in society is goes back centuries if not eons. <sup>4</sup> The media has come to be an extremely effective tool whether used as propaganda in a dictatorship or to promote consumption in a democracy during the last 80 or so years. In a similar vein, the use of military power to conquer nations and peoples has also been around for millennia, but I will discuss both Dominican and American military histories as both countries' military powers have adversely and positively affected Dominicans and Dominican Americans

through their rule. The following is a brief albeit comprehensive historical discussion of religion, the media and military power structures in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

### **A Silent Minority? : Afrosyncretic belief systems in the Dominican Republic**

When looked at through a strictly hegemonic lens, religion as an ISA is an extremely powerful system, one that typically does not require much external control. This is because religion itself is a set of rules that subjects often personally and voluntarily internalize to the extent that they become part of their everyday lives. Organized religion is a system where a few have ecclesiastical power over thousands and possibly millions of believers. In a similar manner, Spanish colonization was essentially the rule of the monarchy over overseas territories that most Spaniards would not ever see, territories that were homes to millions of souls who became subjects of and subjugated by the crown. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the cradle of Western colonization, religion played a key role and it is the socioreligious systems of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that would serve as the archetypes for later hegemonies in the nineteenth and twentieth. The Taíno cosmology present in Hispaniola at the time of Columbus's arrival in the late fifteenth century eventually gave way to Roman Catholicism, a process that began with Jeronymite evangelization of the diminished Indigenous population. During Spanish colonization, one's religious beliefs came to indicate not only their faith, but their identity as well, a concept that was present in fifteenth and sixteenth century Spain. So it was in Hispaniola; those *criollos*, whether they were loyal to the crown and enjoyed economic privilege, or those who fought against the monarchy's attempts to undermine their financial freedoms, still saw themselves as white and Christian as opposed to *indio* or

*negro* and *pagano*. As the *criollo* population continued to hold both economic and social power in Dominican society during the colonial era and continues to do so today, their attitudes towards alternate belief systems were disseminated among members of the middle, lower and enslaved classes. These socioreligious attitudes can also be seen in the nineteenth and twentiethcenturies, periods that saw Dominican identity become defined as that which is not Haitian (San Miguel 39). Much of the root of these Manichean identity categories is present in the perceived history of Haiti's domination of the Dominican Republic. From 1822 until 1844 Haiti's then leader, Jean Pierre Boyer disempowered both the *mulâtre* elite of Haiti as well as the Dominican *criollos* leading to his political downfall and loss of the eastern two thirds of the island. On February 27<sup>th</sup> 1844, Juan Pablo Duarte, Ramón Matías Mella, and Francisco del Rosario Sánchez established Dominican independence and returned power to the *criollos* who continued to battle against the Haitians who tried to regain control of the Dominican Republic from 1844 to 1855 (Torres Saillant, 127). Haitian rule in the Dominican Republic has often been depicted as a dark period of Dominican history with Haitian officials exacting unwarranted cruelties against the general Dominican populace. However, in an attempt to unify the island and perhaps wrest economic power from the *criollos*, slavery was abolished in the Dominican Republic and land was given to former slaves under Boyer (Moya Pons 125). Clearly for the Dominican Republic's landed *criollos* no good could come from Haiti and thus began the construction of what would become a prescribed notion of Dominicaness: whiteness as opposed to blackness, Spanish as opposed to Kréyol and Roman Catholicism as opposed to *vodú*. This ideology became necessary to the *criollos* who felt a distinction had to be

made between themselves and the Haitian population in order to justify the nation's break from Haitian rule.

Afro and Afrosyncretic religious systems were discouraged in the Dominican Republic not only for cultural but political reasons as well. As far as the Dominican elite was concerned, Haiti was the antithesis of all things European. Its African peoples fought for and won their independence from France, spoke Kreyòl, a language that had West African vocabulary and structures, and they practiced voodoo, another tie to West Africaness that further separated them from European culture. While this was the general conception of what Haitians were, the Dominican elite also knew that there was a ruling Haitian elite as well, composed of the whitest of that population, namely the *mulâtres* and the *quaterons*, but it was important to project the idea that a Dominican and *majority mulata* population should not be ruled by a people so different from they (Torres Saillant 129). Voodoo was seen as the worst of what Haiti had to offer the Dominican Republic, and it is popularly believed that today's Dominican adherents of *vodú* and *gagá* learned most of their religious practices from Haitians who came to live in the Dominican Republic during Boyer's 22 year rule, and that before this time, Afrosyncretic belief systems in the country were minimal to non-existent (Davis 20). However the Dominican Republic as the cradle of blackness in the Americas certainly had a West African religious influence present in its enslaved population well before the nineteenth century (Torres Saillant 126). In the early seventeenth century, many Africans brought from West Africa became members of *cofradías* or religious brotherhoods. These groups were modeled after their Spanish counterparts that had existed since the end of the fourteenth century in the Andalusian cities Seville and Málaga (Davis 78). The Spanish *ingenio* owners would often group Africans

from the same cultures and ethnicities into the same *cofradías* in an attempt to foster inter-ethnic rivalries. What happened instead was the flourishing of West African religious practices that remained intact due to the commonalities shared by those members of the *cofradías* who were supposed to be venerating the white images of God, Jesus, the Blessed Mother and the Catholic saints. The Africans continued to pass their reinforced belief systems to the children born to them in the New World and continued fellowship with many newly arrived Biafrans, Mandigans and Brans who added to their numbers and were even further inclined toward adhering to the religious practices of their homelands. This reality proved a volatile powder keg for whites in the then colony of Spain since slave rebellions became more and more prevalent; the newly arrived African population's contribution to the *cofradías* added more fuel to the religious fire. Those who had perhaps been stolen from Africa in childhood or adolescence and had forgotten some of the practices associated with their religions now had access to a broader knowledge base; the Africans' true identity burgeoned forth in their religious rituals making it harder for them to assimilate to the harsh realities of enslavement. Eventually, fewer and fewer Africans were imported from the Senegambia region, and their religious influence weakened over time (Davis 82).

Much later evidence exists that alternate faith systems in the Dominican Republic continued to be considered a threat to government authorities. During the American occupation of the island from 1916 to 1924 there was an attempt to quash the growing popularity of Olivorio Mateo, a man from San Juan de la Maguana. Known to his followers the *olivoristas* as "Liborio," Mateo was a known spiritual healer and diviner with a numerous Afro Dominican base who believed himself to be a divinely sent leader of the people, who would reach the age of 33, Christ's age when he was crucified (Davis 21).

Mateo's popularity exploded during a dismal time for many Dominicans. While the U.S. Navy established an internal revenue system, the Dominican National Guard, paid government workers' salaries, planned to continue the construction of national highways and to eliminate illiteracy, it also confiscated Dominicans' arms. Many Dominicans were arbitrarily arrested, tortured and imprisoned (Moya Pons 322). While some applauded the progress the country was making under American rule, still many others saw the American occupation as an invasion that trampled the rights of Dominican citizens. Ultimately, Mateo's popularity grew to such heights that people no longer feared the local level Dominican civil authority that carried on an armed struggle with Mateo and his men for two years. The U.S. military assisted Dominican government officials in killing Mateo and many of the *olivoristas* in 1922 and proceeded to drag his body through the streets of San Juan and Azua so that people would know that he was actually dead (Davis 21).

This state-sanctioned act of violence against a spiritual leader was not an isolated event. After Trujillo's assassination in May of 1961, the country was in a state of upheaval until the election of Juan Bosch in December of 1962. During this time period, the Liborio movement, deemed "magical-religious" by authorities, resurfaced in Palma Sola under the leadership of the Ventura Rodríguez brothers Plinio and León Romilio. An online article reports that on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962, Palma Sola's citizens witnessed the massacre of 44 people, including women and children and the arrest of 675 others. Many believed Plinio was killed in this attack by members of the Dominican National Police. Speculation still surrounds the possible cause of the murder, particularly if it was the attempt to squelch any political aspirations that the brothers may have had at the time, which León has never confirmed (Espinosa Rosario, Minaya, "Palma Sola en la memoria de los dominicanos").

Mr. Ventura Rodríguez has remained in Palma Sola and has stated that he no longer wishes to talk about the subject “knowing that dozens of boys and girls, men and women might have been killed for purely political reasons” (Trans. mine) and he has expressed his desire to one day see the salvation of the world (Espinosa Rosario, Minaya, “Palma Sola en la memoria de los dominicanos”). The stark difference between the *olivoristas* of 1922 and those of 1962 was the fact that members of the latter group were ambushed and killed while the earlier group had carried on a two year battle. It is very likely that despite the fact that Juan Bosch was popularly elected during the time of the Palma Sola movement, there were some factions present among Dominicans who might not agree with his policies even though he was a known critic of the *Trujillato* forced into exile after the regime tried to purchase his silence. Perhaps in such an unstable political environment, the fear was that too many political factions arising would result in a power struggle that would plunge the nation to its pre-Trujillo era chaos with either U.S. intervention or a succession of quickly deposed presidents. Any popular movement that might have roots in an alternative faith system also indicated the question of race as many of the *olivoristas* were clearly of African descent, a problematic characteristic of those who might have wished to ascend to the office of president during the 1960’s. Some would argue that it is still a factor in presidential elections as evidenced by the 1994 elections where Dr. José Francisco Gómez Peña was demonized for his African phenotype which led many to believe that he was a Haitian Voodoo practitioner, when he was in fact born in the Dominican Republic’s Cibao region (Cambeira 203).

Alternative Dominican belief systems play a central role in the daily lives of many of the country’s citizens. Besides the Afrosyncretic *gagá* there is also folk Catholicism,

which includes elements of European folk Catholicism as well as local folk practices. For instance the *misa del gallo* or Mass of the Rooster, is a popular Christmas Eve celebration, so named because it is popularly believed that the only time that roosters crowed at night was the night Christ was born thus they would be the among the first beings to announce His birth. This practice was common in Barcelona before being introduced to the Latin America. The “official” Church, that is to say the Church that followed the Roman rite has actively discouraged such folk practices because canonical beliefs are either omitted or revised in folk Catholicism. Furthermore, like other alternative religious practices folk Catholicism is considered a threat to the political status quo (Davis 51, 52) and many official Catholic churches have attempted to win converts from folk Catholic groups in an attempt to illustrate the inaccuracy of folk Catholicism practices. One of the reasons for the spread of folk Catholicism in the Dominican Republic was the shortage of priests, making the evangelization of some folk Catholics in their opinion “difficult to evangelize” as their ties to the official practices of the Catholic church were weak (Levitt 77).

Dominican *gagá* and *vodú* are more than simple copies of their Haitian counterparts. Overall, they are generally less structured than Haitian, Trinidadian, Cuban and Brazilian systems. For example, there are few official initiation ceremonies, and positions within the *cofradías* are not hereditary as they are in Haiti (Davis 56). Those who wish to perform rituals must be taught by present members, but their positions may be held by many. In addition, in the Dominican traditions, the dead are not worshipped unless as *loas* or gods, nor is music used as much as it is in the Haitian tradition. Both traditions emphasize healing and advising their followers, a role that *servidores*, or those believed to have special extrasensory powers, carry out in many fashions whether through spiritual

cleansing or *despojo*, using traditional medicines, or pleading on behalf of believers to the various *loas* of the pantheon. Oftentimes in the Dominican Republic, there are more *servidoras* than *servidores* in the *cofradías* (Davis 291). This reality offers women a position of power in an otherwise patriarchal society because as *servidoras* their main responsibility becomes tending to the wishes of the *loas* before those of their husbands, replacing their spouses as the most powerful members of the households and marriages. *Servidoras* are offered money for their assistance *and* their believed direct connection with the *loas* is often perceived by many as direct protection as well. If a *servidora's* husband should mistreat her, there exists the fear that either she may call on the *loas* to avenge her or that an angry *loa* will automatically come to her aid.

*Geographies of Home* follows the lives of a large Dominican American family, in particular the parents Papito and Aurelia's struggles to provide spiritual and moral support for their 14 children in what can be a harsh America. Much of the novel is told through the perspective of Aurelia and the couple's youngest daughter Iliana, it is through their narratives that the reader also becomes acquainted with the results that physical and mental abuse have had upon the children in their adult years despite Papito and Aurelia's strict religious upbringing. In the novel the role of *servidora* is represented as a vital part of not only the Dominican community but also of the Dominican family as well. Bienvenida, Aurelia's mother, is the local midwife, advisor, seer and healer in her small rural town. She wishes to impart her gifts to her children. Unfortunately, her son Virgilio commits suicide because he is unable to understand or cope with his visions of the spirit world. While saddened by the loss of her son, Bienvenida still hopes that her daughter Aurelia will cultivate her family's spiritual gifts and continue to help others. However, Aurelia chooses

to distance herself from her mother's belief system since she sees it as the cause of Virgilio's demise and turns instead to her husband Papito's religion, Adventism. After many years in the United States, her family begins to degenerate; the children fight amongst each other, suffer from mental problems, sickness and abuse. It is not until she witnesses the results of her own daughter Marina's attempted suicide that she remembers that she has access to another belief system that empowers her to affect change in herself and in her children's lives. Pérez's novel parallels this Afrosyncretic system with Christian Adventism and does not favor one over the other; rather Pérez novel emphasizes the importance of an individual's spirituality more so than his religion. *Geographies of Home* makes it very clear that while following the rituals and rules are important, that it is even more important to pursue the spiritual forces *behind* those rituals and rules.

Another *servidora* who plays a critical role in her family's life is Gorda, Soledad's aunt in *Soledad*. Angie Cruz's novel introduces the reader to Soledad, a young woman who feels torn at times between the customs and beliefs of her Dominican American family largely represented by Gorda and her desire to assimilate into the broader American society that she sees as an escape. Although Gorda is not explicitly described in the novel as having gone through the training needed to become a *servidora* she is representative of this population. When her sister Olivia goes into a catatonic state, the family does not take her to a hospital but they decide to take care of her themselves, seeing the problem as purely spiritual rather than physical and she is described as being spiritually beaten. It is Gorda and Doña Sosa, her mother who tend to Olivia putting her in bed and keeping a vigil of sorts until she wakes up. It is Gorda who gives Olivia's home a *despojo* and encourages Soledad to become more in tune with her mother spiritually in order to help her. In addition

to this, Gorda has paranormal encounters with the spirits present in Olivia's home and in an attempt to stop the illness she places glasses of water all around the apartment. As in *Geographies of Home* the spiritual gifts seem to be passed from one generation to the next. Even though Gorda is going through a tough period with her teenage daughter Flaca, it is Flaca who uses her spiritual gifts at a pivotal point in the novel's plot that changes its trajectory.

Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido* features Lorenza Parduz, a woman who is an active member of an Afrosyncretic religious rural community in an island nation that is similar to the Dominican republic. She is the matrilineal descendant of the women of La Costa, a "mystical" *maniel* or community of runaway slaves that has intrigued many throughout the island's history. Each woman in the family holds a special place in the village as a member of the town council, dream interpreter and diviner. In addition to this the Parduz women also determine the best times for La Costa to plant its crops. Lorenza's daughter Herminia goes on to marry Abelardo, a character based on Trujillo who abuses both his wife and the country. It is not until Herminia begins to have a relationship with Lorenza and thus connects to the alternative religious system of which her mother is a part that she begins to free herself from psychological wounds left from years of both psychological and physical damage that Abelardo has inflicted upon her. Rizik's representation of *gagá* and *vodú* is positive, not in opposition to a negative representation of Roman Catholicism but as alternative view of the marginalized people who belong to *gagá* and *vodú* sects in the Dominican Republic. Lorenza is shown as being proud of her African heritage, her religious traditions, her *campesina* background and her spiritual

healing knowledge. Rather than being embarrassed by these roots as Herminia is initially, she uses her gifts to aid her daughter and Herminia is able to find her independence.

In each of the novels mentioned above, religion occupies a principal space within the lives of each of the characters. It is the source of power and relief for those in the helpless or hopeless situations in which they find themselves, that is, when the dominant societies in which they live offer no alternative but to be spiritually or emotionally destroyed and destitute. While one of the main antagonists to the characters in *Geographies of Home*, *Soledad*, and *El tiempo del olvido* is poverty, which marginalizes the characters, there is an alternative system of beliefs that “enriches” their lives when the pressures of society attempt to leave them spiritually and emotionally bereft. These Afrosyncretic religions offer a place where people who look, think, and believe as they do are able to provide answers to problems. Furthermore the Afrosyncretic belief systems specifically encourage female as well as male leadership, giving Afro-Latina women a system in which they are in control of their bodies, lives and spirits. This religious space is at times a domestic one with female relatives officiating religious ceremonies. However, alongside this religious system exists a significantly influential external one, one that competes with the family’s influence over the children.

**Be an individual...like everyone else.**

While religion carries weight with the subject in Dominican and Dominican American women’s literature, the media has been noted as being a powerfully effective tool when it comes to controlling the masses. In addition to Althusser’s suggestion that ideologies are interpellative, that is, they “call” to the subjects that they themselves have created and the subjects respond accordingly, one can add Adorno and Horkheimer’s

theories from “The Culture Industry,” primarily that: “the whole world is made to pass through [its] filter [...]. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer’s guideline. [...] Every sound film and every broadcast program infers the social effect which is exclusive to none but shared by all alike” (Adorno and Horkheimer 126-127). Horkheimer and Adorno think that, instead of art imitating life what you have are instances of art created in such a way to make it look like it produces life. This is essentially a newer form of control, one that is far more sophisticated because it does not require the use of force or chattel slavery in order to achieve the ruling class’s desired ends. If subjects can be made to desire that which is presented to them through mass media such as movies, television and nowadays the internet, there will no longer be any need for a visible source of authority because the subjects’ desires can now be controlled by external influences. Such is Jessica Benjamin’s theory in regards to Adorno’s theories on the fascist culture of 1930s Germany and conformist American culture. The subject was formerly under the authority of the father in the household and not only obeyed him but identified with him. Once the father lost his ability to provide for his family on his own terms (i.e. as a farmer, merchant or artisan) in modern society, the subject began to look toward authoritative sources outside the home with which to identify. The father’s influence and role as the subject’s superego fell in the face of a new external power, the media, that was now able to serve not only as a new superego but also had the ability to directly manipulate the subject’s id making the subject’s ego almost non-existent. For example, the subject wants a new bicycle not because she or he may necessarily need one, but because the media has continuously promoted the bicycle

as being *the* desirable object for those subjects who wish to belong to a certain socioeconomic class or group.

In *Soledad*, Angie Cruz's characters differ in the way they have internalized what the wider American society has deemed desirable. For instance Soledad, the novel's main protagonist, sees herself as different from the people who live in her Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan. Although born to foreign-born parents, Soledad wants little to do with Dominican cultural norms and distances herself from her mother Olivia and the rest of her family when she chooses to attend Cooper Union, a small private arts college downtown, far away from her neighborhood. For Soledad, being American has more to do with having an advanced education, adopting the likes and dislikes of the middle class, living in "better" neighborhoods and pursuing one's artistic endeavors. Soledad's younger teenage cousin Flaca, on the other hand, is the complete opposite of Soledad; although the two were born in the United States, Flaca is consciously a proud defender of all things Dominican and strongly identifies with the enclave in which she lives. For her, being a Dominican American means being aware of one's island roots and desiring to remain connected to them as much as possible by remaining in the neighborhood. However even as Flaca adheres to a prescribed "Dominican" identity in the States, she is also the product of American and American media culture. For instance, she frequently disobeys her mother Gorda's wishes, an attribute that is seen as a negative trait for adolescents on the island, frequently thinks about the American movies she has seen, spends much of her time watching English-speaking television programs, eats at American fast food restaurants and is best friends with Caty, a neighborhood Haitian girl, a relationship that might not be encouraged in the Dominican Republic. These attributes of course represent a constructed

identity but one that betrays Flaca's "Americaness" as much as her "Dominicaness." It is perhaps her relationship with Caty that best signifies how American Flaca really is; she identifies with Caty as simply another teenage daughter of immigrant parents, a reality that is an important part of being in a country made up of people from other nations.

In the same vein, Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* features four generations of Dominican and Dominican American women, Graciela, Mercedes, Amalfi and Leila. Graciela, the family matriarch, comes from a poor rural area but has always had dreams of a better life, one in which she would be able to afford luxuries such as travel, a fine house and money. Abandoned or widowed by her young husband and pregnant, she takes up with Casimiro, a good natured but lazy man who seems content with what Graciela has given him, companionship, a home, and being part of a community. Graciela, unhappy with being a mother and a partner, decides to go on a journey to experience the life of a woman of means, earning her way through various towns and ultimately meeting with her undoing. While Graciela's character lives in the 1920's Dominican Republic, she is aware of others living within the country in relative wealth and has her first exposures to their lives when she takes her weekly trips to the market to treat herself to popcorn and stare at passersby in their elegant clothing and riding in carriages and occasionally cars. So tempted is she by the life that she thinks that she is missing, she goes on to destroy her chances of happiness. In this regard, Rosario suggests that what the dominant culture has to offer is not always best and extols the simple ways of country life. Mercedes, Graciela's daughter goes on to become a well to do married religious merchant who adheres to the Trujillato's propaganda. Although she comes from simple *campesina* roots, upon becoming her own boss she makes sure to publicly declare her loyalty to the regime and becomes a product

of the dictatorship. Later in life she decides that she wants more for her children than she can provide in the Dominican Republic and moves with her family to the United States with her husband, son and her granddaughter Leila. The family leaves Amalfi, Mercedes's daughter and Leila's mother behind on the island, and Leila grows up experiencing many of the challenges that *Soledad's* Flaca does. Caught between the stronger American ideals of a God-given independence and the old fashioned ways of her grandparents, Leila rebels against their strict ways to her own detriment, much like her great-grandmother Graciela. She is drawn to the excitement of city life and resents the fact that Amalfi has never come to visit her in 11 years. This leaves Leila even more open to the influences of the American culture industry despite the fact that she has three authority figures with whom she lives; it is the absence of her most desired authority figure, her mother, that engenders Leila's anger and rebellion.

*He olvidado tu nombre* by Marta Rivera is perhaps the best representation of Adorno and Horkheimer's theories on the culture industry. This is because the novel's protagonist is actually two: María and María's alter ego Rain. The novel mainly takes place in Santo Domingo but also features vignettes of the two women's travels to the United States, the Caribbean and Europe. María's character serves as a metaphor for the double consciousness that Dominicans experienced during the 70's and 80's, after Trujillo's death but during Balaguer's 12 year rule, a time when foreign investment dominated the Dominican economy. The United States not only became a critical player in Dominican politics after the 1965 civil war, but, through its economic rule, set the cultural standard for all levels of Dominican society, from the upper classes to the poor farmers whose industry had been replaced by tourism. The country, still fresh from

wounding itself began to look north for influence concerning fashion, movies, music, art and language. The old propaganda of the dictatorship was gone and replaced with what was deemed a much more liberal and modern way of life that young people, particularly from the middle to upper classes, had the luxury of emulating. The novel questions the effects of the American culture industry upon a generation of young Dominicans trying to find their own identity. María's character represents that generation of Dominicans who came of age at a time when they were trying their best to claim their "Dominicaness" in the face of such powerful cultural influences from abroad, while Rain represents the struggle of young Dominicans who find themselves torn between emulating American norms and being loyal to their Dominican roots. On the outside María seems like any normal person. She goes to college, has relationships, travels and matures. Rain on the other hand, while good friends with María is depicted as struggling to find answers about social problems and systems of power, but more than anything Rain struggles with finding out about herself, an allusion to the effects of the culture industry on the subject. Led by whatever is trending, Rain has a series of relationships with various men with whom she cannot relate, experiments with drugs, cuts herself, experiments sexually with another woman and has a nervous breakdown. Despite all of this María is always there for Rain, that is she is, always in touch with her inner self. However, the most telling part of the novel is Rain's complaint about what the city of Santo Domingo has now become now that she and María are older. It is in this passage that the effects of the culture industry's interpellation become evident: the subject eventually disassociates itself from itself and no longer recognizes who it truly is, thus rendering the subject unable to remember its own name.

## **Might, White and Right**

While the culture industry is an effective tool for psychologically controlling the masses during peace time, it is often the military that first subjugates populations through force. Military might has always been key in maintaining power in the Dominican Republic, making the interstices of power neither white nor black but a gray area. As a Hispano-Caribbean nation, traditionally the *peninsulares* and later the *criollos* had the most influence during the colonial period. Later the descendants of the *criollos* would continue a legacy of military violence well into the twentieth century that will be discussed shortly. The forced labor of the Taíno population was the basis of the initial power structure in the colony drawn along racial lines. But one of the reasons that the Europeans were able to establish this structure here in Hispaniola and other colonized regions throughout the globe was their weaponry. At the time of the encounter the Taínos major weaponry consisted of bows and arrows whose darts at times could be poisoned with the latex of the *guaio* plant (Moya-Pons 23). This is not to say that the Taínos had no need of weaponry, as their fiercest enemies the Caribes, posed a severe threat. However, bows, arrows, javelins, other small weapons such as rocks, bones and hand to hand combat were sufficient to ward off any attacks that the Caribes might have launched. This all changed with the arrival of Columbus and his men, some of whom were accustomed to wearing armor, had knowledge of the crossbow, pistol, musket, blunderbuss, rapier, matchlock handgun or *espingarda* which had all been used at the time in Spain's previous battles particularly the Reconquista where Spanish Muslims and Christians were no strangers to cannons or gunpowder. Although much of Columbus's initial visit in December of 1492 was a reconnaissance mission, in 1494 and 1495, he "unleashed two

violent military campaigns throughout the center of the island” which were “ostensibly designed to submit the Indians to the vassalage of the Catholic Monarchs” (Moya-Pons 31). Columbus made the conscious decision to commit such acts of violence in order to quell the dissention between *peninsulares* of higher social rank such as the *hidalgos* who felt that they should not perform manual labor to build outposts and those of lower rank who saw themselves as superior to the Taínos. In addition to this conflict, some *hidalgos* returned to Spain to complain about how Columbus treated them in the New World. In order to satisfy all Spanish parties involved, the Admiral decided to give hundreds of Taínos to his men to perform labor in the *encomienda* system, where the Taínos were made to work for their masters on farms, homes and most importantly in the mines. This first European system of chattel slavery in the New World was made possible by military coercion and is the ancestor of what would become military culture in the Dominican Republic.

As the above paragraph shows, one of the most significant aspects of colonialism in the often repeated history of Hispaniola’s early years is violence. It is a necessary part of the colonization process and at first both the colonizers and the colonized take part in exacting vicious revenge upon each other. The results of this violence are not only physical but psychological as well. The colonized population, in this case the Taínos, learned that the Europeans’ weapons are to be respected making their owners a force with which to be reckoned. In the initial stages of forced mine labor, if the Taínos returned without gold, the first time the *encomenderos* would cut off their hands, the second time their arm, and the third unsuccessful return from the mines would be the last. These acts of violence made another message clear to the Taínos: they were worth less than the

resources that they were able to extract and collect, an idea that to them seemed foreign since they saw themselves as equal parts of the creation around them, neither more nor less. This process of dehumanization continues to repeat itself over and over again throughout the colony's history.

The reason that this violent militarized process was possible is the worldview of the Spaniards and other Europeans during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Columbus's own letters offer some clues about how he and possibly the Spaniards with him viewed the new "Indians"

Ellos no traen armas ni las cognosçen: porque les amostré espadas y las tomavan por el filo y se cortava con ignorança. No tienen algún fierro: sus azagayas son unas varas sin fierro y algunas de ellas tienen al cabo un diente de peçe y otras de otras cosas. Ellos todos a una mano son de buena estatura de grandeza y buenos gesto bien hechos. Yo vide algunos que tenían señales de feridas en sus cuerpos y les hize señas que era aquello, y ellos me mostraron cómo allí venían gente de otras islas que estaban açerca y les querían tomar y se defendían [...] Ellos deven ser buenos servidores de de buen ingenio que veo que muy presto dizen todo lo que les dezía. Y creo que ligeramente se harían cristianos que me pareçio que ninguna secta tenían. (Colón 111)

In this diary entry dated October the 12<sup>th</sup> 1492 Columbus makes several important points. He notes that the Taínos do not carry weapons nor do they have knowledge of them because they in fact are ignorant of what Europeans *would consider* weapons. They are so unacquainted with them that they hurt themselves with them and knowledge of this fact is critical for the Spaniards; even if the Taínos were to fight them, they would first

have to have access to these new weapons and then go through a trial by error process to use them in battle. Columbus also sees that the previous battles with men from other islands have left marks on the Taínos but have not wounded them. Therefore, the weapons of the New World might inflict some harm and perhaps kill but not in the numbers that the Europeans had seen in the wars fought on the continent. With these observations, it is highly likely that Columbus, who on the one hand references the perceived goodness and docility of the Taínos, also believes that they are a population that would be easily subjugated. The next section of the diary entry is perhaps the most telling. He writes to the Catholic Kings of the Taíno's suitability for servanthood and goes on to assure the monarchs that the Taínos are indeed intelligent because they are able to parrot his speech. In this lies Columbus's assumption that because they are able to imitate the speech of the Europeans, they would also want to assimilate to all parts of European culture, even if it means forever being marginalized. These ideas are the fruit of the European view of the Other during this time. Identity was drawn along the lines of nationality, race and for the Spaniards, most importantly religion. This was the central issue in the Spain of Columbus's day with Isabel and Ferdinand's triumph over the Moors in Granada and the expulsion of anyone who was not an adherent of the true faith, Catholicism. Indeed, "doubts about the truths of the faith or a merely pretended Christianity were inconceivable due to conflicts with the moral law" (*translation mine*) (Höffner, 111). To be Spanish was to be white, to speak one of the Spanish Romance languages, to come from a former kingdom that fought against the Moors in the Reconquista and to believe in the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. If the "Indians" could not be white or come from Spain they could at least ideally become

Castilian speaking Roman Catholics, who were loyal tax paying colonists. While this was the pretended goal of the Catholic Kings, Isabela's in particular, the Spanish mindset towards those who were categorized completely as the Other was somewhat different. Although the Crown and the clergy wrestled with the morality of waging war against other Christian populations, those peoples of the world who had no inclination to conversion after being exposed to the faith were classified as pagans or infidels and treated as such. This established the association of colonization, military violence and race that would be carried out throughout Spanish America. Unfortunately, despite the presence of the clergymen who evangelized the Indigenous, many of the first Spanish colonists in the New World chose to wage war against and subjugate the new populations they encountered to obtain wealth for themselves so that they could be liberated from the economic subjugation they had previously suffered in Spain.

Although Spain had abolished the *encomienda* system in 1501, some colonists such as Nicolás de Ovando convinced the Crown that if the Indigenous population were not enslaved then the Spanish population would leave the island, ending the possibility of a colony. In 1503, Spain again sanctioned the forced labor system. By 1519 despite the efforts of Spanish Jeronymites to end the brutal treatment of the Taínos who numbered an estimated 400,000 at the time of Columbus's arrival in December 1492, their numbers decreased to a reported 500. New sources of labor were needed to run the now failing *encomiendas* bolstering the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The colonists brought large numbers of West Africans in 1516 to work on the *ingenios* or sugar mills. By the 1530s and 1540s, the black population outnumbered the white population in Hispaniola and this reality opened a new chapter of violence in the colony. Life at the *ingenios* was no better

than that on the *encomiendas* with even more violence between the Africans and the Spaniards who needed to exert more control over them as the *cimarrón* or runaway population grew daily. These former slaves would often head to other parts of the colony away from Santo Domingo to such places as Bahoruco where they established *manieles* which were communes, safe havens that welcomed former slaves. The *manieles* like the ingenious and *encomiendas* before them became their own institutions, often located in difficult terrain and they “experienced frequent search-and-destroy-type campaigns by the Spanish authorities” which were met with “fierce counterattacks by the young able-bodied members, men and women alike...” (Cambeira 77). The Europeans were not the only instigators of violence as slave rebellions and *cimarrón* raids where white families were murdered and fellow slaves liberated became more and more common. Among the *cimarrón* leaders were Diego Guzmán, Diego de Ocampo, Juan Vaquero and one of the most well-known, Lemba. These men were “especially noted as much for their military strategy as for their sophisticated leadership and organizational skills” (Cambeira 73). Eventually “the white population never left their farms in less than 15 to 20 armed men since the *cimarrones* had lances and other weapons stolen from the Spaniards” (Moya Pons 41). In order to prevent an uprising in the colony, the Crown appointed Alonso de Cerrato, an experienced soldier, to eliminate the threat of the former slaves. Cerrato and his men carried on a war with the *cimarrones* that lasted three years, capturing *cimarrón* leaders, torturing them and their followers, with some former *cimarrones* exchanging the locations of others for their lives. It is military force that ensured order for the colonists in a New World with new enemies who had become as or more adept than their masters with their

own weapons. For both the slaves and former slaves, warfare represented a chance of freedom, however short-lived it might be.

Military violence for the colonists was not only a way of maintaining control, but it was endemic to an inherent negrophobia. This attitude that dominated the colonists' everyday life would be passed down to many of the Dominican Republic's current citizens, although today there are signs of a burgeoning Afrocentricism that can be found as a result of transnationalism, specifically with emigration to and return from the United States within the past 30 years. The source of the negative attitude towards all things African has its roots in such concepts as *limpieza de sangre* or blood purity. A nascent Spain became unified during the middle fifteenth century because of a common enemy: the infidels, or in this case Muslims and Jews. Those Spanish citizens who "could positively claim to have had purely Christian ancestry were assumed to have exemplary moral character" (Cambeira 90). While the Taínos were seen as different they were still described as having "handsome bodies and good faces...being the color of the Canarians; *neither black nor white*" and potential converts to Christianity the Africans were seen as the exact opposite. Africaness was associated with paganism, barbaric tongues, and the most extreme difference, skin color. In the New World *limpieza de sangre* took on an important role as it established the socio-political norms in the region and their "effect...was vital for enforcing notions of white supremacy, while at the same time propagating the belief that African heritage was somehow insignificant, even negative, shameful and undesirable (Cambiera 90-91). *Casta* or the caste system was a direct result of the *limpieza de sangre* ideology where *peninsulares* occupied the higher strata, people of mixed blood and *indios* the middle, and *negros* the lower. Interracial marriage was not encouraged in Hispaniola, however, the

concubinage of Spanish males with African, mixed race and Indigenous women was tolerated ultimately creating a large mixed race population consisting of people of mostly African and Spanish heritage with relatively small amounts of Taíno admixture. As the African population continued to be predominant despite the battles waged in the 1540s, this *mestizaje* or racial mixing led to a society with a small Spanish elite.

Hispaniola would continue to witness acts of military violence from the middle sixteenth century onward with the Africans fighting the colonists, the colonists fighting Spaniards for economic freedoms and the Spanish warding off the advances of the French, English and Dutch on the island. Spain's intermittent wars with France affected the colonists' status first with the Treaty of Ryswick which ceded the western third of the island to France in 1697 and later the Treaty of Basel which ceded the entire island to the French in 1795. With the birth of Haiti in 1801, Toussaint L'Ouverture and his men battled France for control of Hispaniola and the French regained control on the eastern two thirds of the island in 1802. Later this same region fell under the control of the Spanish Crown for a second time in 1809. More military action ensued in 1821 when José Núñez de Cáceres declared independence from Spain, creating the *Estado Independiente del Haití Español* which sought to be a member of *La Gran Colombia* under Simón Bolívar's leadership. The state's independence was short lived as Núñez de Cáceres accepted the protection of Haiti in 1822 following the advice of Haiti's then leader Jean Pierre Boyer who argued that Hispaniola had a better chance of maintaining its freedom from both France and Spain if it were united. After 22 years of Haitian rule, Juan Pablo Duarte, the leader of *La Trinitaria*, a group devoted to independence for the former Spanish colony, began to organize and mount battles that turned into a war against Haitian domination winning what would be the

first independence for the region as the Dominican Republic in 1844. After 17 years of despotism, more battles and political instability, the Dominican Republic decided to become a Spanish colony again in 1861, much to the relief of the elite whose lands and titles had been stripped from them in the days of the Haitian takeover. The Dominican Republic would see its second independence after the War of Restoration against Spain, in 1865, making the country like others in the Western Hemisphere a product of centuries of military violence.

The years between 1865 and 1930 are just as unstable as their predecessors; bearing witness to endless power struggles between different political factions. There is a period of despotism or *caudillismo*, from 1865 until the liberals placed Gregorio Luperón in power in 1879 and Fernando Meriño in 1880. Then the new country suffered one of its first modern dictatorships from 1886 to 1899 under the rule of Ulises Heureaux known as General Lilís. At first the conservative party financially and politically backed Heureaux, but as the years went on Heureaux continued to abuse his power as president, ceding land to Haiti, embezzling money from the Dominican government, coming close to bankrupting the country during the sugar crises and through these actions placing the Dominican Republic at the mercy of foreign creditors, principally the United States (Moya Pons 275 279). After Heureaux's assassination, a short period of violence returned to the country as its political leaders fought over the best way to solve the nation's financial problems. As a result of the conservatives' efforts Ramón Cáceres briefly became president from 1906 until his assassination in 1911. It was during the Cáceres administration that Dominican Republic became a United States protectorate, a move that satisfied the country's European creditors who felt reassured knowing that the

United States would guarantee repayment of their loans (Moya Pons 291). This was the beginning of a second colonization of the Dominican Republic, an economic stronghold that has not been broken until this day.

The United States military occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916 until 1924. During this time Dominican citizens were prohibited from carrying firearms, munitions or explosives however, the American officers faced resistance from the *campesinos* or farmers population who waged guerilla warfare against the US servicemen. Many of the *campesinos* who fought the soldiers for some six years lost due to the superior weapons of the United States Armed Forces. In addition to this some Dominican women played key roles in the resistance movement forming the *Junta Patriótica de Damas* or the Ladies Patriotic Union that collected monies to send delegates abroad to protest the occupation of their country (Peguero, 30-31). Later the Dominican Army would undergo a complete reorganization modeled on its American counterpart. One such man who was a witness and product of this new training was named Rafael Leónidas Trujillo y Molina. Trujillo would eventually go on to fight against his own countrymen in the attacks on the guerilla *campesinos* before becoming a general in the US trained Dominican army in 1927. Later Trujillo became active in the political and military movements against president Horacio Vázquez who resigned on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1930 allowing Trujillo to take power on May sixteenth of the same year. This would mark the beginning of a 31 year ruthless dictatorship that still haunts many Dominican and Dominican Americans today, the *Trujillato*.

Race and military superiority are two essential factors of colonialism and modern day power structures. Before reviewing the numerous atrocities inflicted upon

Dominicans and Haitians during this era of Dominican history, one can view a completed cycle from the time of Columbus to Trujillo's rise to power and understand that some of the same 439 year old ideologies can be superimposed onto those of the early twentieth century. Columbus and the *peninsulares* used military power to conquer the Taíno population, seen by most Europeans as racially inferior, pagan, with a high propensity for servitude and the Europeans treated them as such. The stolen West African population soon took the place of the few Taínos left on the island and was viewed with nearly the same disdain as the Taínos due to their physical appearance, language and religion, therefore legitimizing in the colonists' minds the military repression of the black population. Although most Dominicans today have African ancestry, there existed and still exists a stigma attached to African customs, appearance, mannerisms and culture with roots in the Spanish colonial *limpieza de sangre* ideology. These attitudes continued to be perpetuated from the fifteenth century to the twentieth in the Dominican Republic despite the fact that the population had become largely mixed race and the elite created a nascent pigmentocracy with advantages for those with the most European blood. During the *Trujillato* military and political oppression were the rule, leading to the torture and deaths of many Dominicans who were deemed political dissidents. Trujillo's *Servicio de Inteligencia Militar*, or SIM, publicly and privately made examples of those Dominicans who challenged the dictator's policies, the most famous being the Mirabal Sisters, Jesús Galíndez, Virgilio Morales, and Rómulo Betancourt in the same way the *cimarron* leaders were made examples in the colonial era. The construction of race in the era of Trujillo was a paramount issue just as it was during the time of the *conquistadores*. Despite the fact that Trujillo and Haiti's then president Stenio Vincent had met several

times in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo and signed a border treaty between the two nations in 1936, Dominican identity was built upon a dichotomy, namely one that was negrophobic and anti-Haitian. To be Dominican during the *Trujillato* meant celebrating an Indo-Hispanic race, culture, the Catholic faith and speaking Spanish. Haitians on the other hand were seen as the blacks of Hispaniola, a population of former slaves having formed their own country, the Dominican Republic's former oppressors, cattle thieves who lived in the border towns, voodoo practitioners, and French speaking (San Miguel 39). Trujillo spread this propaganda throughout the Dominican Republic in an effort to revive latent anti-Haitian sentiment that had by the 1930s become dormant and to invoke a level of nationalism amongst the people. All of this led to *el corte* or the Haitian massacre of 1937 that lasted from October 2<sup>nd</sup> to October 8<sup>th</sup> and began at the northern border town of Dajabón at the Artibonito river, eventually spreading to some seventy five localities in the country (Cambiera, 182). Some estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Haitians and Dominicans were murdered in this event that is also called the Parsley Massacre. Since some Dominicans and Haitians tend to resemble one another, there was no way for the soldiers who carried out Trujillo's orders to differentiate between the two populations. Many Haitians and Dominicans living on the border had learned some Kreyòl and Spanish for everyday purposes and so it was even harder at times to tell one group from the other. However, language did become a deciding factor. The Dominican soldiers used the Spanish word for parley, *perejil* as a shibboleth, knowing that the Kreyòl speaking Haitians might have trouble pronouncing the Spanish r. When asked, "What is this?" the person addressed would answer in Spanish, an accented Spanish or Kreyòl thus betraying their perceived nationality (Cambeira 182).

There were many proposed reasons behind Trujillo's desire to rid the Dominican population of those persons with what he deemed too much African ancestry. Initially, when Trujillo tried to gain entrance to the inner circles of the upper classes of Dominican society, he was rejected even though he had earned some social status as a general; the rejection was most likely because of his partial African ancestry and family background. Later, after he became president of the country, he was elected president of the Club Unión in 1932. However, it seems that this acceptance by those of lighter complexions was not enough for Trujillo and so to prove his allegiance with this new group, he desired to surpass them in their negrophobia by prompting a virulent anti-Haitian campaign (Cambeira 183). Another reason as to why he might have ordered the murder of so many souls is the border between the two nations. By the middle 1930s, there was such a significant number of Haitians living on the Dominican side of the border that the fear was that one day the Haitian government might wish to claim those territories populated by its citizens. In addition, the border's porosity was also a cause for concern as contraband freely flowed between the two nations without being taxed. Perhaps some of the primary reasons behind Trujillo's decision were the influence of Eugenio de Hostos (1839-1903), and Federico García Godoy (1857-1924) whose writings were then en vogue. Both scholars recommended a mass influx of European immigration to whiten the populace and recommended that Dominicans' mental degeneracy could be cured with an increase of European blood in future generations respectively. In addition to these theories, Nazism, and Fascism were also at their zenith during the time of the massacre. Trujillo sought a way to be perceived as a strong leader by invoking a sense of nationalism which included undertones of racial supremacy. Whatever the reason, these

acts affected the psyches of Dominicans, some of whom defended Trujillo's actions arguing that the massacre was an attempt to protect Dominican sovereignty in contrast to others who were horrified at the violence committed not only against Haitians but against Dominicans as well.

The history of the country's military violence and its racial discourse informs most of the novels discussed in this book and is structured to emphasize in a postcolonialism. In Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home*, Papito and Aurelia are the head of a large family of 14 children whom they raise in New York City after they emigrate from the Dominican Republic in order to escape the violence and repression of the *Trujillato*. In this novel the dictatorship is depicted as a difficult time with negative memories for both parents. Papito sees the ability to move his family from the island to the States as a gift from God and in return he attempts to be a hyper-religious patriarch to his children. Pérez offers a few representations of life under *El Jefe* that are phantasmagoric and mysterious, often connecting the images with memory, the desire to forget, pain, fear, and uncertainty. While most of the family relates to life in the United States, some suffer from the psychological consequences of a harsh life on the island which parallels the inhumanities Dominicans suffered under the dictator. Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido* features three generations of women, Lorenza, Herminia, and Sara. In the novel Rizik creates a thinly veiled allusion to Trujillo and the Dominican Republic. Herminia, Lorenza's daughter, marries a general of a fictitious island nation who constantly abuses her and sabotages the relationship between her and her daughter Sara. Like Trujillo this general is ruthless, killing those who might challenge his authority, but Rivera offers an alternative to the brutality of the regime in the character

Lorenza who represents the culture of an earlier pre-dictatorship era that Herminia finally embraces and thus finds liberation. *Let it Rain Coffee*, a novel by Angie Cruz, tells a story of several generations living both under the Trujillato and here as in *Geographies of Home*, New York. Chan Lee, another family patriarch, is a staunch opponent of *Trujillismo* and witnesses the country he knew as a young immigrant boy change for the worse as an adult. For Cruz, the dictatorship takes on more of a central role through Chan Lee's memories of life on the island during the *Trujillato* and after the dictator's demise with chaos, betrayal, anger, and the severing of family ties serving to frame her interpretation of this period in history.

Race in Dominican women's literature plays a prominent role and a postcolonial view of the interpretation of race in the following novels is a reflection of perceptions of the colonial era that are still present. Angie Cruz's *Soledad* features an eponymous heroine who feels alienated at times due to her light skin because other Dominican American girls are jealous of her complexion. The source of the girls' attitude can be traced back to colonialism's racial hierarchies that are alive and well in today's Dominican Republic where "[W]hites dominate business, finance, the prestigious professions, government, and high society" and "mulatto elements are preponderant in the military officer corps, the provincial towns, the less prestigious professions, and among lower to-middle-level government officials" (Kryzanek and Wiarda 17). Soledad's grandmother Doña Sosa reminds Soledad that her grandfather did her grandmother's family a favor by marrying her because she is dark complexioned and he is not. Soledad's aunt Gorda does not want her daughter Flaca to wear her hair in a fashion she calls *cocolo*, a disparaging term used to describe Haitians and other French and English speaking Afro Antilleans. This may

seem odd to American and British readers whose racial paradigms deem that anyone with any trace of African blood is automatically considered to be a black person, however light their skin may be, making most of the Dominican population black in the eyes of the Anglo American socio-racial system. However, in the Dominican Republic, this Anglo American approach to race is completely turned on its head. Those Dominicans with any traceable amount of *non-African* heritage are *not* categorized as black. Instead, there arises a complex autonymic system where people from the same family with different shades of skin, categorize themselves in a variety of racial groups. For example, ethnonyms such as *negro*, *blanco*, *indio*, *mestizo* and *amarillo* appeared on the national census until the last decades of the twentieth century with *indio* being a popular term establishing a facet of *Trujillo's* negrophobic nationalism. Besides these official racial categories that can be found on *cédulas* as well as the census, there exist popular racial categorizations including: *moreno*, *blanco*, *indio claro*, *indio oscuro*, *negro*, *mulato*, *rubio*, *blanco jipato*, *trigüeño*, *cenizo* and *cocolo* among others (Candelario 17). Decades of this racial categorization resulted in the perception that the portion of the population that Dominicans consider to be black is relatively small and in effect, a figurative whitening of the population in the Dominican point of view.

In *Let it Rain Coffee*, Chan Lee, a Chinese Dominican, is a dedicated *anti-trujillista* who experiences some forms of discrimination from his countrymen as a young boy due to his race and what he perceives to be discrimination later on as an adult. He becomes a minority once again, when he emigrates to the United States at the request of his son and his family becoming a Latino. Julia Álvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* illustrates race but along class lines. The Mirabal sisters enjoy a comfortable middle class life that they

sacrifice to fight for the country's freedom. While Álvarez's novel is a fictitious account of the ladies' lives, the Mirabal sisters themselves were in fact a light brown skinned hue that some Dominicans might call *pinto*, or *pinto javero* the color of many members of the Dominican middle class in the 1930's and 1940's. Those characters depicted as having more African ancestry are oftentimes domestic workers and farm laborers reflecting the reality of the *Trujillato* and to some extent, modern Dominican society, "where as one moves up the social scale race is very important factor separating social classes and economic positions" (Kryzanek and Wiarda 16). Marina, one of Pérez's characters in *Geographies of Home*, feels that she is better looking than some of her siblings as she is one of the lightest children and that she should become a model. She is sexually assaulted by a black man, and in turn scrubs herself with Brillo and sprays herself with Lysol in an attempt to rid herself of her perceived newly acquired blackness. Gabriel, Marina's brother comments on the differences between white, black and Latina women ultimately claiming that he prefers white women as they are less demanding than black and Latina women and are more attractive. Here the internalization of a colonial past becomes manifest where these two characters that come from a country with a significant African population, reject their heritage in favor of European standards.

Marisela Rizik's *El Tiempo del Olvido* offers a different view of the former colonial racial ideologies. Lorenza Parduz is a Dominican woman of African descent who comes from a former *maniel*, La Costa. La Costa has existed for centuries in isolation having been "discovered" by a priest who wished to evangelize the population. Eventually with the advancement of modernization, the town slowly begins to change. However, in the novel, its members, all descendants of former slaves, come to symbolize a sector of the country's

undeniable African past as evidenced in its religious beliefs, songs, language and people and this past becomes the key to a better future for the nation, which in the novel is an allusion to the Dominican Republic. Although Rizik romanticizes this past in the novel, it is still significant because it stands out as a reminder of an often overlooked part of Dominican history that often goes unrepresented.

### **Conclusion**

The Dominican Republic is the cradle of colonization in the New World, and as such, there is a rich history from which one can glean literature from the colonial period up until the present day. Contemporary Dominican and Dominican American women's literature illustrates the historical and present day struggles of a marginalized and lesser known population. It is for this reason that the field is one ripe for social, political, economic, and cultural as well as other analyses. The stories that these authors create are significant because they represent a challenge to the traditional systems of power in a way that is accessible to readers from different walks of life. First these women are telling stories that are influenced by the culture of the so called "Third World." Second, the authors themselves are women and as such much of the human population can relate to the voices and narratives found in their works. This is not to say that it is only women who can relate to these novels but that women in particular from all over the world can find themselves in some of the characters. Third and most importantly, one can take away a reading about power, who has it, how it is wielded against the powerless and how the powerless continue to survive within their respective hegemonies from the novels mentioned in this discussion as well as other novels written by Dominican and Dominican American authors. As per Althusser's theory, the world consists of interpellated subjects existing within one power

structure or another. It is fitting therefore to search for and understand the constructions of subjects and power systems through the eyes of those who descend from the first colonized subjects in the Western hemisphere, Dominicans.

## Chapter 1

### **Powerful Priestesses**

The Dominican Republic has had a long and intricate relationship with the Roman Catholic Church that began in 1492 with the arrival of the Spanish. Upon the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo's ascent to power in 1931, the Church played a major role in the sociocultural lives of many Dominican citizens. Trujillo knew that in order to maintain his nascent control of the country, he would need to form an alliance with the Church's clergy. Therefore, from the beginning of his time in office, he made sure that the Church was given political and juridical powers in order to control and guarantee the support of its leaders and members. During this time, many Dominicans either turned away from the Church or continued to depend upon marginalized Afrosyncretic religions that survived the country's colonial era. Religion in the Dominican Republic was one of the branches of what Louis Althusser calls an ISA or ideological state apparatus that are "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions [including] education, the family, the law, politics, trade unions, communication and culture" (Althusser 136-137). The ultimate purpose of an ISA is to maintain these institutions, which are the products of the ruling classes and thus ensure a perpetual dominance of the lower classes. However, in the Afrosyncretic religious beliefs practiced in the Dominican Republic and by Dominican Americans, women as well as men serve as conduits to a power system that some believe to be even more powerful than sanctioned religious ISAs and that is the spirit world. It is this believed ability to access the world of the supernatural that empowers the women characters in the novels discussed in this chapter as priestesses who do not automatically

have to accept the dictates of their dominant cultures and hegemonies and in doing so try to find answers to their and their families' problems by practicing their religious beliefs and encouraging others to tap into their own spiritualities. This very aspect of Afrosyncretic religion makes its practice a threat not only to organized religion but to the ISAs themselves; if one can access the divine on a personal level, then the dominant power system's existence becomes less and less justifiable. This discussion will focus upon how the novels *El tiempo del olvido*, *Soledad* and *Geographies of Home* illustrate Dominican and Dominican Americans citizens' attempt at autonomy through religious practices that seemingly empower them by allowing them to play active as opposed to passive roles in regards to what happens in their own lives before and during the *trujillato*.<sup>5</sup>

### **Olivorio Mateo**

The *trujillato* is an example of what Althusser calls an RSA or a repressive state apparatus where the military, paramilitary, police and penal systems use force against to maintain the rule of the upper classes which in turn is the rule of the state. "What distinguishes the ISAs from the [RSAs] is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence,' whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function by 'ideology'" (Althusser 144-145). Trujillo's dictatorship is an RSA par excellence in that it consistently utilized force, but as previously mentioned Trujillo used the ISA of religion to legitimize the system of oppression that he created. Much of the focus of this discussion will be on religion, the *trujillato* and the representation of Dominicans who chose to resist this power structure, but before this I would like to discuss another RSA that existed briefly before Trujillo's time. This RSA was the United

States Marines occupation of the island that lasted from 1916 to 1924. During this period in Dominican history, there arose a figure that came to prominence because his religious ISA stood in the face of American military power: Olivorio Mateo. The significance of this historical figure is pertinent to the discussion of the following novels for several reasons: First, Mateo was known throughout the eastern part of the Dominican Republic as a healer and religious man and this same figure arises alongside of Lorenza Parduz in *De tiempos perdidos*. She and Mateo are contemporaries who serve as the bridge between the the nineteenth century Afrosyncretic customs and the twentieth century. Second the figure of Mateo can also be seen in Gorda from *Soledad* who represents those who still carry on *gagá* beliefs today and like Mateo is a type of *servidora*. Third, in *Geographies of Home* there are three generations of spiritually gifted women, Bienvenida who like Lorenza is a contemporary of Mateo's, and Aurelia and Iliana who at times struggle with their spiritual gifts but learn to embrace them in times of need. In all of the novels, religion plays a significant role of the lives of the protagonists and each novel showcases specific rituals that are akin to those that Mateo and his followers practiced. Known to his followers the *olivoristas* as "Liborio," Mateo was a trusted local spiritual healer and *servidor* with a numerous Afro-Dominican base who believed himself to be a divinely sent leader of the people whose mission would last 33 years, Christ's age when he was crucified (Lundius and Lundahl 33).<sup>6</sup> Today there are still those in San Juan de Maguana, Mateo's hometown, who believe that Mateo "was a man for the poor" who will "soon return to call the poor to power" (Lundius and Lundahl 76). While his teachings were religious in nature and borrowed certain Biblical texts, with an emphasis on the belief that "everybody had to work together and seek means for the poor ones, so that they can

improve their existence,” many of the religious practices observed by both Mateo and the *olivoristas* indicate that their group was akin to a *cofradía*, a religious brotherhood that practices *gagá*. (Lundius and Lundahl 78)<sup>7</sup> These groups are common in the Dominican Republic in rural areas where there is a lack of priests and churches allow the lay population to create its own methods of worship.

Many of the *olivoristas* were drawn to Mateo because of what he had to offer, namely healing, hope and a different way of life than the one of oppression that they knew. However beyond this, Mateo offered his followers a new way of perceiving the power of their own spirituality to free them from the United States’s RSA. Much of his teaching focused on “tolerance, compassion and solidarity,” not only amongst his followers in San Juan de Maguana but also amongst those of the rural areas and the capital (Lundius and Lundahl 76). Mateo further encouraged the communal living amongst the *olivoristas* advising them, “Unite with one another. All of you eat together from one *paila* [frying pan]. Become twins. If you find a sweet potato, share it between you. You have to unite. Do not wish evil for others” (Lundius and Lundahl 76). The communal lifestyle provided the *olivoristas* economic benefits and “Olivorio’s community became a sanctuary, not only for poor peasants and landless day laborers but people who one way or another had got into trouble with the legal authorities also found a haven in La Maguana” given that “weak governments contributed to a state of anarchy throughout the country” and “a poor peasant could easily become a criminal...” (Lundius and Lundahl 80). Mateo desired to see his followers continue in the sharing of land and an egalitarian distribution of food in order for them to continue to live peaceably free from government abuse during perilous times in the Dominican Republic brought about

by means that were not under the people's control. This movement is what most likely presented the greatest threat to both Dominican as well United States military rule, causing both parties to join forces against Olivorio and the *olivoristas* in 1916. Later after their murders in 1922, other *olivoristas* would soon come to the same end in the early years of the *trujillato* and even some 30 years later after the dictatorship had ended.

### **Do you remember the time?**

Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido* centers on a character whose life story is similar to Mateo and the *olivoristas*. The novel takes place on an unnamed Caribbean island that is ruled by a dictator, a strong allusion to the history of the Dominican Republic. Lorenza Parduz is an Afro-descendant woman who lives through the era that came before, during and after the dictatorship of her abusive son in law, general Abelardo who marries Herminia, her daughter. Like Mateo, Lorenza is from the countryside and is an important member of a special *cofradía* of sorts. She comes from a long line of mothers who have traditionally chosen the fathers of their daughters based on dreams. The *cofradía* is ruled by "The Council of Twelve" and has followed traditions that are similar to those found in *gagá* since the times of slavery. It represents a level of freedom for those who wished to abstain from the corruption of modern society just as those who worked the communal lands the *olivoristas* shared during the time of United States occupation. Rizik juxtaposes the economic and political independence of the Council's alternative faith system with mainstream Christianity of the time represented by Maldonado, Lorenza's father, who convinces her that the ways of her village are evil and that she should leave and live with him. Shortly thereafter however, his attitude of concern for his daughter changes:

Una noche, Maldonado tenía un dolor de muela y quería que Lorenza fuera a casa de la vecina, que quedaba lejos. Lorenza, que siempre le había tenido miedo a la oscuridad, le suplicó que esperara hasta la mañana siguiente. Eso fue motivo suficiente para encender la rabia de Maldonado, quien de pronto pensó que todo su sacrificio había sido en vano. Le lanzó varios puñetazos, mientras le decía: “Te salvé de las garras del demonio y así es como me pagas.” Lorenza no gritaba, lo que causaba que Maldonado se enfureciese más. La golpeó una y otra vez. Después le ató las manos y la forzó a ponerse de rodillas en un guayo. Prendió velas hasta formar un círculo alrededor de ella. “Vamos a sacarte el demonio que todavía tienes adentro. Ya verás como aprenderás a obedecerme de una vez y por todas.” (Rizik 17)

Maldonado goes from being the father who previously “[quería] salvar a [Lorenza] porque [era] su hija,” and “le habló de los años que llevaba por acercársele” and how “él nunca había abandonado y ahora estaba dispuesto a todo porque Dios estaba de su lado,” (Rizik 12) to succumbing to the worst of Christian fanaticism. Maldonado’s actions are quintessentially selfish, uncaring, cold and violent. Instead of speaking with Lorenza about Catholicism and offering to listen to her mother and the Council’s religious system, Maldonado is convinced of the superiority and civility of his own beliefs. Her father shows no compassion when Lorenza exhibits the most human of emotions; fear of the dark, which can be interpreted as fear of the unknown. Through the Maldonado character, Rizik illustrates how Christian fanaticism can ironically have little to do with Christ’s examples. Instead of possibly saving a potential soul by representing the love of God, religion becomes the platform for one subject to exert power over

another through violence, thus illustrating how when used as an ISA, religion has the potential to justify the violence of an RSA; Lorenza, although his daughter, is inferior because of the socio-religious system in which she was raised and therefore worthy of beatings and tortures.

After leaving her father's house to ask for medicine, Lorenza comes upon Pedro Casals, a white wealthy landowner and she becomes one of his several mistresses and mother to Herminia. Unable to care for the child, Lorenza gives her to Pedro who gives her to his sister Florencia, a practicing Catholic to raise. While Herminia is still a small child, her aunt takes her to visit Lorenza in her village and while she is there her mother tells her about a tsunami that suddenly destroyed the people's homes and washed some of them away to sea. This is akin to what happened to Mateo in 1908 when a hurricane damaged the town of San Juan de Maguana. Mateo consequently went missing for almost a week and upon reappearing he began his work as a spiritual leader.<sup>8</sup> The novel also gives a description of a *gagá* session, where Lorenza asks her friends to invoke the *Baron del cemetario* for advice regarding Herminia's pregnancy and troubled marriage to Abelardo, the island's dictator general.<sup>9</sup> Afterward, members of the Council give Lorenza additional suggestions:

La mujer con ojos de lechuza la miró fijamente y sin mover un músculo del rostro, le dijo: 'De otros muertos me llegó la noticia de que tu hija te necesita. Tienes que apurarte...me encargan decirte también que el día que sepas que te vas a morir, debe decir a tu nieta este secreto.'—Le dijo algo a los oídos que nadie escuchó y desapareció en la oscuridad sin darle tiempo a Lorenza a que preguntara nada más. Taní fue el ultimo en salir.

‘Debes irte cuando antes. Esa no era la voz de Frida, era la voz de una muerta.’

‘¿Crees que me decía la verdad?’

‘Sí, Frida tiene buenos contactos. Se ha ganado el respeto de muchos muertos.’

‘Pero Taní, Hermi nunca me ha querido a su lado.’

‘Es hora de que pongas tu orgullo de un lado. Hace tiempo que quiere acercarse a ti; Pero tú no le has dado una oportunidad.’

Lorenza iba a protestar pero él no la dejó.

‘Acércate tú. No esperes que sea ella.’ (Rizik 120)

Lorenza’s *gagá* session with the remaining members of the Council of Twelve empowers her in a way that she had not felt in many years. In this description of Afrosyncretic religion, Rizik legitimizes the religious systems of the marginalized. Before her arrival at La Costa Lorenza decides that “a pesar de su temor, sabía que era el momento adecuado” as “hacia más de veinticinco años que había atravesado el país huyendo de sus recuerdos” (Rizik 106). By having Lorenza realize that she had to connect with her religious system in order to find the courage to face her past, Rizik suggests that this system is powerful in its own right. In her article “From Matrophobia to Motherline: Marisela Rizik’s *Of Forgotten Times*,” Isabel Brown argues that “the Dominican Republic balances two heritages: the Spanish and the African,” and that “although the African heritage has been systematically repressed since colonization, its presence is nonetheless constant and pervasive” (111). Brown further suggests that, “in *Of Forgotten*

*Times* the balancing act tilts the scale, ultimately, in the direction of the African tradition, as it privileges precisely the notion of matrilineality and matriarchy over the Spanish imposed patriarchy” (111-112). I am inclined to agree with Brown’s observation and as I show below, I would like to further suggest that in addition to challenging patriarchy through Lorenza’s African matriarchal character, Rizik also challenges the Dominican state through her depiction of Lorenza’s Afro-syncretic religious practices.

### **Trujillo’s dream, the Dominican nightmare.**

*El tiempo del olvido*’s principal plot, the challenges to Lorenza and her daughter Herminia’s growing relationship can be seen as an allegory for the Dominican struggle to gain autonomy in the face of one of the strongest RSAs the country had ever seen, the *trujillato*. If Lorenza represents the African, the marginalized, alternative religion and the Other as Brown suggests, then Abelardo, the general dictator and Herminia’s husband would parallel Trujillo. Like Trujillo, Abelardo is brutally authoritative, has numerous affairs, and has to literally be removed from office by a coup formed by military men. Besides this, however, the historical Trujillo was shrewd when it came to his dealings with the Roman Catholic Church. Religion was part of an imagined<sup>10</sup> national identity that Joaquín Balaguer<sup>11</sup> among others promoted through propaganda. Balaguer saw

‘[c]ulture as a derivative of race. For example, the predominance in Haiti of voodoo and magico-religious practices is ‘a product of race’: biology begets society. Likewise he explains the ‘underlying superstitiousness’ among Dominicans by alluding to the ‘the presence in our blood of features characteristic of the primitivism of the African race.’ Fortunately, Balaguer declares, the ‘African influence’ in Dominican culture ‘has been almost imperceptible’ in

comparision with that in Haiti. Therefore, ‘our cultural tradition preserves the stamp of our Spanish origin.’ (San Miguel 59)

This racial and cultural discourse was en vogue during the 1920’s and 1930’s when positivism was seen as the way for Latin American countries to take their place among the “advanced” nations of the world.<sup>12</sup> This type of racial ISA gave birth to an ideal Dominican subject who was racially Spanish, Spanish speaking and Catholic. Those Dominicans of a darker complexion were encouraged to call themselves “indio,” a reference to an imagined significant amount of Taíno blood that accounted for those Dominicans who were in truth mostly a mixture of African and European as the Indigenous population had been decimated by the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The Dominican identity was basically predicated upon the opposite of an imagined Haitian identity that was black African, Creole speaking and voodoo practicing. As part of promoting the nation’s Hispano-Catholic heritage, Trujillo formed a close alliance with the Church, which had previously lost some of its power. In 1929 “the Supreme Court declared the Church non-existent before the law and a measure was submitted to the Congress calling for the liquidation of all Church property” (Wiarda 239). Trujillo took advantage of the opportunity to seal Church and state relations in 1931 shortly after he had come to power. Trujillo defeated the Supreme Court’s 1929 measure against the Church by passing a bill that restored the Church’s juridical personality. In addition to this, “[t]he government financed, and the official Dominican Party administered, the construction of many churches. Marriage was changed from a civil to a religious institution and education was fused with religious teachings” (Wiarda 239). Trujillo’s ultimate attempt at gaining the Church’s approval came in 1954 when he signed a Concordat with the Church. In return

for the Church's recognition of his divorce and remarriage, Trujillo granted the Church vast concessions..." (Wiarda 239) The state now recognized the power of the clergy, Church institutions and the Church had the right "to establish schools of all levels" (Wiarda 239).<sup>14</sup>

By aligning the *trujillato* so closely with the Church, Trujillo eerily managed to use the ISA of religion in such a way as to attempt to make Dominican Catholics believe that if the Church approved of his RSA then God must too, an example of ISAs giving RSAs power. In the later years of the dictatorship the Dominican clergy would take a stand against the regime but not before those who practiced alternative beliefs were punished even though the Dominican constitution had previously guaranteed freedom of religion.<sup>15</sup> *El tiempo del olvido* offers a metaphoric challenge to Trujillo's RSA as Isabel Brown suggests through the character of Lorenza. Trujillo's dictatorship *was* in fact the opposite of what Lorenza represents, in particular it was patriarchal, Hispanic in culture, and based upon maintaining power over anyone who might disagree with its basic tenets. Abelardo, as the country's dictator general, physically and mentally abuses his wife Herminia who can be likened to the Dominican people. He virtually keeps her prisoner in a beautiful house just as Trujillo made the Dominican Republic a beautiful island that controlled its inhabitants by using military and paramilitary forces spying upon them, imprisoning, torturing and killing them in order to remain in power. Eventually Herminia becomes insane, and it is this break with her known reality that produces change:

Doña Herminia no hacía ningún esfuerzo para disipar la imagen de que se estaba poniendo loca. Había llenado una habitación completa de material para hacer muñecas de trapos y muñecos de palos que había aprendido a diseñar

cuando estaba en el internado. Primero había hecho el nacimiento del niño Jesús. El que lo vio elogió la maestría con que había tejido los alambres y los palitos juntos; pero sorprendió a todo el mundo cuando rodeó al niño Jesús de muchos diablitos con cuernos. Tomó fascinación con la figura del diablo e hizo varias variaciones que colgó en toda su habitación. Las muchachas del servicio concluyeron que no estaba loca sino poseída por el mismo demonio. (Rizik 170)

This is perhaps one of the most significant passages in the novel for several reasons. First, as Herminia represents the Dominican people who have seen and understand that the Church is *trujillista* she chooses to recreate one of the most important dogma of Christianity, the birth of Christ, in her own way, which represents her building a new reality for herself.<sup>16</sup> Second, she like many Dominicans recognizes the propaganda's daily hagiography of the dictator and so she obligatorily identifies him with the Christ child. Third by choosing to admire the devils she is choosing to admire the enemy of the dictator who has committed the ultimate blasphemy by associating the dictatorship with the Church. That which appears insane, is really telling the truth; Herminia's "twisted" version of events is simply holding a mirror to the political reality, that is, the dictator has profanely identified himself as being the savior of his people when in fact the forces behind him and the RSA he rules are truly diabolical.<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that in the novel, Herminia has no problems with the Church until she marries Abelardo. She herself is the product of her aunt Florencia's Catholic teaching and a Catholic education. Thus, this passage questions the role of the Roman Catholic Church during Trujillo's rule of the island. How could the Church become a fervent supporter of one of the most notorious dictatorships in Caribbean history? How could it go on celebrating Christmas, Easter and

the other holy days of obligation but honor Trujillo as the archbishop of Santo Domingo as Ricardo Pittini did in exchange for financial support from the state?<sup>18</sup> Herminia's artistic endeavors, which can be classified as her own response to the official religious ISA of the country, expose the atrocities of Abelardo's government, much like political dissidents tried to expose the *trujillato's* unjust punishing and murders of those who desired political freedom instead of an RSA that denied them human rights.

The *El tiempo del olvido* narrative offers a different outlook for those who are marginalized and proposes that they can somehow navigate within the RSA by relying on their own religious systems. Lorenza's character represents the possibility of escape from the dictatorship's abuses and she does this through connecting to her spiritual roots as well as through her strong connection to the countryside, a place in the novel that is associated with liberty. After Lorenza visits with Herminia for a while, Herminia decides to leave the urban capital and live on the farm her aunt has left her:

‘No veo la necesidad que tienes de trabajar tanto,’ le dijo Lorenza que la había venido a buscar para que comiera.

‘Vamos a ver esos cafetales produciendo de nuevo,’ le dijo a su madre con entusiasmo.

‘Con lo que te ha quedado tienes suficiente para vivir, no necesitas matarte trabajando,’ insistió Lorenza.

‘Es más que eso Mamá. Esto me pertenece. Lo estoy creando con mis manos, sola.’ (Rizik 212)

Lorenza insists that Herminia rest because of all the physical and mental stress that Abelardo has given her, but it is precisely the ability to work for oneself as her African

ancestors had in the countryside that gives Herminia her strength. This physical move to the country is also a spiritual move closer to the religious systems passed down to Lorenza. Herminia's decision to move closer to Lorenza's home town of La Costa is also significant because of its history as a *maniel* or town that was built by and for former slaves who escaped their plantations in search of freedom.<sup>19</sup> Rizik's representation of the fictional La Costa parallels that of Mateo's town, San Juan de la Maguana, which plays an important role in the history of Afro-Dominicans and the Taínos as well since it was the area where the famed Enriquillo, Lemba and Diego de Ocampo led groups of former slaves to freedom through decades of guerrilla warfare from the early 1500s until the middle of that same century, and the site of the many *manieles* of the former slaves, some of whom practiced *gagá*, built after fighting for their freedom.<sup>20</sup>

### **As I Lie Dreaming...**

While *El tiempo del olvido* celebrates alternative religious and power systems that have existed in the Dominican Republic before and during the era of Trujillo, Angie Cruz's *Soledad* picks up the stories of those marginalized Dominicans who moved to the United States after Trujillo's assassination in May of 1961. The novel illustrates the potency and importance of the religious ISAs of Soledad's family as well as the deleterious effects of oppressive power structures through the locus of the woman's body in the novel. The main plot centers around Olivia, Soledad's mother who has gone into a spiritual coma where she sleeps, sleepwalks and dreams of both her problems and wishes for a better life. Gorda, the family *santiguadora* uses all of her spiritual knowledge to encourage others in the family, especially Soledad, to tune into her own spiritual powers so that Olivia can return to consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Cruz depicts Olivia's life as one of sadness

and economic hardship brought about by circumstances beyond her control. Olivia's mother, Doña Sosa's describesn of her to her granddaughter Soledad:

It seems that Nueva York was just too much for fragile Olivia. [...] After Manolo died your mother thought she could just go back to D.R. and relive her childhood. I never forget that one night when she came into my bedroom and said really serious, like your mother sometimes gets, she said, Mamá I'm never leaving Dominican Republic, its like selling your soul when you leave. I asked her if she was unhappy, but I should've known, her eyes, Soledad, you know how big and green they are, they were sleepy and disillusioned. And when she couldn't buy our old land in Juan Dolio, because the government owns it now and leased it to a bunch of Germans, Olivia cracked and her spirit spilled out from her. She's been trying to gather herself up ever since. (Cruz 165)

Olivia's reaction to the news that she would not be able to return to the island represents the struggle of many transnationals who have chosen to make the U.S. a temporary economic refuge but have intended to go "home" as soon as their budget permitted. This is in fact the Dominican American dream for many Dominican immigrants: to come to the States, save money, educate one's children and someday return to live well in the Dominican Republic. Olivia's eyes show the disillusion common to many immigrants who find life in the States to be much harsher than they ever expected. Her eyes are also green like those of Lorenza Parduz character of *El tiempo del olvido*, but the two are complete spiritual opposites; while Lorenza learns to appreciate the old Afrosyncretic religion of her town and relies on it in hard times, Olivia does not believe in the family's religious practices as strongly her sister Gorda does, a possible indication for her eventual

spiritual sleep. Cruz describes Olivia's body as "cracking" and her spirit as "spilling out from her," a reference to the idea that once the spirit leaves the body it is difficult to recover it, just like any spilled liquid (165). The years of living in a poverty inflicted by the Dominican economic ISA of the 70s and the one in the U.S. is damaging to the subject who has no imagined way of navigating through their respective power system.

One of the repeating themes of *Soledad* is the importance of family at all times, especially when one is in a crisis. A young university student, Soledad is at first reluctant to come home to her family as her relationship with Olivia has always been strained, due to Soledad's inability to relate to her fears and Olivia's inability to be completely honest with Soledad about her previous life in the Dominican Republic. Gorda, Soledad's aunt and Olivia's sister, on the other hand, has her own explanation about what is happening to Olivia and she does everything she can to help:

Gorda has been having dreams that don't lie. Dreams of elaborate weddings filled with carnations and dirty diapers. It was obviously a warning. But she had no idea it would be this bad. Olivia's been sleeping for four full days only getting up to go to the bathroom. Gorda looks at her little sister. She looks exhausted, as if the life was beaten out of her. She's not bruised up the way Manolo would leave her after one of his fits, it's more like her spirit has taken a beating. (Cruz 25)

Gorda sees Olivia's situation through her religious ISA and she does what she can for her sister. She decides that it is the spirit of her dead brother in law, Manolo, who used to abuse Olivia, that is, not allowing Olivia to live in peace. In an attempt to save Olivia from perhaps going on to be completely in the spirit world, she calls Soledad and tells her to come home so that she can be close to her mother. She also decides that in order for

Olivia to awaken from her spiritual coma she should give Olivia's apartment a *limpieza* or a spiritual cleansing using her "collection of healing teas, oils [,] candles," herbs and Florida water (Cruz 25). Gorda stays in Olivia's apartment throughout the novel, attempting to understand the presence of the masculine spirits there that sometimes molest her. This is the same thing that happened to Olivia after she pushes Manolo out the apartment window to his death after years of abuse. Later Gorda admits to Soledad that she thinks she is responsible for Manolo's demise since she "prayed for his death, every night to Santa Altagracia [and] imagined him falling and crashing. [She] dreamed he would spill blood [...] Every time [she] saw [her] mother bruised [she] prayed for his death" (Cruz 142).<sup>22</sup> Although Soledad tries to reassure her and tells her she is not responsible, Gorda sobs remorsefully and asks God's forgiveness, an act which humanizes her character but one that shows reverence; she does not want to be punished in the spirit world for what she has done, an indication of the power her religious ISA has over her.

Gorda's character symbolizes how subjects use religion to combat the problems that they face in life. In the case of the novel *Soledad*, however, the examples of Gorda and Olivia can also be paralleled to Dominican history. The family's stories are representative of what many Dominican families endured during the years after the fall of Trujillo in 1961, when first, a leftist leaning *antitrujillista* Juan Bosch and then a rightist leaning *trujillista* Balaguer came to power in 1966 and remained until 1978.<sup>23</sup> Many Dominicans were killed, tortured and imprisoned in the ensuing battles between conservatives and liberals that occurred between those years, which was in effect a continuation of Trujillo's RSA under a different name. While this period of Balaguer's rule saw an increase in the

nation's economy as well as somewhat of a more equitable distribution of wealth, many of the poor *campesinos*<sup>24</sup> suffered economic hardships due to the fact that Balaguer used manufacturing, mining, and tourism to bolster the nation's economy as opposed to agriculture which had previously served as the nation's primary economic resource. Many of those who were members of a predominantly rural population were forced to find opportunities either in Santo Domingo or abroad as was the case in the novel with Soledad's family, who owned land but sold it to come to the United States in search of better financial prospects. Olivia, while on the island, initially had no choice but to turn to prostitution for economic survival, when she had in fact told her family she was working in tourism. Cruz's depiction of Olivia's harsh choices is a reflection of the financial situation for many during the 1960s and 1970s in the Dominican Republic. Her body becomes a symbolic commodity and the many foreign men who buy her are representative of the foreign investment that benefited some members of Dominican society, leaving most Dominicans to precariously fend for themselves while looking toward an uncertain future. In the novel, an Afro-Dominican woman has lost the basic right of control over her own body in her own country and it has left her spiritually bereft.

Gorda is intent upon restoring her sister Olivia to spiritual health, and she strongly believes that she and her family members have the power to help Olivia return to them and become functional once again. It is she who first calls Soledad to return to help Olivia and it is she who takes it upon herself as a strong believer in her alternative religious ISA to heal her despite Olivia's preference for Western medicine:

Gorda passes incense over my mother's body, ignoring the fact that my mother doesn't believe in the power of a cleansing. My mother believes in X-rays,

prescriptions, things that come out of a pharmacy. But that's not going to stop Gorda from breaking into my mother's apartment and getting rid of what Gorda calls frustrated energy that's eating away at my mother's spirit. If she only knew. Gorda always believed my mother's apartment had something eerie inside of it, and she thinks her giving it a cleaning will make the sun shine through the windows again. I'm tempted to share with Gorda what I know about my mother. But somehow through the years I've convinced myself that if I don't say anything, if I ignore it, it's not really happening. (Cruz 24)

Soledad's description of Gorda and Olivia is indicative of two choices of an ISA's subjects: either they can submit to the dominant ideology or they can attempt to continue to follow their own ISAs in an attempt to solve the problems that the dominant ISA has caused. If Olivia's body serves as a metaphor for the troubles that the country has suffered under Balaguer after Trujillo, then Gorda's character as a *santiguadora* can serve as a metaphor for the many attempts of poorer Dominicans to find autonomy in a country that continued to abuse their human rights through an RSA that was made possible by Balaguer's American Dominican economic ISA. Just as the Lorenza Parduz character from *El tiempo del olvido* represents the early *olivoristas* of the 1900s through the early 1920s, Gorda and her mother Doña Sosa are parallels to the *olivoristas* who continued their struggle for independence from the country's economic ISAs through their faith in the 60's. This group was called the Palma Sola Movement and was headed by Plinio and León Ventura, who were born in 1918 and 1921 respectively during the days of Olivorio Mateo's influence. Their father, the elder León Ventura, was forced to flee to Haiti after his first son Delanoy Ventura killed a *trujillista* guard thus obliging the numerous Ventura siblings to be brought

up with various relatives in case of vengeance on the part of the *trujillistas*. Although Plinio and León were not twin brothers themselves, they came from a family of no less than three twin births and in *gagá*, which has roots in the Nigerian Yoruba religious tradition, twins, the sibling born before them and the sibling born after them are believed to be endowed with spiritual powers (Lundhal and Lundius 172). Eventually, the Ventura brothers became the leaders of the *olivorista* movement when both told each other about spiritual visions that they thought encouraged them about a special mission and brought the two together at Palma Sola. Members of a strong *olivorista* family, Plinio and León were possessed at times by Olivorio's spirit and began healing and prophesying as "Liborio" had done while he was living. One of the most "dangerous, prophetic statement[s in early 1961] was that Trujillo would be killed in the not so distant future" (Lundhal and Lundius 177). As in the first *olivorista* communities Palma Sola became a place of refuge for those seeking spiritual, political and economic freedom from the ISA that was the Dominican government. Fornication, money and arms were forbidden in the community where all were welcome to live and work together toward a common welfare. Members of the Palma Sola Movement swore religious oaths of allegiance, listened to the spiritual teachings of Plinio, and participated in *cofradía* rituals. A self-sustaining unit, León Ventura notes Palma Sola soon inspired "envy among the politicians, the church and the medical doctors. They closed their minds and never accepted the good things that were to be found up there. For that reason they finally turned against us" (Lundhal and Lundius 194). Part of León's theories were true, as the Catholic church, which had not had too much influence in the San Juan de Managua area was not happy to find so many potential converts were *olivoristas*. While it is important to remember that the Church finally took an official stand

against Trujillo at the end of the dictatorship on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the American-influenced political climate of the Caribbean favored right leaning governments in the wake of Castro's revolution in Cuba in January of 1959.<sup>25</sup> Therefore any groups that were seen as a threat to the Church which was openly anti-communist, were also seen as a potential threat to the current political power in the Dominican Republic in the years following the *trujillato*. While many non-religious leftist organizations such as the fourteenth of June Movement expressly understood and feared that the removal of Trujillo might simply end in his being replaced by another dictator the United States choosing, the Palma Sola Movement served mainly as a non-violent answer for those who wished to retire from the nation's sometimes chaotic RSAs and ISAs.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, a special unit of United States trained the reformed Dominican police force informally referred to as *Los Cascos Blancos*, or "the white helmets" along with Dominican military leaders came to Palma Sola on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1962. While the leaders met with Tulio and Delanoy, the Ventura brothers who acted in León and Plinio's stead, *Los Cascos Blancos* who were stationed outside Palma Sola and the *olivoristas* began fighting with one another. In the confusion they killed Plinio who had been standing in the crowd as just another follower. What ensued was a massacre of men women and children including Onilio Ventura, Delanoy Ventura, and his son. Attack planes were sent to hover over Palma Sola and more patrolmen entered the site ordering the men to come out of their homes. León Ventura survived, having previously been taken from Palma Sola for questioning by the local authorities but then beaten in Santo Domingo.

Gorda's attempt to heal Olivia's spirit is much like what the Palma Sola movement tried to offer poor and marginalized Dominicans living in the unstable interim years

between Trujillo's assassination and Joaquín Balaguer's 12 year rule. Olivia has become the victim of economic hardships, which led her to sell herself, which in turn made her vulnerable to a predator like partner in Manolo, who as a Dominican character represents the worst abuses that Dominicans made other Dominicans suffer in attacks like those of Palma Sola in 1962 and subsequent human rights abuses over the next 16 years. *Soledad* suggests that there *is* a way for the Olivias of the Dominican Republic to find relief from the years of physical, mental and spiritual hardship and that is to reconnect with the spiritual resources found in the country. *El tiempo del olvido* suggests this very same tactic where Herminia begins to heal herself through running her aunt's farm. It is ironic that Olivia as previously mentioned is an Afro-Dominican with green eyes like the Lorenza Parduz character who represents early twentieth century country life, and that Olivia's name is similar to Olivorio, yet she has disconnected herself from the family's religion. It is not until the end of the novel that Gorda decides that Olivia should return to the Dominican Republic to become whole again. She and Soledad go through Olivia's apartment searching for all of Manolo's possessions to give away so that his spirit will no longer feel comfortable staying there. During the cleaning Soledad comes upon a notebook that contains all of Olivia's clients while she was in the Dominican Republic. Upon reading the list, the men's spirits appear in the apartment and are visible to Soledad and Olivia. Soledad is fascinated by the men and after some time their presence affects her:

Last time Gorda found me she slapped me so I could come back to earth. Gorda reminds me that it's my longing to know which one my father is that keeps them in the apartment. I feel terrible for doing it but I can't help but be curious. They are so close, how can I not compare, and think about the possibilities. Last night I didn't

sleep all night thinking about it. Even after Gorda put glasses of water behind all the doors, installed white dishes filled with rice to soak up the spirits, hung eucalyptus by the windows, I had a hard time sleeping wondering about them. (Cruz 215)

Gorda's role as *santiguadora* has become even more intensified as Soledad begins to relate to the mystery and the pain of the secret that Olivia has kept for years. This is perhaps in keeping with the idea that the reach of the Dominican economic structure is indeed long; before Soledad discovered her mother's past she had little to do with the poverty Olivia suffered on the island. Rather she became a subject of the dominant American ideologies that led her to want to leave home to go to college and assimilate as much as possible to American life. It becomes obvious to Gorda, however, that her niece is bound to suffer as her sister has done:

Gorda's right. I feel myself getting worse. Just this morning I woke up, took a deep breath and from the depths of my belly I screamed, so loud that the glass on the alarm clock almost shattered. And when I tried to stand up, I dropped and cracked just like a ripe pomegranate. My skin broke and my soul spilled out like pomegranate juice onto the floor. It took me hours to recover, to get myself up, to realize I'm still alive. (Cruz 215)

The depiction of the transmission of Olivia's spiritual pathology to Soledad springs Gorda into further action. She decides after Soledad's episode that the best thing to do would be for Olivia to go to a place called *las Tres Bocas*, a spiritual pool surrounded by a cave in the country where she can destroy the list of Olivia's clients. Soledad takes Olivia to the Dominican Republic where they retrace her steps as Gorda suggests. Again, Cruz suggests

the importance of connecting to the land in her narrative as Rizik does in *El tiempo del olvido*. This is in keeping with the religious practices of the *olivoristas* that still occur to this day. They too have a special spring to which they go located in the San Juan Valley close to Mateo Olivorio's town of San Juan de Managua. These places in the central eastern part of the island are the sites of many wells, lakes and springs, all of which serve as places for the worship of African, Christian and Indigenous deities. For example, the spirits of both the *cacique* Caonabo and his wife Anacaona are honored for their resistance against Spanish rule through annual ceremonies.<sup>27</sup> In the *gagá* belief system, San Juan is associated with Shangó, the god of thunder, masculinity, lightning and warriors. It is believed that both he and his consort Oshún, the goddess of all fresh waters, femininity, fertility, children and pleasure can be beseeched through the waters that run throughout the San Juan Valley. Believers from around the country often go to the spring of San Juan at La Agüita, which is also known as the Spring of Olivorio to be healed of both their sins and diseases.<sup>28</sup> Seeking alternative sources of healing is another way of reclaiming the body as one's own; rather than handing the care of the body to allopathic medicine, the decision to follow a more Afro-Indigenous syncretic form of healing through *gagá* is an act that allows the marginalized subject to take ownership of their physical and spiritual persons from the dominant medical ISA. This is in keeping with contemporary attitudes of the followers of Afro-Caribbean alternative religions in New York City today. Oftentimes Dominicans and Dominican Americans have high dropout rates when receiving treatment for psychological problems. They prefer alternative providers of mental health care and an individual's sickness, be it psychological or physical, is often seen as a family concern (Paulino 86, 91).

This is evident when Soledad takes Olivia to meet up with their concerned cousins who take them to *Las Tres Bocas*.

At the end of *Soledad*, both Soledad and Olivia undergo a spiritual rebirth at *Las Tres Bocas*. Olivia, no longer caught between the spiritual world and the physical, draws Soledad from the waters she falls into and the two begin to repair their broken relationship having now a mutual understanding of each other's pain. Both *Soledad* and *El tiempo del olvido* suggest that subjects suffer much before they are able to gain a semblance of spiritual and mental independence. The discussion of the following novels and Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home* illustrate the struggles of Dominican American and Dominican subjects whose fight for freedom from the RSA of the *trujillato* exacts the prices of spiritual and physical death.

#### **A map for the soul...**

Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home* represents Dominican subjects' struggle against the United States's cultural and economic apparatuses and the Dominican Republic's power structures in a manner similar to *Soledad*. Both novels feature women who use the knowledge of their religious systems and their spirituality to confront the problems they face as Dominican immigrants in New York City. In her discussion of the novel Cynthia Palmer indicates that

Pérez emphasizes the social function of these pre-Hispanic religious practices and the clear symbolic value of a religious system based on feminine knowledge and power. The gynocentric spiritual tradition is represented in the novel as a contra-hegemonic cultural discourse that serves as the basis of feminine resistance to multiple levels of oppression of women in a purely patriarchal society (283).<sup>29</sup>

Palmer's observations on religion in *Geographies of Home* are in direct accordance with this discussion. Indeed, the novel does not exoticize Afro-syncretic religion nor does it disparage it as pagan and mysterious, but depicts it as a vital part everyday survival. However, *Geographies of Home* differs from the previous novels in that while it suggests a possible answer to the oppression brought about by patriarchy and dictatorships, Pérez's novel simultaneously questions the relationship between the subject and their religion, in particular the reason as to why they chose to follow it.

*Geographies of Home* follows the lives of Papito and Aurelia, a Dominican immigrant couple and their 14 children. The two leave the Dominican Republic during the *trujillato* to raise their large family in Brooklyn, New York, expecting better economic prospects, political freedom and peace as many Dominicans have done and continue to do today. While living on the island with her mother Bienvenida, Aurelia learns about the spiritual traditions that Bienvenida attempts to impart to her and her brother Virgilio. Bienvenida is her town's midwife and is also a *servidora* to whom the people come for advice and healing. Although she has considerable knowledge and capabilities, Aurelia does not follow Bienvenida's advice concerning the cultivation of her spiritual gifts because Virgilio, unable to understand or bear being able to see into the spirit realm, commits suicide:

She gazed up at the clear and turquoise sky. Had she been with her husband, he would have evoked for her the God he claimed could reach down from His height to calm all troubled hearts. That God was the one spirit she wanted to believe in, not the spirits her mother claimed lingered after death to resolve the problems of former lives. It did not matter that she herself felt their presence as tangibly as she

did the breezes which in summer arrived at sunset and lasted only until dawn or that throughout her visit she had lain awake at night listening to their voices and hearing her mother's response. She preferred to believe in a death that laid spirits out to rest and in a God Who would one day reward those who had suffered. She did not want to consider that after dying she too might continue yearning or seeking answers to what she did not understand. (Pérez 133)

Searching for answers to life's spiritual questions is one of the main themes that courses through the novel and Aurelia's character as a mother is always concerned about the path that she and her children have taken. Although she is a *servidora* Aurelia deliberately ignores this part of her spirituality because it does not provide her with the answers she wants. Aurelia is too upset about the death of her brother, which the religion did not explain to her satisfaction, making her victimized instead of empowered. She converts to Seventh Day Adventism in the hopes that this religion would shelter her from the pain she underwent as a young woman. Unfortunately, her daughters Marina, Rebecca, and Iliana also experience various degrees of suffering in their lives due to the strict tenets of Seventh Day Adventism as taught to them by their parents, creating a cycle of mental and spiritual illness. Aurelia reflects on her former religion while waiting in the hospital to hear about Marina who has attempted suicide and so again questions the validity of her beliefs in a state of disillusion. While the life of the family has been better materially than what they would have experienced in the Dominican Republic, Adventism, which was thought to be the ideal religious belief system has also let Aurelia down. She decides to return to the religion of her childhood and later attempts to help all three of her daughters with her spiritual gifts.

*Geographies of Home* like *Soledad* deals with the issue of domestic violence. Just as Gorda resented the way Manolo abused Olivia, most of the family is concerned about Rebecca, the eldest sibling's relationship with Pasi3n her second husband whose "brows [...] arched with humor and cruelty [and whose] lips swelled with reckless sensuality" (P3rez 54). Rebecca and Pasi3n live with their three children in a home without heat or hot water but where the chickens he raises receive most of his attention. Rebecca suffers physical and mental cruelty but refuses to leave her husband despite Aurelia and Papito's pleas for her to return home for the sake of their grandchildren. After reminiscing in the hospital about her mother, Aurelia, in a scene that is perhaps an homage to magical realism realizes the power she has to save her daughter.<sup>30</sup> She purchases headless, plumed chickens for a Christmas dinner and uses the birds to work against Pasi3n while he is in his house:

Pasi3n stumbled toward the door. Aurelia plucked and released more feathers. She did this again and again, her hands moving at a dizzying speed, the air thickening with dust and feathers that choked Pasi3n. He fell to his knees and fumbled in a pocket for his inhaler. Aurelia instantly swung the largest of the birds through the air. The rooster whose wings her son-in-law had clipped followed her cue by defying gravity to knock the inhaler out of his reach. [...] A flurry of birds scrambled forward, kicking the inhaler into the farthest corners of the coop. [...] They lashed out at Pasi3n, pecking at his face, his hands, his wrists and any other bits of skin exposed as he crawled from the room to collapse on the third-floor landing. (P3rez 255,256)

The time that Aurelia chooses to exact revenge upon Pasi3n is significant; she chooses to use the same birds that will feed the family in a Christmas celebration in an act that is more in keeping with the alternative religious practices of her youth, thus symbolically combining the two. This act symbolizes some of the characteristics of *gag3* as a syncretic belief system. Often *gag3* adherents venerate African deities under the names of Catholic saints and this is in a way what Aurelia does. Her choice to follow her old religion is an act of subversion in that Catholicism was the mainstream religion of the Dominican Republic and she does not rely on the help of either a Catholic priest or an Adventist Pastor to resolve her problem. In this case it is the subject itself that chooses to act independently of state sanctioned religious ISAs and obtains the desired results. Through the act of killing Pasi3n unbeknownst to the police, P3rez suggests through Aurelia that if the marginalized rely upon their own religious beliefs that they can make necessary changes to their lives. Furthermore, it is Aurelia an older Afro-Dominican woman who does away with Pasi3n in a country where the penal structure is run by people who are not like her at all, that is, male, white, English speaking and products of a more “advanced” society. This further suggests that one can successfully avert the punishment of the U.S. police structures by simply being in tune with one’s own spiritual force.

The novel continues to question the patriarchal structure of Christianity through Papito’s character. Sixty-five but still the head of the large household, Papito’s past on the island was not exactly that of Aurelia. He unlike she inherits three acres from his father and farms it in order to support himself when he was 19. Raised Roman Catholic he later has an epiphany:

He thought back to his conversion from Catholicism of his youth. What had appealed to him about Adventist doctrine was its specificity in distinguishing right from wrong. In a country where both had shifted according to a tyrant's whims and little had offered relief or hope, religion had granted him salvation, unmediated access to the divine, and steadfast rules by which to live. These he had offered to his children as buffer against poverty and pain. He had hoped with the promise of heaven, to shield them from disappointment in this world. Yet in a United States where the fulfillment of dreams was considered possible and the young demanded satisfaction in the here and now, he, who had long ago given up on dreams, had been unable to discourage his children from theirs or to fathom what, other than faith, he might in old age offer to help them endure their lives.

(Pérez 149)

For Papito, religion was a way to challenge the *trujillato* at a time when the Catholic church was one of the dictator's main supporters. This was the reality for many Dominicans during Trujillo's tenure as exemplified by the *olivoristas* who operated underground during the dictatorship because they were seen as a political threat. The Dominican Republic has for most of the twentieth century been a country of religious freedom, but at the same time to be Catholic was to some extent to be part of Trujillo's mainstream. In order to free himself from the dictatorship, Papito takes advantage of the religious freedom he has as a citizen and decides that the Adventist church is a way out. Unlike Aurelia, he is a much stricter adherent to the religion and rules the family with an unquestioned authority. This is ironic because the point of leaving the Dominican Republic behind was to abandon the patriarchal rule of one man. In this sense Papito,

although loving his children, becomes a dictator of sorts and this produces psychopathologies in some of the children who are in effect searching for ways to escape their parent's home as it is not a place of wholeness and safety but one of bad memories and lack of autonomy. In creating parental characters that doubt their choice of raising their children in the religion that they chose to follow, Pérez questions the authority of the religious and the family structures which form the foundation of society.

Pérez's narrative continues in this vein with the depiction of the discussion between Iliana, one of the youngest children, and Papito. At various points in the novel, Iliana senses the truth about situations that her siblings, the church or her parents do not wish to confront. Aurelia believes that Iliana's nascent spirituality is a trait that Iliana has inherited from her despite the Adventist upbringing she has had. One night after Marina attacks her, Iliana goes out to seek the company of her college friend. Upon returning the next morning Papito beats her for her disobedience after which she defiantly asks if he is finished. Later, a contrite Papito tries to explain his actions:

[Y]ou slipped out of the yard [and] we found you hours later. You were [...] throwing twigs into the river and giggling as you watched them tumble downstream. You could've drowned out there by yourself. Yet there you were, laughing and [...] showing no fear of being out there all alone. I was so relieved to find you and so angry that you'd put yourself in danger that I pulled your dress up right then and there and whacked your butt. [...] You were three years old and you didn't even cry. [...] You [...] shut your eyes real tight until a vein showed on your forehead from the effort you were making not to cry. You only opened them when I pulled your dress back down. The look you gave me then made my

blood run cold. It was like—like an adult was looking at me out of your eyes. An adult who knew exactly what she'd been doing and judged me as if I were the one who had done wrong. (Pérez 317)

Again, Pérez challenges the traditional power structures. Papito as the Christian father wants to make sure that none of his children are harmed and attempts to discipline Iliana his youngest daughter because “[she was] headstrong even then, [and He] had to teach [her] a lesson so that [she'd] learn to be afraid. Without fear, anything could've happened to [her] (Pérez 318). The use of fear in order to control his children is akin to some traditional religions that insist their adherents never deviate from the ISA's dogma if they wish to attain spiritual perfection. Pérez challenges the authority of mainstream religious apparatuses through Iliana's three year old judgment of her father, the exact opposite of what would normally happen between a father and child in that situation. By allowing Iliana to “chastise” her father for chastising her, Pérez indicates that Aurelia's original spiritual belief is just as or more legitimate than Papito's. As a young child, Iliana never hurt herself or anyone else and asks: “Couldn't that mean I somehow knew instinctively what was dangerous and not?” indicating that she was most likely guided by forces beyond typical early child thought patterns (Pérez 318). It is also important to note that Iliana escaped from the house, which represented all the rules of Adventism to find a place in nature where she could play in running water. This place is similar to the countrysided of Aurelia's youth, another connection to Aurelia's former religion. As Aurelia's daughter, Iliana represents stunted potential of her grandmother's faith system in her life. Papito's beatings quell the childhood love that she once had for him rather than teach her fear of the unknown and this most likely turns her away from his religion:

Looking at him now, Iliana for the first time recognized him as no more than an old and very tired man. Irrationally, she had persisted in seeing him through the eyes of a child who had believed herself to be at the mercy of a father both as daunting and almighty as the God she had long ceased believing in. She had also continued to judge him by standards higher than those by which she judged others and herself. As her father Papito was supposed to have been the paradigm of perfection. [...] If necessary, he was supposed to have shed his blood to deliver her from harm. He was supposed to have been free of the base emotions to which humans were all prey as well as impervious to the effects of the world in which they lived. (Pérez 320)

Iliana's changing view of the religious ISA of her childhood reveals an important point, specifically about how religion and the construction of authority figures. Papito's insistence that the children follow all the tenets of Adventism at home as well as in church paralleled him with divine authority in the eyes of his children. As Iliana indicates, Papito was seen as a super human messiah who was able to save her at all times. The problem with this religio-domestic system of which Papito was head, was that it left no room for Papito or the children's mistakes. Being human became a flaw and once Iliana realized that even Papito could fail, her belief in him as an authority figure also crumbled. It is at this point that the nakedness of this particular religion becomes clear, that many of the rules to attain God's favor and grace are manmade, albeit with good intentions and as such they are prone to error. As a subject, Iliana is left without a religion to follow because instead of salvation, she sees an unforgiving structure without tolerance for human imperfection. Aurelia has not taught her about her budding powers

as a *servidora*, and so Iliana decides that the best thing for her to do would be to leave her parents' home, a place where she was chastised for being herself. Again, Pérez questions the more mainstream religious ISA of Adventism where parents, who are fallible, are the ultimate earthly authorities through Iliana's actions. Although she finally pities her father and understands that he was "a man conscious of having failed his children and fostering no hopes of being redeemed before their eyes" (Pérez 320), she leaves hoping her past experiences, good and bad, will help her in the future.

### **Conclusion**

Religion as depicted in the novels *El tiempo del olvido*, *Soledad* and *Geographies of Home* represents complex realities for subjects that struggle to find their way in the power structures in which they live. In the case of Dominican and Dominican American subjects, religion was not only a matter of belief but it could also mean the difference between political freedom and oppression. Trujillo's decision to use the church as a powerful ally to his dictatorship was a strategically calculated move, one that reduced the Church to simply another organization. This is the exact opposite of what religious systems have meant to the people of the Dominican Republic. Whether it be Roman Catholicism, Protestantism or Afro-syncretic religions such as *gagá*, religious structures in these novels are depicted as a source of protection, power and problem solving. Rizik, Cruz and Pérez create systems in their novels with characters who all have the potential ability to change the negative forces around them to positive ones and use them to their advantage. These plots suggest that the marginalized in society can live a different reality than the one imposed upon them, a seemingly innocuous but perhaps revolutionary

possibility linking the Divine with those who have nothing but their faith to carry them through life.

## Chapter 2

### **Domination and Desire**

Dominican women's literature illustrates the concept of desire on many different levels. Besides those of physical or romantic desire, there are depictions of the desire for freedom, a particular lifestyle, social status or the desire for power to be found in novels featuring Dominican and Dominican American characters. At first glance, it seems that in the novels, the characters' desires are organic, emanating from the characters themselves just as an individual's desires seem to have their origins in that individual. Theodor Adorno suggests, however, that origins of desire are much more complicated in that they lie outside of the subject rather than within. Today's society, Adorno argues, has come to almost completely dominate individuals and in doing so, has also come to manipulate the desires of these individuals in such a fashion that they believe that their desires truly come from within themselves. His findings are conjunctive to Louis Althusser's ISA or ideological state apparatus theory as discussed in the previous chapter, where society exerts its control through the ideologies of religion, education, economics, et cetera. In the previous chapter I focused on how religious ISAs operate and how the subject survives within them. In a similar manner, in this chapter I will explore how the depictions of characters in the novels illustrate the powerful connection between the ISAs of class, capitalism, culture and the manipulation of the desire of the subject.

Modern societies in the Western world are made of individuals who seemingly act upon their own wishes that in reality are generated and controlled by external sources. These external sources originate in the dominant societies themselves in the forms of institutions such as religion, education, politics, economics, and culture, all of which

explicitly and implicitly dictate to the individual who she is. This status quo is able to exist because “people are incapable of recognizing themselves in society and society ccccccin themselves because they are alienated from each other and the totality. Their reified social relations necessarily appear to them as an ‘in itself’” (Adorno 1967). In other words, today’s individual has internalized societal norms to the extent that they cannot see these norms as alien to their own psyches, in particular to their ids, the seat of their desires. Society’s ability to function as an apparently organic phenomenon is due to the individuals’ compliance to the ISAs of religion, education, economics, politics and culture. It is these institutions that manipulate people’s ids thus allowing for the perpetuation of societal rules that shape the members of different socioeconomic classes.<sup>31</sup> Althusser describes the nature of these ISAs as “interpellative” in that they call and interrogate the members of society by categorizing them as rich, poor, religious, secular, mainstream, marginalized, intelligent, not intelligent, et cetera.<sup>32</sup> This in turn produces constructed identities that subjects aspire to embody, believing that these identities are indeed who they are, when in reality they have been manufactured and assigned.

### **This “Class” That is Not One**

In *Soledad* Angie Cruz’s characters are representative of the types of individuals produced by the society that Adorno and Althusser indicate, namely one where the subjects act upon wishes that have been prescribed for them by a dominant society. Set primarily in the New York City neighborhood of Washington Heights, the novel follows the lives of Dominican Americans who have lived both on the island and in the United States, both places that have produced ISAs to which the characters subscribe. However,

as transnational and transcultural subjects, Cruz's characters operate within mainly American ISAs particularly, economics and culture. Soledad, the novel's eponymous heroine, comes from a working class family and neighborhood but she does not identify with her background and surroundings, opting to attempt to change them and thus change her categorization in a society that marks her as a minority, of lower economic status and from a culture that is subordinate to the dominant one. The novel opens with Soledad's return from her downtown Manhattan apartment to those of her family in Washington Heights where she expresses conflicting feelings about her origins:

When I first moved downtown and people where I work asked me where I was from, I used to say the Upper West Side, vaguely.

Oh I really love it up there, they said, no doubt picturing Central Park and hordes of yuppified New Yorkers roller blading on a Sunday afternoon, or restaurants with outdoor seating that serve Italian gelato and crepes. I said it for so long that even I forgot that to most people Washington Heights is not even considered Manhattan. It's more like the Bronx. And because I knew that people associated what they saw on the news with the place I grew up in—a war zone filled with cop killers, killer cops, crack dealers, gang members and lazy welfare mothers—I convinced myself that embroidering the truth about my living on the Upper Upper Upper West Side was my way of keeping nasty stereotypes of Washington Heights out of people's minds. (Cruz 12)

Soledad's description of her home and her imagined home represents the product of two ISAs: a dominant American society that produces different social classes and their economies. Soledad gives a Manichean description of Washington Heights and the Upper

West Side, one a place of poverty and violence and the other a place of idyllic comfort. In doing so she indicates a social divide that exists among people who occupy the same space, namely Manhattan. The poor are violent, prone to drug use, lazy and live in a space that is marginalized, which Soledad indicates by noting, “to most people Washington Heights is not even Manhattan” (Cruz 12). The wealthy on the other hand enjoy foreign delicacies and occupy beautiful mainstream spaces like Central Park through which they are literally free to glide effortlessly. Initially it may seem that this “reality” is natural; people living in poor communities live there because they either choose to do so or do not have the ability to attain access to better living conditions, while the upper classes enjoy their lifestyle because they have done everything they should have to earn a place in a world of relative comfort. Soledad’s character represents a typical subject within a capitalist society in that she associates wealth and poverty with assigned social classes. This is indicative of an internalization of the dictates of a dominant society, one that prescribes behaviors, tastes, worldviews, demeanors, interests, attitudes and cultures to its members. While it is not wrong for one to desire to have access to capital in order to live a better life, it becomes easy to believe that only those who carry themselves as members of the upper classes should have the money attributed to the upper classes. The ISA of class is indeed a powerful one because it proposes identities that subjects either claim as other characters in the novel do, or reject in favor of another as Soledad does. It is ironic that Soledad believes that “embroidering the truth about [her] living on the Upper Upper Upper West Side was [her] way of keeping nasty stereotypes of Washington Heights out of people’s minds” because hiding her origins would only perpetuate them. (Cruz 12) It is because she *already embodies* what is

seemingly different from what people might expect of those who live in Washington Heights that she shatters preconceived notions of people from her neighborhood, but she does not understand this. Rather she feels that because she is different she must become a member of a different class and live in a different place. This is because what is not clear in the prescriptions of class behavior is just that: they are prescriptions and they can be likened to clothes that one puts on and takes off in order to give a series of performances. Soledad's identification with the "yuppified New Yorkers" is an illusion not because she cannot become one of them, but because she adheres to the ISAs of class and economics that are designed to maintain control of the masses but do not exist without their internalization.

Once an individual begins to follow the patterns set forth by the dominant society, it becomes much easier for them to share the same perceptions as those of people in power. The elite in the United States follow a certain set of rules in order to continue enjoying their participation in their group and these rules give rise to a manufactured persona that can be adopted by all subjects. The ISA of class, like any other ISA, is effective in that it does not have to be enforced; rather the people themselves consciously and subconsciously act it out because they are "interpellated as [free subjects so] that [they] shall freely accept their subjugation" (Althusser 182).<sup>33</sup> It has been taught to the individual in schools where it has gone unquestioned and can possibly create a rift between the individual and her family.<sup>34</sup> One of the primary reasons that inscribed subjects wish to attain higher education is to better their stations in life, however what may inadvertently happen is the formation of the belief in an individual's mind that they must separate themselves from the family that they know if their family belongs to the

lower and working classes. Furthermore, the individual may not only deem it necessary to separate themselves from their familiar surroundings but they might also begin to adopt a negative view of those who either do not belong to the upper classes or do not wish to do so. Cruz depicts this phenomenon in Soledad's depiction of her neighborhood when she returns home to help her mother Olivia at the behest of her aunt Gorda:

As soon as I arrive at 164<sup>th</sup> Street I'm attacked. I trip on the uneven sidewalk. The air-conditioners spit at me. The smell of onion and cilantro sting my eyes. I start to sneeze, the humidity is thick, sweat beads drip on the small of my back. Hydrants erupt, splashing cold water over the pavement. I know I should turn back while I still can, before anybody in my family sees me, but when potbellied, sockless men and pubescent homeboys call me mami, as if I'll give them the time of day if they stare at me long enough, I know I must keep moving forward. The last thing I want is to look lost or confused about where I'm going. There are more cops on the streets than fire hydrants. Merengue blares out of car speakers, the Dominican flag drapes in place of curtains on apartment windows, sneakers hang from lampposts, Presidente bottles, pizza boxes and old issues of *El Diario* burst out of the trash cans on the corner, a side of pernil grills by a building's basement...The way I'm figuring it, my time in Washington Heights is like a prison sentence. Once I do the time, I won't have the guilt trip anymore about moving out. (Cruz 13)

Soledad's perception of her neighborhood is in keeping with her new class outlook. By likening her living there to being incarcerated, she expresses the ultimate despair of being locked not only physically in one place, but mentally as well. Prison is a place of torment,

depression, discomfort, the exact opposite of what a person in the upper middle classes is accustomed to. It is a place reserved for those who have done wrong, in this case, the poor who have not ventured out to better themselves through education as Soledad has. She attends school downtown in Manhattan, physically removing herself from the neighborhood as far as she possibly can, and this results in a disdain for the place where she grew up. Cruz gives a sensual picture of the neighborhood that is no longer agreeable to Soledad's taste, as is represented in the literal smells of onion and cilantro that sting her eyes. Cruz further indicates the differences in class and taste by associating food found in the neighborhood with filth or sordidness by noting the pizza from the garbage and the pernil on the grill by the basement.<sup>35</sup> Even the air conditioning plays a negative role by "spitting" on her upon her arrival rather than welcoming her with a cool breeze on a hot summer day. This is in stark contrast with what a college student might miss about home: their mother's cooking, a feeling of belonging, seeing friends, and a wave of good memories. Not only is the food to her distaste, but the men are as well. Either too old or too young, Soledad dismisses them because she associates them with the place in which they live, something that Soledad has been trying to avoid. These attitudes are exemplary of the individual's agreement with the tastes of the upper classes, which tend to promote a separation between people of different economic backgrounds. In stark contrast with the sights, sounds, smells and people of her original neighborhood as Soledad perceives them lies Soledad's new world. Instead of the common pernil and pizza she prefers "the overpriced cafés" because while "sitting on one of those tall bar stools facing the window, watching people walk by sipping [her] foamy milk, sprinkled with cinnamon, among other university students, [she feels] like [she's] arrived" (Cruz 77). She works at

an art gallery where the owner refuses to show the art of any of the employees and lives in the East Village with her roommate, Caramel. Rather than seeing this as a dramatic turn from the life she has always known, Soledad embraces a new lifestyle that is simply a constructed one; she acts out what she believes is the persona of a university student from downtown and this is exemplary of the power of the ISA of class has over the individual. The behavior, likes and dislikes of a particular group or class are all part of a construction, which ultimately organizes practices and the perception of practices (Bourdieu 170). Enjoying the ambiance of a local café is not natural to university students, rather it is one of the activities that defines university students' identity, an activity in which they participate as a members of their group. In other words, it is one of the daily practices of the ISA that interpellates the group by assigning it its characteristics, which the group agrees to perform.

While the dominant American society categorizes the individual into given classes by perpetuating prescribed roles to the masses, this process does not always produce homogenous beings who strictly adhere to only one socioeconomic categorization. There are some who are able to navigate fluidly through several types of class settings and are accepted in different social strata. These subjects straddle two or more worlds and have mastered the art of performance in each of them. Another dimension is added however when it comes to transcultural and transnational subjects such as the Dominican Americans of Cruz's novel. Not only can the subject belong to different classes within the dominant society but he may also belong to two distinct nationalities, creating a multidimensional personage. Such is the case with Ritchie, Soledad's love interest, who she does not initially see as a potential partner but sees him

as “some loser, who actually likes hanging around this neighborhood, as if he owns shares to the property” (Cruz 106). When he invites her to visit him she is surprised to find that he is not who she believes he is:

Richie continues playing as if I never entered the apartment. I know he’s not ignoring me, I can tell he’s showing off. I look at his trophies. First Championship Junior Nationals. His graduation tassels hang from the corner of his shelf. He did graduate. A Pace University diploma hangs next to a portrait. I walk toward the portrait of this woman with the sad eyes. She’s smiling but her eyes are still sad. Is this your mother? I recognize her from the tattoo. Yes. It’s a beautiful frame. The dark wood is carved in curlicues and flowers. I’ve never noticed the frame. I think people who notice the frames see the borders to things. What are you talking about? What do you see when you see the picture? I see your mother’s face. When I see this picture I see everything she was. I see me standing on the side, while the photographer tried to take her picture. She didn’t want me to smile. She smiled because me and my father were making faces at her. Well how could I see that? I wasn’t there. No you didn’t see the possibilities because you noticed the frame and that’s where it all ends. (Cruz 108)

Richie’s observation about Soledad is both literal and symbolic; he recognizes that she is unable to perceive realities beyond prescribed borders and this speaks to her responding to the call of the ISA. Soledad’s character too lives within a frame, one that has given her specific spaces in which to exist where she is to look a certain way, act a certain way and appreciate certain things. Before visiting Richie she already has preconceptions about him thinking “he’ll leave the door ajar for me and even if he

doesn't like reading, he'll have books thrown around to impress me, and of course the photo albums men love to show off so I can see how sweet and innocent he once was" (Cruz 107). However, while Richie recognizes Soledad's limitations he also sees their similarities and chooses to focus upon them instead. Knowing that she is an art student, he asks her to draw him, which can be seen as a request to re-imagine him beyond what she might typically conceive. Earlier in the novel, he offers her support in dealing with her mother Olivia, who is in a spiritual coma, by sharing the fact that he believes that his mother, who has died, speaks to him at times. Both characters come from the same poor neighborhood, have gone on to pursue higher education and are familiar with the world of academia and its mores. However, Richie's character differs from that of Soledad in that he represents a hybrid construction, while Soledad is in complete compliance with what American culture has depicted as being successful, Richie lies at the crossroads between the culture of Washington Heights and that of the dominant society.<sup>36</sup> Instead of pursuing a career in classical music, Richie is a popular sight at local clubs and plays the congas, piano and saxophone, instruments that are integral to contemporary Dominican music. He is a computer repairman but does not allow this aspect of his life to completely define him, as he feels it is also important to provide a positive influence for the young people in the neighborhood who look up to him. In contrast with Soledad who sees her education as a way to escape the prison of her environment by studying away from home, Richie, while proud of his accomplishments, celebrates them in the space he has always lived in among people that he has always known. When Richie asks her if she goes home a lot, she assumes he means to her apartment downtown but he means the Dominican Republic. Instead of feeling nostalgic, Soledad confesses that she has

nightmares where she has “no papers to get out of the country, no extra clothes to wear and [she needs] to go to the bathroom but the toilets don’t flush” and Richie advises her to visit the island “so that the nightmares will stop” (Cruz 137). Soledad categorizes the island the same way she does the neighborhood, but Richie attempts to persuade her to change her perceptions of both places. When Soledad expresses her desire to go to Jones Beach on Long Island, he tells her to look at the sky and reminds her, “everywhere you go you have the ocean. All you have to do is think of the sky as the ocean upside down and the clouds as sea foam” (Cruz 139), encouraging Soledad to see the beauty that surrounds her in Washington Heights. As Soledad becomes more and more aware of the boundaries placed around her by her worldview, she begins to see the similarities that exist between her and Richie and decides that Richie “is not all that bad” (Cruz 139). It may appear superficially that Richie’s social hybridity allows him greater freedom than Soledad because he recognizes that she prefers the social confines of another class and he makes her aware of this. In reality however, he is no freer than she. He too represents the response to the interpellation of the ISA of class but not only responds to one but two and so gives a double performance as a member of a marginalized group and as a member of a middle, educated class. Rather than avoid the trappings of his origins, Richie’s character chooses to embrace them and in doing so still embodies a prescribed set of tastes whose origins lie in Dominican and Dominican American culture. Although not part of the dominant class, Dominican culture like any other in the United States still rules the behavior of those who would belong to the group and like the dominant culture its characteristics are simply a set of external conventions upon which the group has agreed to accept as necessary for membership.

Flaca, Soledad's cousin is like Soledad in that she too adheres to the conventions of her social group, the aforementioned Dominican Americans of the novel's neighborhood. Like Richie, she represents a hybrid identity and therefore responds to both the dominant American culture yet claims a Dominican heritage. A teenager, Flaca's character represents the belief that in order to be a particular nationality one must consciously embrace all things that allegedly pertain to that nationality and this includes remaining physically and emotionally close to national communities both imagined and real.<sup>37</sup> For example, when Soledad points out that although Flaca is wearing a tee shirt that says "Dominicans Go All Out" in "big bold letters," she has never even been to the Dominican Republic, Flaca proudly answers "I'm still Dominican. Mami tells me we supposed to be the most beautiful women on the planet" (Cruz 42). Born and raised in Washington Heights, Flaca strongly identifies with her surroundings and the "Dominicaness" that constitutes them. Unlike Soledad who sees people who like being in the neighborhood as "losers," Flaca enjoys the time she spends with her friend Caty; Toeknee, a local drug dealer; his young daughter Iluminada whom she occasionally babysits; and the neighborhood's blind sage, Ciego. Flaca even goes as far as preparing to fight alongside Caty because "they have got to learn how to defend their block, though they don't know what they're defending exactly" (Cruz 171). Her adoption of what she sees as a Dominican identity often puts her at odds with Gorda, her overprotective mother and Soledad's aunt, who does not like Flaca to spend so much time in the streets but would rather that she be more like her cousin. Flaca, however, sees Soledad differently:

As if anyone should listen to Soledad after she went away and she didn't visit us since Christmas. What excuse she got? Not even on Mother's Day did she come.

Tía you said it yourself how ungrateful Soledad is. You remember how everybody talked about her, how she dissed la familia. But Mami don't shut up about her. She's like Flaca why can't you be more like her. As if I want to be like her boring-ass. Flaca why can't you do better in school? Why can't you dress more like a señorita? You can learn a lot from Soledad you know. Agh! Why can't she learn something from me? (Cruz 26)

Flaca sees Soledad's decision to leave the neighborhood to attend Cooper Union as a way of turning her back on her and the rest of the family. Her decision to leave the family is tantamount to turning her back on being Dominican. She describes Soledad as "cold," "a hippie white girl chick," and "uppity" because she has decided to embrace the middle and upper classes, but it is Flaca's refusal to conform to Soledad's new class that in fact reinforces the separation between the two characters. Part of this refusal to become more like Soledad lies in Flaca's search for an identity of her own, which is in keeping with adolescent ego development.<sup>38</sup> This search for identity is a search by elimination; it may not yet be clear who Flaca wants to be but it is clear who she does not want to be and that is an outsider. The neighborhood serves Flaca as a place of affirmation and acceptance, and these are important to people in their adolescence.<sup>39</sup> While it represents negative experiences for Soledad, Flaca does not see the bad in her community and accepts its sociocultural mores in order to maintain her membership. This type of thinking is characteristic of a subject who conforms to the ISA of culture.

While the two characters clash in many ways, Richie serves as the seat of both Soledad and Flaca's projected desires in the novel but for different reasons. Soledad eventually falls in love with Richie because she sees that he too like her is comfortable in

the dominant American society, but Flaca likes Richie precisely because she sees him as *a product* of the neighborhood. She spends the summer trying to get his attention and goes as far as pretending to like Pito, a neighborhood boy her own age and friend of Richie's so that she might see him more often. Flaca's desire for Richie is the result of her wish to be part of the more "Dominican" group but it is also shaped by the dominant society as well. As previously discussed, the subject's id is now more often manipulated by external forces to such an extent that the subject believes that their desires' origins are internal when the opposite is true. In the case of children and adolescents in modern Western societies such as the United States, this reality has become more and more prevalent with the decline of family authority. Instead of developing an identity vis-à-vis parental power, young people are being directly influenced by mass media such as the internet, movies, music and television.<sup>40</sup> It is these sources of information that now serve as models of behavior and they have usurped the parents' place as mediator between the child and the outside world. Such is the case with Flaca's young and impressionable character. When talking to Richie while he teaches her about the instruments he plays, Flaca speaks to him in her "best soap opera voice" and says she "felt like [she] was writing our soap opera right there" (Cruz 37). Another time, when Iluminada accidentally swallows pills, "she sticks her finger down her throat just like she seen done on TV" and immediately goes to Richie to help the little girl (Cruz 158). While the two try to find a way ensure Iluminada's safety, "Flaca thinks her being in Richie's house is cool" because "they are like a team in a movie" (Cruz 159). When she is alone at night in her grandparents' apartment she watches "the nudie channels, where women kiss women kissing men kissing women" and "imagines Richie doing all that to her and more" (Cruz

166). Although Richie sees Flaca as a younger sister, Gorda believes that he is the one who encourages her daughter's affections and tells Soledad that if he continues to do so that Gorda will kill him. Flaca and Gorda's relationship is indicative of the breakdown of parental control in the face of a much more powerful society. She is like any other teenager who wants freedom and will do whatever is necessary to gain it and the respect of her peers:

Flaca and Caty bounce quick to Wendy's to see who's hanging out there this afternoon. Flaca made sure her mother was already home. [...] Toe-knee walks in and says, wassup [...] I'm waiting for Caty, she says, as if she goes to Wendy's all the time.[...][T]wo big fellas greet Toe-knee. One is kind of cute and he sits on the seat right next to her[...] Flaca doesn't know if she should lean forward or back[...] Hands off she's just a baby, Toe-knee says, pushing one of them away. Flaca doesn't like that Toe-knee calls her a baby. The cute guy winks at Flaca anyway. Flaca [...] wishes with all her might that Richie would just pass by and get jealous[...] Flaca counts seven guys around her. From her seat she can no longer see Caty unless she stands on one of the chairs. So she stands up [...] and when she turns around to look out the window, [...] [she] sees her mother seeing her in the midst of all her new guy friends. Mother and daughter's eyes lock in time and Flaca doesn't know if she should wave hello or run. So she just stands there not looking away. Gorda looks at Flaca as if she weren't her daughter, just some girl from around the block, and then she breaks the trance by walking by as if she hasn't seen Flaca at all. (Cruz 114)

This scene is full of references to the dominant society in which the novel takes place.

Wendy's is a restaurant where the American staples, hamburgers and French fries, are served and is full of local teenagers. This is reminiscent of the malt shops that catered to that group in 1950s America. It is also a place where Flaca is free to enjoy the attention of boys who are older than she, attentions from which she is shielded in the space of her home. In addition, the action of eating at Wendy's instead of eating the Dominican food she is served at home is symbolic of the desire to "consume" an American way of life. Furthermore, after Gorda initially sees Flaca standing, she decides not to "see" her at all. This is because Flaca is in a place that is foreign to Gorda's youth as she was raised on the island and she becomes alienated from Gorda because of her behavior and her disobedience. All of this is ironic because Flaca sees herself as being more "Dominican" than Soledad who is in favor of things American, yet Flaca is a Dominican American who responds to the dominant cultures from two different sources. She performs the role of an American teenager even more so than that of a Dominican in that she was raised in the United States, has been educated there and relates to the world through an American mindset. What distinguishes Flaca's performance of "Americanness" from that of Soledad is that Flaca does not consciously use it to escape from what she feels being a Dominican is; rather it is simply an automatic response to the dominant society in which she lives. Since society has taken on the role of manipulating the id, Flaca like everyone else has been reduced to being a consumer who wants what is presented to her but without any idea as to why their desires are what they how they came to be formed.

The characters in Cruz's *Soledad* are representative of subjects who live according to the dictates of their respective ISAs. Soledad, Richie and Flaca all live within two spheres, a dominant American society, and a Dominican American one both

of which interpellate them at different levels. The wishes and outlooks of these characters all have their sources in an external power system that influences their ideas of success or belonging. Soledad adheres to the tastes of middle and upper class Americans and this ultimately leads her to categorize her neighborhood as lower class. It is not until she sees the similarities between her and Richie that she begins to appreciate her origins. Flaca sees Soledad's world as alien and non-Dominican and so embraces the neighborhood as much as she can in an attempt to affirm her identity. However, she too is a product of American culture but somewhat differently from Soledad in that she is unconsciously affected by the propaganda perpetuated by American media. Richie is part of both American and Dominican culture as he is a product of American academia like Soledad but at the same time is connected to the cultural roots of Washington Heights and continues to live in the community.

The root of the power of an ISA is the compliance and credence that people within a given society provide it. It is their belief that creates a system of boundaries between different groups that appear to be real and they come to define the subjects that live within them. For instance the economic boundaries that exist in modern Western societies are based in capitalism, an ideology that encloses the poor in a cycle of poverty where there are limited opportunities to create wealth. The socioeconomic marginalization of the poor leads to the desire to either break free from the decrees of capitalism or to work within the system and find a way of acquiring wealth. The desire for wealth can have several causes, namely the power that accompanies it but there can be others. Wealth can also represent freedom, in particular the freedom to travel, to have

access to information and to make one's own decisions without regards to the amount of money one may have.

### **In Pursuit of Happiness**

In this same vein, Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* features Graciela, a character that represents the struggles of the poor in the early twentieth century Dominican Republic. An Afro-Dominican woman with farmer's roots, she comes of age during the U.S. occupation of the island, a time when poverty and political disempowerment presented few opportunities for the lower classes to have access to social mobility.<sup>41</sup> The occupation is a historical example of a repressive state apparatus or an RSA, a system of power that sets up further boundaries besides those established by the class and socioeconomic ISAs.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Graciela represents those Dominicans who existed within the confines of national social dictates as well as those of a foreign military power. Although lacking a formal education, she dreams of a better life:

Sometimes on the way home from the market, Graciela dawdled in the town's park to sit and watch people go about their business. On the bench, she lamented that some people were born being able to buy such exquisite clothing.

I know I waited on a long line to get born, God, ¿so when will my turn come to sip the juice from this life?

She would crunch on her weekly treat of popcorn. ¿What would it feel like to ride on one of those cars, to go up to the little step and sit in the little moving box? ¿How could she get her hair to curl and shine like that under her hat when the day's sweat made even her tight braids coil? ¿How much washing would she have to do to be able to buy such brilliant patent-leather shoes? ¿And where could

she meet a fancy man, different from the land-roughened ones who took their hats off to her as they rode their horses past her on the long walk home? (Rosario 43)

This scene emphasizes the marginalization of the poor within early twentieth century Dominican society. Graciela thinks to herself outside the market, a place of commerce that she visits yet is not a part of, much like the mainstream. Her position is one where she looks from the outside into a world to which she would like to gain access. The admiration of people's clothing, their carriages and shoes is in keeping with the desire to become one of the wealthy and enjoy their mobility that is not only physical, but mental as well. There exists in Graciela's imagination an association between the freedom of physical movement and the exposure to new experiences that it brings. Although "she refused to be confined to the market, the river, and neighboring households," Graciela knows that "to wander further by herself would get her branded 'a woman with loose skins,'" thus her desire for a "fancy man" who might provide the means for travel and companionship (Rosario 56). This is representative of not only the economic but social expectations of Graciela's group; she is a woman, and as such should be accompanied by her husband in the public sphere. This reality shapes how Graciela views men; they are not only objects of her physical desire, but they are also a means to the freedoms that the wealthy enjoy. Silvio, Casimiro and Eli Cavilier, the men in her life, all represent this opportunity to Graciela in different ways, but ultimately, none of the men fulfill her wishes. When living at her parents' home Graciela constantly tells Silvio about her dreams of a turquoise palmwood house with a zinc roof, but when the two marry they move into a modest thatched cabin similar to the one she grew up in. A former proud member of the Dominican National Guard, Silvio is disillusioned by its military violence

and decides one day to join a Caribbean fishing fleet. Graciela too has dreams of a sea voyage, but he leaves her at home never to return. It is later rumored that Silvio and his shipping fleet were assisting the *gavilleros* by delivering ammunitions to them and that the fleet's members were subsequently murdered, either at sea or on the island by the Marines.<sup>43</sup> These events indicate the power structures that define the characters' lives. A member of a poor farming community in the Dominican Republic, Silvio has little access to life beyond his village but still seeks ways to escape this marginalization through attempting to work within the military RSA which proves to be unsuccessful. When he tries another alternative, by working as a fisherman his fate is still in the hands of the same RSA that he once believed would provide a means for social mobility.

A young pregnant abandoned wife, Graciela does not give up on her dreams of acquiring the goods and enjoying the comforts that she believes accompany the lives of the well-to-do. After resigning herself to the fact that Silvio will not return, she takes up with Casimiro, a good natured but lazy man who loves her and her daughter Mercedes. During one of their first meetings, he casually offers her the sky, the park and the ocean to which Graciela replies "you don't own any of it," showing Graciela's longing for material things (Rosario 40). He goes throughout their small town, pilfering small knickknacks to bring to Graciela in an attempt to give her the things that he thinks will make her happy, but Graciela returns them to whomever she feels is the rightful owner. Later, she complains that Casimiro never takes her anywhere and so he tells her that they will travel to Puerto Rico when in reality they only go to the outskirts of Santo Domingo. Upon finding out, "her anger toward him had turned to pity when she realized that he could offer her only what little he had. Tattered clothing and empty pockets obscured his

real riches, which [she] knew lay in his imagination like hidden deposits of gold” (Rosario 53). These “real” riches, like the stolen knickknacks, are of no value to Graciela who tires of the mundane routines and poverty that have come to define her life. She decides to go in search of adventure and perhaps a better life on her own, taking her worldly belongings with her: a hatbox Casimiro brought her, her Sunday dress, a few toiletries and a porcelain thimble. These things come to represent her life experiences, which Graciela wishes to fill and broaden through contact with those she feels have more than she. On her travels she meets Eli Cavalier, a Franco-German escaping World War II by starting life over on the island. The two have a tryst at a local house of ill fame in Santiago after meeting on a train. Eli stands out among the people, a well-dressed foreigner with heavily accented Spanish, he represents the foreign economic interests in the Dominican Republic at the time. Europeans and Americans ran many of the nation’s sugar mills, a fact which led to a loss of most of the country’s wealth as sugar was one of the nation’s chief exports. In addition, many of the companies would hire cheap labor from Haiti or the Anglophone Caribbean to work during the already short harvest period. This created an economic structure during the early twentieth century that placed former land owning self sustaining Dominicans into the lower classes leading to rampant unemployment and poverty.<sup>44</sup> It is this same economic ISA that frames the characters Graciela and Eli with Eli in an economically powerful position and Graciela in an economically powerless one. Like the foreign sugar companies, Eli sees the country and its inhabitants solely as a means to benefit himself. Upon meeting Graciela, he fantasizes about having sex with her believing her to be “a girl of dark meats,” and begins to buy her food during the journey (Rosario 67):

Eli gauged his questions. He gave her his full attention as she told him of her dream of a turquoise house and her ideas as to why the yanquis should let the country be. She told him she wanted to learn to read, and to ride a ship someday. Eli mined the smallness of her world. Like a farmer fattening his cow, he embellished his ride on the ship across the Atlantic, leaving out the numbing sickness, the howls of widows and orphans. By the time the train pulled into Santiago, Graciela had eaten three more loaves of bread and many strips of salted meat. (Rosario 71)

At first glance, Graciela's desires seem simple; she wants decent housing, to be literate, to be a citizen of a sovereign nation and the ability to travel. However, Graciela's character represents a great number of Dominicans during the U.S. military occupation. She is bound by both a military RSA as well as socioeconomic ISAs that delegate her to a marginalized position in her own country. While the Marines held power on the island, the very movement of the country's citizens was patrolled with the soldiers' presence as popular uprisings against the government were becoming prevalent. This reality forced citizens to live within large yet restricted areas for fear of being associated with rebel activity. The decision to travel far away from home during this time is a daring one considering the possible consequences. Graciela is able to have a brief private convent education as a young girl, due to the missionary work of Catholic nuns but she does not stay long enough to finish her education and so is functionally illiterate, a fact that keeps her in the realm of manual labor for the rest of her life. This was the case for many in the Dominican Republic, since free public primary schooling did not reach many living in the countryside until after the 1920s.<sup>45</sup> Overseas travel during the early twentieth century is

also a privilege enjoyed by the wealthy and this further minimizes the poor's possibilities for learning more about the world that surrounds them. Graciela tells Eli about her dreams of a better house in which to live, which is a fundamental human right, one that foreign investors took from many Dominican citizens. Eli as the embodiment of foreign interests, feeds and simply pretends to listen to Graciela with the ulterior motive of later having a brief sexual encounter, one that leads to Graciela's detriment. Their relationship is like that of the foreign sugar and cacao investors whose presence deprived Dominicans of their autonomy; the U.S. promoted foreign investment in the Dominican Republic as a way to prevent Dominicans from gaining economic independence.<sup>46</sup> Although Dominicans of various social strata decried the damage foreign investment inflicted in rural communities, their protests went unheard. Poverty and hunger continued to plague the general populace, placing them in a position where they were dependent upon the whims of foreign economic powers.

The novel exemplifies this dependence on capitalist structures of power through Eli's character when he "buys" Graciela so that he might "consume" her, reducing her to a mere commodity despite the human articulation of her needs. She eats the food that he purchases for her and before the two have sex, he orders a bath to be drawn for her and he rubs parts of her body with leaves. When Graciela questions him about this Eli explains the leaves are "seasoning for [his] meal," further indicating his inability to see her as a person but as a fleeting source of enjoyment (Rosario 78). In the same manner that foreign investment proved to be the economic ruin of poorer Dominicans, the sexual encounter ruins Graciela, who becomes a syphilitic and in turn unknowingly goes on to spread the disease to her village. Rosario's use of disease as the cause of Graciela's death

is significant because it serves as a powerful metaphor of the perimeters the country's economic structure assigned to her. Graciela's attempts to escape her poverty in search of new experiences and better way of life clash with the hardened reality of a system that does not allow her to reach beyond the world that she knows. Her very body serves as the site of punishment for attempting to leave her given socioeconomic status as it becomes weakened and marked with syphilitic sores and she ultimately returns to her origins to suffer her fate. The choice of syphilis as the disease from which Graciela suffers is also significant because of its notorious contagiousness; the disease like the power structures under which she suffers is contracted as a result of an attraction to someone who seemed healthy and promised physical satisfaction. This can be likened to the idea of the apparent facile attainability of the happiness and comfort of the wealthy when in reality it is difficult for the poor and marginalized to obtain them.

ISAs create boundaries that restrict the power of their respective subjects. Graciela's character represents a subject that did not comply with the sociocultural norms that came to define her life as a poor woman from the country. Her poverty and lack of formal education were the dictates of a system that relegated her to a contained world where she would not have social mobility despite her attempts. Her daughter Mercedes serves as an example of a subject who answers the interpellation of both sociocultural ISAs and RSAs as well. The *trujillato* frames most of Mercedes's life and her character represents those who responded to the dictatorship's fascist calls out of fear of death and loss of wealth. Upon hearing about the state sanctioned massacre at the Dajabón River, Mercedes shows little to no pity for the thousands who were slain:<sup>47</sup>

But the Haitians have been polluting us with their language, their superstitions, their sweat for too long, Mercedes said, as pornographic descriptions attracted an audience. She did not care what anyone thought about her views. God had His ways of exterminating heathens and their evil ways, and they were not always pretty, she said to the crowd that gathered at the kiosk. As a soldier of God, she accepted the ugliness and necessity of war [...] How lucky for you that your tongue can taste the ‘r’ in parsley, she said to Old Man Desiderio. Otherwise, your blood would have blended with that river just as well [...] Without looking at him, Mercedes pushed away his arms and wiped away the sweat spots on the countertop. Those milling about the kiosk raised their brows. What a bit of money does to a little girl, ¿ah? ¡No more Sunday Mass or the love of Christ for this greedy merchant! Mustafá sure knew how to pick out his cow. Desiderio winked at Mercedes and took off his hat before walking out of the kiosk. (Rosario 181-182)

Mercedes’s callous indifference in the face of the massacre reflects the internalization of the ISAs prevalent in the country during the 1930s. The Trujillo regime was fascist at its core, a fact that led to the proliferation of nationalist propaganda amongst the country’s citizens. According to the regime, in order for the nation to be strong, it was necessary to construct a national identity with which everyone could agree, and Dominican identity was defined in terms of race, religion and language. To be Dominican was to be mixed race, Catholic and Spanish speaking as opposed to being black, Spiritist and Creole speaking, as all Haitians were portrayed to be. These cultural characteristics were deemed an undesirable menace to the Dominican Republic that had to be annihilated at any cost no matter how inhumane. Although there were Dominicans who were shocked upon hearing

about the carnage at Dajabón where both Haitians and those Dominicans presumed to be Haitians were killed, still other Dominicans supported the regime's actions.<sup>48</sup> There are several possible reasons for their support of Trujillo's actions. During the regime, poverty among the working classes was widespread and the dictator took advantage of their situation by offering monies, jobs, houses and chances for social mobility, earning the hearts of men and women who were struggling to feed their families. In this way Trujillo became a significant figure in the lives of the people he chose to help and took on legendary personage. In addition to this, Trujillo would further enhance his reputation as Benefactor of the Fatherland by offering to personally repay foreign investors in exchange for Dominican economic freedom (Derby 167, 224).<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Trujillo became *padrino* to literally hundreds of children throughout the country, creating strong family ties with thousands of people who now looked at him as not only the country's leader but practically a member of their nuclear families, someone to whom loyalty and never betrayal was due (Peguero 92). Theodore Adorno offers an additional analytical answer for the populace's complacency. Fascism is able to take root in a society that does not have a strong superego with which to identify, that is to say a strong external authority. Normally the subject's ego develops vis à vis the authority of the superego which the parents represented in the past.<sup>49</sup> However, as governments modernized in the early twentieth century, so did the power they exerted over the subject's everyday life. No longer was it the father who had the strongest influence over the child, but it was the educational, cultural, economic and political ISAs that began to dominate the child's world in the role of the superego. This was the case in the Dominican Republic, as more and more fathers became unable to independently support their families and make their own living from their small plots of land. Many of

the people began to look more and more to government leadership in hard times, and these were the new political ISAs and RSAs of both the Dominican Republic and United States.

The novel mirrors the progression of this reality in Graciela and Mercedes's history. Graciela is the daughter of a farmer but marries Silvio, a man who looked to state authority, specifically the U.S. military, as a means of support, allowing Graciela to leave her father's home earlier than would have perhaps been possible if Silvio continued farming his father's land. Upon Silvio's abandoning Graciela, she in turn abandons Mercedes in search of a better life but returns to die from syphilis, which she passes to Casimiro who also passes away. Mercedes is orphaned at 17 and her parents' absence grievously pains her, leading her to find solace in the Church which as a religious ISA serves as an external authority figure with which she begins to identify. Her main desire is to feel accepted and loved by her mother, which is related to identification with parental authority. Instead of being like Graciela, Mercedes finds a new identity through her religion and decides to become what she feels is a soldier for God. Unfortunately, she is so bound to organized religion that she is unable to understand that Trujillo's rhetoric uses this particular ISA in order to justify the RSA that is the *trujillato*.<sup>50</sup> In essence Mercedes's character is just as trapped by the ISAs and RSAs of her mother, but unlike Graciela who tried to literally escape the class system that marginalized her, Mercedes continues to follow the dictates of the *trujillato* in an attempt to be part of the mainstream. She runs the local kiosk and enjoys the material luxuries that allow her and her husband Andrés to live somewhat more comfortably than others in the village. In an attempt to maintain this security, Mercedes is sure to replace the obligatory portrait of Trujillo in front of the store where all can see when a local resident removes it, a show of loyalty to the ultimate external authority at the time.

When a subject loses an authority figure, its own perceived internal desires attempt to dominate it.<sup>51</sup> Rosario's novel features another character that represents this theory through Leila, Mercedes's granddaughter who follows what she feels are her own desires in search of affirmation. A young woman raised in Washington Heights, Leila lives with her grandparents and like Mercedes she lives her life separated from her mother Amalfi who chose to remain on the island when the family came to New York. Although her grandparents and uncle Ismael provide a strict but caring upbringing, Leila is a teenager primarily influenced by the cultural ISAs of the dominant American society, much like Flaca is in *Soledad*. Like Flaca, Leila too is interested in a man older than she. However the two characters differ in their relationships with their mothers. While Flaca's desire for more freedom is at odds with Gorda's desire to influence and protect her from an environment she feels would harm her daughter, Leila resents Amalfi's absence from her life and looks to other sources of validation. She often interweaves insults in the letters Mercedes dictates to Amalfi, chiding her mother for never coming to see her and is convinced that she doesn't care about the family. After 11 years, in an attempt to keep the family together, Ismael encourages them to visit Amalfi pointing out that "Leila needs her mother. I'm warning you, kids in New York grow up wild," further indicating the effect that Leila and Amalfi's broken relationship has had upon the young girl (Rosario 216). This broken relationship is the result of two subjects living within two distinct cultural ISAs, one of the Dominican Republic and one of the United States. Rosario emphasizes this reality in the exchanges between Leila, Amalfi and Mercedes during the family's visit to Santo Domingo:

¿Avocado a fruit? Look my love, don't come strutting here from the lap of imperialism and take me for a fool, Amalfi had said as she stirred a sancocho. And then and there, Leila decided she hated sancocho, hated having to sip the thick liquid and gnash the starchy roots like a hog. Hog food, that's what it was. Slave food. (Rosario 218)

Later, Mercedes relates life in the United States to Amalfi, echoing the same concerns about Leila's future as Ismael:

Leila felt betrayed when Mercedes complained to Amalfi about the deterioration of Dominicans living abroad, especially that of the youth, who were living out of wedlock and dressing like common hookers—including the boys. And they've forgotten Spanish and stopped combing their hair and become Negros who bop their heads to that awful music. (Rosario 218)

The argument between Leila and Amalfi represents the clash between mother and daughter but also between two systems of power. Although Amalfi loves Leila dearly and even invites her to stay with her on the island, she still sees her as the cultural product of a foreign power, a power that presumes itself more intelligent than its subjects. Leila's attempt to define a food that is not native to the United States, but is to the Dominican Republic, is symbolic of the United States's repeated attempts throughout the twentieth century to define Dominican politics. In the same vein, Leila goes on to disdainfully relate sancocho, one of the country's national dishes, to hogs and slavery, further distancing herself from her mother and her ancestry. The betrayal she feels when Mercedes talks about life in New York, reflects just how strongly she responds to the cultural interpellation and the authority of the American cultural ISAs, as a result of the

pain of Amalfi's absence in her life. It is also reflected in the fact that Mercedes's belief in what she perceives as true Dominicaness is what potentially degrades Leila as a non-Dominican subject, further alienating Leila from her family to the point where those things Dominican come to represent a restrictive system where she cannot be who she wants to be, prompting her on a journey much like her great grandmother Graciela's, who like Leila refused to be defined by the system that contained her. Leila demands an answer from Amalfi as to why she never answers the letters that Mercedes sends nor has come to visit and learns that Amalfi was "such a coward for not going along with everyone else, for having the will" (Rosario 220). Leila and Amalfi feebly reconcile with one another but Leila continues to lack a maternal authority figure as Amalfi continues to live on the island. This leaves Leila continuing to seek affirmation from an authority figure with whom she can identify, someone who relates more to life in the States. This leads her to Miguel, a neighbor in the family's building:

Leila had decided she did not like to kiss, and, to her amazement, she had in fact read in a book that people like her were called philematophobes. This man here, did not seem to be curing her. But while smoothing down her hair and snapping her bra back to place, Miguel told her she was pretty—Mercedes's pigeon soup must be fattening her up so that it even made a man want to cheat on wifey. Miguel was flesh, more flesh than the Dannys and Alexes of her recycled fantasies. Next time Leila would make him take her somewhere else. Not on the wall. She was about to ask him for his phone number, but he put his index finger to her lips. Shshsh. And before she slipped off ahead of him to ride the elevator back to reality, Miguel gave Leila his crisp business card. (Rosario 211)

Leila's attraction and ensuing affair with Miguel is representative of the subject responding to the influences of a dominant culture. Unlike Mercedes, Andrés, and Ismael, Leila is heavily influenced by American culture as she was raised all of her life in the United States, a place where teenagers are more encouraged to embrace the freedom from parental control than they are in the Dominican Republic.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, her world for the most part is very limited as her grandparents keep a sharp eye on her, often forbidding her to go out with her high school friends and reminding her, "late bloomers last longer" (Rosario 210). Leila sees Miguel as a pathway to freedom of sexual expression, physical freedom and emotional maturity, values that she has acquired from American movies and music. Again, like Flaca in *Soledad*, she has fallen in love with a man much older than she and it is pornographic films, romance novels, and television commercials that frame her desires. She lies when her friend Mirangeli asks about him, creating scenarios based on what she believes romance should be like. Miguel, at once a product as well as a symbol of the dominant society in which Leila lives, allows the relationship to progress on his terms and therefore not how Leila's desires are fulfilled. He decides when, where and if he wishes to meet her and threatens her about her grandparents' wrath should they find out about them.

The novel comes full circle with Leila's experiences mirroring Graciela's. As Eli saw Graciela, Miguel sees Leila as a sexual object, not caring about the fact he takes advantage of her youth. He gives her his business card after one of their meetings, an action associated with business transactions. When the two go to a hotel to have sex just as Graciela and Eli had done years before, Miguel makes repeated jokes about harming and killing her, telling her he "could throw her out the window the way that German did to a *cuero* back in Boca Chica," a reference to the sex tourism industry prevalent in certain parts

of the island (Rosario 253).<sup>53</sup> It is not until after she spends the night with Miguel that Leila becomes disillusioned with what she felt was going to make her happy, namely the chance to experience sex with someone she thought she loved, and this is akin to what life in the States has turned out to be for Leila. Rather than being a place of opportunity to for her to grow as her family expected, it has become her undoing as the author indicates that she like Graciela may have unknowingly contracted a fatal venereal disease, AIDS, the syphilis of its day. These illnesses, which wreak havoc upon the body, parallel the ISAs and RSAs the family suffers throughout the novel. Foreign intervention, economics and cultural standards prevent Graciela from leaving her socioeconomic group; the years after the fall of Trujillo brought political and economic instability to Mercedes who can no longer subsist from her store and forces the family to seek better opportunities in the United States where Leila meets her possible demise.

*Song of the Water Saints* thus illustrates the connections between overlapping and interwoven ISAs and RSAs. The Dominican Republic itself was officially under American military rule from 1916 to 1922 and again from 1965 until 1966 and under a strong American economic rule, particularly since Balaguer's second term in office in 1966. This reality created subjects on the island who were beholden to two systems, one American and one Dominican. The desires of three generations of Dominican women as represented in the novel are the products of class systems, occupations, dictatorships, cultural mores and economics. At the same time, it is these ISAs and RSAs that shape these desires that are never organic but external to the subjects in the novel a fact that controls each character's destiny no matter how freely they see themselves or seek to be.

In addition to the American political and economic ISAs, American cultural ISAs have also come to dominate the Dominican Republic especially during the 70s and 80s. After Trujillo's assassination in May of 1961, the country stood divided as different political factions vied for power culminating in a four-month civil war in 1965. The United States once again occupied the Dominican Republic in an attempt to prevent what it felt was an inevitable communist uprising similar to Castro and Guevara's in Cuba. Joaquín Balaguer, one of Trujillo's puppet presidents, came to power later in 1966 and remained in office until 1978. During his tenure, foreign investment, primarily from the United States, provided the Dominican Republic with a booming economy, one that Balaguer intended to be based more upon energy, mining and tourism than the production of agricultural products. This led many Dominicans to forsake their farming roots for opportunities in the newly supported industries, industries that often required institutionalized American cultural capital as well as the training relevant to the careers that they provided.<sup>54</sup> Those middle and upper class Dominicans who had not already moved to the United States during the *trujillato* or during the turbulent early 60s, sent their children abroad to study in the United States in hopes of maintaining social status. The result of this new socioeconomic reality was a loss of esteem for Dominican culture which Martha Rivera illustrates in the novel *He olvidado tu nombre*.

### **La otra yo y la verdad**

*He olvidado tu nombre* is a novel that describes the subject who is a product of more than one ideology. In contrast with Angie Cruz's *Soledad*, which suggests a harmonious blending of ideological structures through subjects who are able to effectively navigate the interpellation of distinct cultural and social power structures, Rivera's novel

suggests that a subject can respond to the dictates of only one system. The novel's trajectory follows the lives of two characters: María and her alter ego Rain. A middle class *capitaleña*, born in 1960, María represents Dominicans who came of age during a time of general economic boom, who still seek to maintain what they perceive as their "Dominicanness" in the face of U.S. cultural influences.<sup>55</sup> Rain on the other hand represents the struggle of Dominicans who found themselves caught between responding to the interpellation of American and Dominican sociocultural ISAs. She vents her frustrations about what has become of life the capital:

No tengo ganas de salir, ¿para qué? ¿Para ver a mis amigos intelectuales convertidos en burócratas, cada vez más superficiales, en los bancos comerciales? ¿Para ver a los poetas haciendo anuncios de televisión en las publicitarias? ¿Qué quieres que haga, pasear por una ciudad que ya no es la misma? [...] En este país se están volviendo locos, se vive de la improvisación total y a nadie le interesa conversar. Rápidamente, se han ido ocupando de dejarnos sin historia, sin memoria. Hay un faro que ilumina al cielo por la noche, y aquí abajo nada los alerta al desastre. Además, me jode ver a la gente patológicamente comunicada. Si estás en un bar conversando con alguien, le suena un beeper o un teléfono celular, y te dejan con la palabra en la boca [...] [M]e cansé de los pragmáticos. [...] Ahora si quieres ver una exposición de pintura, te concetas a un monitor, si quieres ver una película, la alquilas para verla en tu casa; si quieres buscar una información la preguntas a través de un correo electrónico, y si te quieres dormir, te tienes que meter un diacepán, porque el ruido de la vida llegando a sus últimas consecuencias no te deja pegar los ojos. ¡No me joda nadie! A mí no que no me vengán con vainas de

modernidad, post modernidad, globalización, calidad de vida, mercado. ¡Qué se vayan a la mierda! (Rivera 110-111)

Rain's frustration with the advances of the modern world are a reflection of the disconnect that exists between human beings in a new technological age. The more technology influences the country the less "authentic" it becomes, giving rise to a new artificial hybridized society. In rejecting globalization, Rain's character symbolically refuses to answer the dictates of a neo-colonial power indicating that the new cultural and educational ISAs have not given prosperity to the country, but have led to the death of what was once creative and artistic. In trading their talent for profit, Dominican poets and intellectuals have become dehumanized, their gifts reduced to commodities in a nation that has not only sold its natural resources but has sold its people as well. The author further emphasizes how capitalism promotes the loss of human connections by indicating that art is now preferably available through the Internet, an artificial space where the physical distance between people is aggrandized. The lighthouse or *faro a Colón* is significant in that it too serves as a reminder of both colonial and neo-colonial ISAs that have dominated the Dominican Republic's history.<sup>56</sup> Usually a symbol of enlightenment and direction, Rain instead juxtaposes the new lighthouse with the ignorance of the modern "*desastre*" the city has become, an indication of the clash between old and new ISAs. Her refusal to socialize with others who have become entrenched in the new American culture is indicative of the subject's identity being strongly rooted in another cultural system, namely a Dominican one. One of the main reasons why Rain experiences so much pain throughout the novel is because she lost her father, and it is the jolting absence of this relationship that launches her search for another one to replace it. Before there was an overarching American ISA

supported by the Dominican government, Rain's father, a participant in the anti-Trujillo fourteenth of June Movement served as her authority figure, and although she later has a stepfather, she does not identify with him, leaving Rain to struggle against the dictates of a new society.<sup>57</sup>

In a theory that complements Adorno's authority concept, Max Horkheimer suggests that the father's original role in the family is that of the ultimate superego and a buffer between the children and the wider society.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Rain, that father figure wished to protect her from the dictates of the *trujillato*, an extremely destructive RSA. His character, although briefly mentioned in the novel, has an important impact; he symbolizes the Dominicans' attempt to free themselves from the tyranny of an oppressive political system. This is not to say that Dominican sociocultural ISAs would not have existed without the dictatorship, but that because there exists the concept of the nation as an imagined community, therefore an autonomous, free Dominican Republic run by Dominicans was seen as more acceptable to many as opposed to the mandates of the regime.<sup>59</sup> When this did not come to pass due to the Civil War of 1965 and the American intervention, the father's symbolic family role was once again usurped, that is, the everyday Dominican household became beholden to a foreign power that promised the chance for economic improvement, but this came at a price; many of those who disagreed with Balaguer's policies were jailed, tortured or killed, while a few in society enjoyed the benefits of the American dominance of the Dominican economy.

Rain's many attempts at relationships parallel Dominicans' attempt to find themselves in a changing society during the 70s and 80s. She has a series of bohemian lovers as a younger woman, as she herself was interested in poetry, art and music but was

also interested in what was at the time considered subversive politics. When she has an affair with a politician, however, she is confronted with tragedy:

Y entre tu deseo de ser poeta, de hacer la revolución, de sentir la música plenamente [...] etc., te enamoraste varias veces, siempre “definitivamente.” Andabas rodeadas de intelectuales, de pintores, de escritores en ciernes [...]

Pero un episodio, aquél que te convertiría para siempre en víctima de ti misma, vino a terminar por un tiempo nuestra alegría de esos días. Estabas saliendo con tu político, y una tarde llegaste con los ojos hinchados a la universidad [...]

--Estoy embarazada.

Siempre te he dicho que entre este tipo y yo no hay química, no me es simpático. No sé qué le viste; te lleva un montón de años y es un aprovechador. Ahora mete la pata hasta el fondo y no quiere asumirlo.

Típico. (Rivera 50-51)

This conversation between María and Rain, which is really a conversation María has with her own desire, is indicative of the subject's thwarted efforts to negotiate a space for itself within a new power structure. Upon becoming a university student Rain becomes attracted to a series of ideologies, most of them leftist in their nature. For instance, she travels to Cuba to learn more about the revolution of 1959, becomes fascinated by its history, and her love affair with Ricardo serves as a metaphor for her admiration of all things Cuban. She participates in strikes on behalf of Haitian sugar cane cutters, protests against the rise of gasoline prices, describes herself as an “Esoteric-Communist” sells

newspapers on behalf of a communist cell, sympathizes with the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, and expresses her joy at the fall of Somoza's dictatorship. As a result of her activities, Rain is pursued by the police and is arrested with other students; she claims that her "deseo de hacer la revolución tenía mucho que ver con [su] deseo que en el mundo existiera una justicia para [otros] y para la gente como [ella]: a esos que no bastaba la esperanza de ir todos los días al trabajo, tener niños, ir al supermercado y reunirse los domingos con los viejos," activities she associates with a middle class that consented to the new American influenced Dominican status quo (Rivera 43). While Rain details her memories of Ricardo, the Cuban, with fondness, her affair with Enrique, the politician whom María describes as "un militante de Segunda con ínfulas de futuro president," results in the ultimate source of her sorrow in life, an aborted daughter (Rivera 51). Rain feels that this was the beginning of her own internal spiritual death and through this feeling the novel typifies the relationship between the subject and an ISA to which it does not wish to belong. This is because corruption was rampant not only in Balaguer's 12 year term which spanned the 70s but also in that of his successor. Antonio Guzmán.<sup>60</sup> The government's actions were more detrimental to the people that it was supposed to be serving and many began to distrust the leadership for which they had previously voted. María's attitude towards Enrique indicates similar attitudes; she feels that he took advantage of Rain, abandoning her when she needed him most without caring at all for her welfare. After Rain has the abortion that leaves her sterile, she tells María that her daughter would have been named Rubaiyat, a reference to her love for poetry, which can be very personal and is a reflection of the author's creativity.<sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup> This means that the death of Rubaiyat can also be interpreted as the power of interpellation;

rather than allowing the subject to find the semblance of its own creative force and voice within the power system, it completely annihilates it, leaving the subject with no sense of self and dependent upon the voice of external authority.

Political ISAs, no matter what their persuasion, be they leftist, centrist or rightist, all have the same effect upon the subject. Specifically, they dominate the id which is the seat of desire. *He olvidado tu nombre* illustrates this point again through Rain's relationship with Martín, a fellow university student. At first the two get along well, have the same friends, interests and goals. Like Rain, Martín too has lost his father and studies different political ideologies, in particular Marxism. He begins to live out his own personal beliefs, preparing himself and Rain for a possible revolution in the Dominican Republic, but after a while Rain becomes disillusioned with Martín's inability to see who she really is:

Lo recuerdo sentado frente a mí en la tina del baño, observando detenidamente cómo me afeitaba las piernas. El tenía todo una tesis sobre la dirección de la navaja y durante los años que estuvimos juntos no hubo una sola vez que el ritual de mis depilaciones no hubiese sido acompañado por sus consejos. 'Si lo haces como te digo, nunca vas a cortarte.' Él no entendía que yo tenía ya media vida afeitándome las piernas cuando lo conocí. En el fondo, lo que me hacía sentir agredida era la imposibilidad de cortarme si me daba la gana. Yo lo amaba, pero ese mismo amor me convirtió en un ave, tráfuga de mí misma, porque nunca sentí una verdadera aprobación de Martín hacia lo que yo era realmente. El quería encontrar a la otra: esa que sólo yo tenía el derecho de buscar. (Rivera 70)

Rain's recollection of her life with Martín is significant because it serves as an allegory

for the relationship between political ISAs and the subject. First, Martín is present during a very intimate time in a person's everyday life, when they are performing their toilette. Political ISAs also invade the private sphere of the mind, taking command of how the subject sees herself, the world she inhabits and her place in it as ideology "imparts a certain 'representation' of reality and makes an *illusion* to the real in a certain way [that simultaneously] bestows only an *illusion* on reality" (Althusser 29). Second, Martín presumes that his way of doing something that only Rain has done to herself is better, which in a way patronizes her. In the same manner social, economic and political ISAs often take the place of parental figures prescribing various orders for people to follow. Third, Rain expresses her dismay at Martín's inability to see her for who she really is which is exactly the result of ISA indoctrination; there is never any intention of letting the subject simply exist in its natural state, rather the intention is to convince the subject that its prescribed state *is* the natural one, one that the subject freely chose. Rain's relationship with Martín stands for yet another failed attempt of the subject finding its place in society. While the result of her affair with Enrique the politician results in the death of her innermost poetess, Martín compounds the loss by inadvertently attempting to deprive her; Rain bemoans the fact that Martín's need to control her left her longing for autonomy. She declares that only she has the right to find herself and in making this statement indicates the crisis she has been facing. Realizing that she has been trapped, just as subjects are enclosed by the ISAs and sometimes RSAs that rule their lives, Rain leaves Martín for South America and finds a happier love with Carlos, an Argentine short story writer, much in the same way she was happier with Ricardo, the Cuban poet before she met Enrique. Rain's tendency to relate more to the foreign men in her life is symbolic

of the desire to find another order other than the now Americanized Dominican one that has taken over the island. The Fatherland, which is also a constructed marker of identity, is no longer what it was and leaves the María/Rain character in a state of utter chaos that she is unable to resolve. It is her resistance to the modern changes that characterize her young life that cause others around her to perceive her as an eccentric, just as those who go against the status quo established by ISAs are seen as problematic.

Althusser contends that identity itself is a product of the ISA because it is a prescribed set of cultures, religions, educations, nationalities and socioeconomic classes that are projected onto the subject in such a way that the subject thinks that who they are is the result of their own volition. One of the main themes of *He olvidado tu nombre* is precisely this, identity, and the struggle of those subjects who consciously fight against a new ISA in favor of adhering to one in which they see themselves validated. In truth, Rivera's María/Rain protagonist can stand for those subjects living in a world of changing political and economic climates. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the 70s and 80s were the beginning stages of an irresistible American economic influence that gave way to an ensuing dominant cultural influence that afforded those Dominicans who chose to assimilate to American norms a better chance at success in their own country.

María, the ego to the id that is Rain, often tries to understand Rain's point of view and supports her during her emotional and physical crises throughout the novel, yet the two do not really know one another. The alienated/connected relationship is evidenced in the novel's title. When María and Martín discuss Rain and Martín's break up, he asks why she insists upon calling her Rain to which she replies: "I've forgotten her name, that name that you keep repeating as though it were something public. I wanted to forget it"

(Rivera 78). In forgetting Rain's real name, María is in effect choosing to forget to follow her own id, and the old desires of the Dominican ISAs in favor of a new one. She assures Martín about Rain's eventual change and feels "she's going to mature someday, and she'll realize that living is much more than a permanent search for something she can't find. She may fall into an abyss, but she'll climb out because she's strong. I can't believe a woman who understands reality so lucidly, cannot find a way to inhabit it" (Rivera 78). In predicting Rain's conformity to the reality that she accepts María in this way also predicts Rain's death, which occurs at the end of the novel. It is not until after Rain decides that she can no longer live either abroad or in the new Santo Domingo that she commits suicide on New Year's Eve, 1999, the dawn of a new century, millennium and supposedly an epoch of progress for the Dominican Republic. She references the day as "our birthday," an indication that the death of the id, desire, and a perceived identity will make room for a new desire that will come under the complete domination of American ISAs thus ending María's identity crisis. The author's conclusion suggests that dying to one's former cultural and social self in order to fit into the mold of a new ISA is in keeping with Althusser's theories in regards to the power of ideology; ideology is able to exert its power over its subjects with their consent, emptying them of any presumed name or identity that they might have thought could exist outside the ideological structure of power.

### **Conclusion**

Angie Cruz's *Soledad*, Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* and Marta Rivera's *He olvidado tu nombre* feature characters who represent the struggle the individual faces living in the twentieth and twenty first century worlds where changing

power structures oblige them to conform. The novels illustrate how political, social, cultural and economic systems come to define the desires of the subjects and thus how they go about attempting to, but never quite attaining the objects of their desires, be they other subjects, what they deem to be a better class, or access to economic freedom. These desires are significant in that they define the identities that the subjects wish to emulate, giving them a sense of individuality. However, the more social norms come to dominate the subject, the more the subject disappears and the ISAs and RSAs continue to perpetuate themselves. The struggle that the protagonists face is not so much a struggle against what they perceive to be their problems but instead it is the struggle of the power systems against their core desires. The domination of this desire is the thread that maintains the ISAs and RSAs both in the United States and the Dominican Republic.

## Chapter 3

### **The Pen and the Sword**

Dominican women's literature is the product of Dominican national history, which includes Trujillo's 30-year rule of the island nation. This dictatorship, like any other, is what Althusser calls a state apparatus, more specifically, a repressive state apparatus or an RSA where the government uses police, military, incarceration, et cetera to maintain power over subordinate classes. During Trujillo's reign, the military became an all powerful class of its own that was allowed to obtain wealth as well as to reward and punish citizens at will, impacting the lives of thousands for better or worse. This political reality created a power struggle between those few who had military connections to the dictatorship and those who did not. Those who had access to the sword at times became masters of who those used the pen, or their own ideologies to advance their freedom. Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist philosopher, proposes possible solutions to totalitarian governments that lie at the intersection between intellectuals and class. He argues that if there is to be a successful deposition of an abusive government two things should happen: middle class intellectuals must ally themselves with the proletariat and the proletariat must produce its own intellectuals who can create their own cultural hegemonies and articulate the needs of the lower classes. In this chapter, I will discuss how *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *Let it Rain Coffee* and *El tiempo del olvido*, serve as a representations of Gramscian intellectuals' struggles against the RSA that was the *trujillato*.

Gramsci's theories on revolution are highly relevant when examining the Dominican struggle against the tyranny of the *trujillato*. He maintains that there are two types of intellectuals, traditional and organic. Traditional intellectuals are the clergy, philosophers and professors who oftentimes see themselves as a special group, unattached to the dominant society. While they are perceived as such by other social groups, this is not the case. For Gramsci, all men are intellectuals in that they all have the capacity for rational thought no matter what their class. Organic intellectuals are those intellectuals who are "the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class" and "are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (Gramsci 4). Revolution is possible when the working class produces its own organic intellectuals who are then able to serve as a link between the working class and the traditional intellectuals to advance a working class hegemony. Althusser, who is also a Marxist like Gramsci, identifies an important roadblock in this potential revolution, that traditional intellectuals are essentially petty bourgeoisie and "have to carry out a radical revolution in their ideas: a long painful and difficult re-education. An endless external and *internal* struggle" (Althusser 12).<sup>63</sup> This is in keeping with Gramsci's notion that traditional intellectuals tend to see themselves as separate from the ruling classes when they are in fact their products. In the case of the Dominican Republic, there arose both traditional intellectuals who were able to look beyond their perceived class origins and worked together with organic intellectuals from the working classes to overthrow Trujillo in 1961. While the following years were chaotic with civil war, Dominicans had managed to stand up to one of the longest

dictatorships in Latin American history by focusing on their commonalities and articulating their demands for freedom in their own country as well as internationally. The novels discussed in this chapter offer representations of the intersections of race and class. More often than not it is lighter skinned mixed race and white individuals who are the traditional intellectuals who begin to side with the lower classes and their organic counterparts as in *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *El tiempo del olvido* where the children of wealthy farming families and well to do businessmen are the ones with access to university education. In this discussion the Dominican organic intellectual is depicted as being either darker skinned or from within a minority group within the Dominican Republic that is, specifically the Asian Dominicans who can be considered doubly marginalized, both for their race *and* ethnicity. While the traditional and organic intellectuals can be racially segregated, it is important to remember that throughout the historical setting of the novels, the *trujillato*, the military which was the principal body of the RSA, was made up of men from primarily the lower classes and so had a sizable African presence. Julia Álvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* is a historical fictional account of the Mirabal sisters who although they were middle class educated women, saw the importance of reaching Dominicans of all social strata in order to defeat Trujillo's regime. Angie Cruz's *Let it Rain Coffee* is a novel that depicts the life of characters who represent Gramsci's organic intellectuals, a group of darker skinned *campesinos* led by an Asian Dominican in their struggle against the dictatorship. Lastly, Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido* serves as an allegorical account of life in the Dominican Republic where organic and traditional intellectuals forge relationships in spite of and because of the political abuse they experience.

The Dominican military elite is the central antagonist in the novels discussed in this section. In addition to Trujillo being the prime enemy of those Dominican citizens who fought for political freedom, he was also the head of a privileged group made mostly of people from the lower classes but with some representation from the upper and middle classes as well.<sup>64</sup> Typically, when one thinks about class warfare, it is in Manichean terms; the upper and middle classes exploit the work of their working and lower counterparts. During the *trujillato* there existed the same structure of exploitation common in an RSA with arrests, imprisonment, retaliation, intimidation, and murder becoming more and more prevalent. However with the rise of the newly powerful military class, it was now they who exerted authority against those who were outsiders *regardless of their class*. Initially, the armed forces presented a valuable opportunity to lower and working class people for a relatively rapid social and economic advancement, which promoted widespread loyalty to Trujillo. Later, however, it became one of the most corrupt superstructures in the country plagued by racketeering as well as by becoming the arm of Trujillo both at home and abroad. While ultimately it was some of the very members of military who orchestrated the dictator's assassination, this was due in part to these members finally identifying with other members of Dominican society who decided that Trujillo's brutal reign should come to an end.<sup>65</sup>

### **A Bourgeois Proletariat?**

*In the Time of the Butterflies* is a fictional account of events in Dominican history leading to Trujillo's demise. It centers on the four Mirabal sisters, Patria, Minerva, Dedé and María Teresa also known as Mate who were the daughters of a solidly middle class farming family from the town of Salcedo in what is now the Hermanas Mirabal province,

in one of the country's known fertile regions. All of the sisters had received private Catholic secondary school education and two, Minerva and Mate had gone on to pursue studies at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo. Minerva became the first woman in the country to study law while Mate studied land surveying and later engineering. Many of the family's friends were young people that the sisters had met in school, who had gone on to become professionals in their respective fields. It was this group that had the opportunity to be exposed to university life that began to question the validity of Trujillo's regime and to try to convince others to reevaluate the country's political reality:

Dedé could only shake her head. She didn't really know Lío was a communist, a subversive, all the other awful things the editorial had called him. She had never known an enemy of the state before. She had assumed such people would be self-serving and wicked, low-class criminals. But Lío was a fine young man with lofty ideals and a compassionate heart. Enemy of state? Why then, Minerva was an enemy of the state. And if she Dedé, thought long and hard about it what was right and wrong, she would no doubt be an enemy of state as well. [...] she didn't understand until that moment that they were really living—as Minerva liked to say—in a police state. (Álvarez 75)

Minerva and the character Lío or Virgilio Morales represent a special type of Gramscian intellectuals that he calls the "rural type" who are "for the most part 'traditional,' that is they are linked to the social mass of country people and the town (particularly small-town) petite bourgeoisie, not as yet elaborated and set in motion by the capitalist system. This type of intellectual brings into contact the peasant masses with the local and state

administration (lawyers, notaries, etc.)” (Gramsci 14). The Dominican Republic of the 1940s was a predominantly rural population that made its living from the land while a privileged minority lived in Santo Domingo. Although most young university students lived as *capitaleños* during their tenure in the city, still many became more politically aware as they were exposed to various political ideologies that challenged that status quo in their own country. One of these ideologies was communism, which *did* provide a starting point for the Mirabals, their husbands and their associates but was not ultimately the defining element behind the anti-government movement that would go on to gain momentum in the nation. That said, Virgilio Morales’s character in the novel could be interpreted as an amalgam of Pericles Franco, Juan Bosch and Virgilio Mainardi Reyna. Franco like Virgilio met Minerva through mutual friends, was associated with communism as he was one of the founders of the group Juventud Democrática del Partido Socialista Popular, had studied medicine, and was eventually exiled from the country in 1944 and 1946 (Cruz 48). Virgilio is like Juan Bosch in that he is an intellectual who spoke out against the tyranny of the government, had spent time in Venezuela and “was thrown out of the country so many times the history books couldn’t keep up with him!”<sup>66</sup> (Álvarez 66). Virgilio’s history is also akin to that of Virgilio Mainardi Reyna, a lawyer who spent his exile years in Cuba where he became one of the founders of the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*. Although Dedé initially shows a budding love interest in Virgilio in the novel, it is the political connection he has with Minerva that serves as a bridge between the reality that she thought she knew, and a new reality that she feels compelled to understand. Virgilio as a rural intellectual represents “an important politico-social function since professional mediation is difficult to separate from political”

(Gramsci 14). As a doctor, Virgilio is accessible to the masses of *campesinos* and their families but is also familiar with their way of life, and this allows people like Dedé to identify with him and his ideologies<sup>67</sup>:

A new challenge sounded in Dedé's life. She began to read the paper with pointed interest. She looked out for key names Lío had mentioned. She evaluated and reflected over what she read. How could she have missed so much before? she asked herself. But then a harder question followed: What was she going to do about it now that she did know? (Álvarez 75).

Lío represents the type of intellectual who activated the political awareness that took place amongst the Dominican populace, slowly at first but then picked up momentum, an example of Gramscian, and Leninist thought in action. Once the people began to see themselves in those whom the RSA began to persecute, the *trujillato* slowly began to lose its power. Dominican rural intellectuals played a vital role in the organization of their families and towns at a time when many people who were *antitrujillista* may not have felt empowered since they were unarmed *and* very few had access to higher education.<sup>68</sup>

While Dedé had received a private secondary education it was through Minerva and Lío that she began to identify with those who wanted to take a political stand against the injustices of the regime. During the *trujillato*, members of middle class Dominican society were not immune to the barbarities of the SIM and by 1960 many middle class families had members who had been incarcerated, tortured or both.<sup>69</sup> This reality facilitated a revolution against the RSA of the dictatorship because it erased the interpellation of class that usually prevents members of the upper classes from working with the lower classes and vice versa.<sup>70</sup> No one could rely upon their class or connections

to those in the military elite to prevent them from suffering the atrocities inflicted upon them if they became political dissidents in the eyes of the law, which was in effect subject to Trujillo's whims.<sup>71</sup> The spread of *antitrujillista* sentiment is a principal theme in the novel beginning with Minerva's friend Sinita who she meets in high school.<sup>72</sup> Sinita reveals "the secret of Trujillo" to Minerva, namely that he is ordering the murder of anyone who would oppose him. All of the men in Sinita's family who were at one time of high social importance were killed once her uncles, who had been Trujillo's friends, orchestrated a failed assassination plot soon after the dictator's specious election as president. Elsa, another of Minerva's high school friends introduces her and Sinita to Don Horacio, her grandfather who is an *antitrujillista*.<sup>73</sup> The girls begin attending meetings in his home where they connect with other *antitrujillistas*. Although Minerva initially wishes to shield her youngest sister from danger, Mate becomes involved with the underground movement when she meets Minerva and her husband Manolo's friend Leandro. Patria convinces her husband Pedro to become involved after she tells him about their son Nelson's desire to be like his aunts and uncles and fight against Trujillo. In this way most of the family and many of their friends and acquaintances build a network that is able to challenge the RSA with their own ISAs of political freedom.<sup>74</sup>

Trujillo's government forces Virgilio to go into hiding after having appeared in the newspaper as an enemy of the state which was tantamount to being warned of an imminent threat to one's life if they continued to speak out against the regime.<sup>75</sup> He eventually seeks asylum, representing the many Dominican citizens who were forced to leave the country fearing for their lives as well as those of their families and close friends. While not everyone was able to escape the horrors of *La Nueve*, *La Cuarenta* and

*La Victoria*, the country's most notorious prisons, there existed a community of Dominican expatriates throughout the Americas who worked toward the country's liberation. In the novel it is rumored that Virgilio's character goes on to Venezuela and prepares for an invasion with other Dominican exiles. As previously mentioned there is an implied connection between Virgilio and Juan Bosch, one of the Dominican Republic's most famous political exiles. One of the first external attempts to topple Trujillo was the Luperón invasion, which was orchestrated and supported by Bosch, as well as other Dominican exiles living in Cuba including Virgilio Mainardi Reyna, Juan Isidro Jiménez Grullón, Ángel Miolán, Miguel Ángel Ramírez, Juan Rodríguez, Enrique Cotubanamá and the Caribbean Legion.<sup>76</sup> These men, some of whom had participated in plots against Trujillo in the 1930's, or had been jailed for speaking out against him, were mainly professionals whose goal was a free and social-democratic Dominican Republic. In 1949 the Caribbean Legion and the Dominican exiles in Cuba and Puerto Rico devised a plan where some 80 men would invade the country by air, landing in the Bay of Luperón in Puerto Plata province on the northern coast and La Vega province in the center. These men were to provide arms to and train members of the *Frente Interno* or Internal Front, which was composed of cells of some eight to ten people in various towns who were to begin an armed revolution. In addition to weaponry, the men who flew into the country on June eighteenth 1949 attempted to distribute a manifesto that called "upon students, workers, professionals, and the armed forces to join in the liberating movement" (Ameringer 107). Again, here is an example of Gramsci's new intellectuals carrying out their social function, specifically through "active participation in practical life, as [...] constructor[s], organizer[s], 'permanent persuader'[s] and not just simple orator[s]" (10).

The men of the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* were aware of the fact that in order for the revolution to be successful, they would need the help of people from all socioeconomic classes and they attempted to liberate them not only through creating a proposal of their own government, but also through combating the RSA's forces if necessary. Unfortunately, Trujillo's military intelligence knew about what would come to be known as the Luperón invasion and he was ready for the would-be liberators. Some of the men were killed and others interrogated and incarcerated.

The Luperón Invasion would not be the last time that the exile community attempted to overthrow the government. A second invasion took place almost ten years to the day on June fourteenth 1959, which would further inspire the *antitrujillista* groups to continue their struggle against the dictator. The timing of this operation has important historical significance given that it took place after one of the most famous revolutions in the twentieth century Americas, the Cuban revolution. Only several hundred miles away, *antitrujillista* Dominicans were able to listen to radio programs in secret about the events that lead to January 1<sup>st</sup> 1959 and this further encouraged the movement:

It was Minerva and Manolo and Leandro and, yes, Nelson, all very drunk. They could hardly contain their excitement till they got inside.

They had just tuned into Radio Rebelde to hear the New Year's news, and they had been greeted by the triumphant announcement. Batista had fled! Fidel, his brother Raúl, and Ernesto they call Che had entered Havana and liberated the country. *¡Cuba libre! ¡Cuba libre!*

Minerva started singing our national anthem and the others joined in. I kept hushing them, and they finally sobered up when I reminded them

that *we* were not *libre* yet. The roosters were already crowing as they left to spread the news to all their friends in the area. (Álvarez 150)

Álvarez's novel captures the excitement and relief of those who were closely following Fidel Castro and Che Guevara's movements in Cuba on that night. This fictional account is in keeping with the sentiment that pervaded those who now felt that after so many years, a change was now possible. On January 6<sup>th</sup> 1959, Minerva, Manolo, Mate and her husband Leandro met with other young professionals in the capital at the home of Guido D'Alessandro. Minerva exhorted the group, "argumentando que 'si en Cuba había sido posible derrotar la dictadura, aquí en nuestro país, donde hay tantos jóvenes antitrujillistas, nosotros podemos hacer lo mismo'"<sup>77</sup> (Aquino García 108). While the group that would later be known as The fourteenth of June Movement was anti-dictatorial, Minerva's ideology was not explicitly communist at its core, rather its purpose was to be "un instrumento de lucha por la libertad y los derechos humanos del pueblo dominicano" (Aquino García 109).<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, one could see traces of communist influence in the group's goals as articulated by Manolo who "no creía en la liquidación física de Trujillo," and "opinaba que la estructura militar que él había creado continuaría operando en la eventualidad de su muerte. Opinaba que Trujillo simplemente sería sustituido por otro. Manolo creía pues en la lucha de todo el pueblo contra la dictadura y su sistema, no en el asesinato político." (Aquino García 115). This line of thinking parallels Althusserian theory, which places an emphasis on understanding that the RSA's function as an integral violent system is to enforce the ideology of the ruling class, in this case the military, and thus oppress the lower classes.

If the destruction of an RSA requires a complete substitution or at least a radical alteration of the ISA that upholds it, then it can be argued that the historical Mirabal sisters, their families, friends and thousands of unnamed resistance members were on the right path to freeing their nation. The challenge comes through those who continue to benefit from the RSA's existence such as a small but powerfully armed military elite and their associates. As the eyes and ears of the military, paramilitary groups such as the SIM allowed for swift retributions against those who would dare to challenge the dictatorship. Álvarez's novel offers a painful fictitious retelling of the brutal murder of Patria, Minerva, Mate and their driver Rufino de la Cruz at the hands of SIM members on the way home from visiting their imprisoned husbands. The women's murder on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960 awakened all members of society to the undeniable brutality of the RSA in which they were living; if it was acceptable to kill unarmed middleclass women then anyone could become a victim of the regime and nothing would be done about it unless the people collectively decided to act against it. Although Trujillo was subsequently murdered by some of his closest men seven months later, the RSA of the *trujillato* would continue to operate from 1966 to 1978 but with a new leader, Joaquín Balaguer, a lawyer and one of the chief traditional intellectual architects of Trujilloism. Towards the end of the novel, an older Dedé comes across Virgilio Morales at a function and the two reminisce over the past years. Later Dedé ponders the present:

It comes to me slowly, as I head north through the dark countryside—the only lights are up in the mountains where the prosperous young are building their getaway houses, and of course, in the sky, all the splurged wattage of the stars.

Lío is right. The nightmare is over; we are free at last. But the thing that is making

me tremble, that I do not want to say out loud—and I'll say it once and it's done.

Was it for this the sacrifice of the butterflies? (Álvarez 318)

Dedé's query about what the death of her sisters has afforded the nation is one that does not precede closure. The nation is free from Trujillo's presence but the question remains: what is there to prevent another RSA just as terrible as the *trujillato* from occurring again? In noting that the only lights are those up in the mountains, Álvarez offers a metaphorical image of the "progress" that has been made over the years; power is still only in the hands of a small, elevated elite while those below have no access to an artificial light that would take away the terrors of darkness. The threat of an RSA seems is present as long as there is a justification for the few to have access to much.

### **Our Land, Ourselves.**

While Álvarez's novel features representations of one type of Gramscian organic intellectuals, Angie Cruz's *Let it Rain Coffee*, introduces another group in the Dominican Republic during and after Trujillo's reign of terror. Don Chan, the novel's protagonist, can be seen as a representation of the Asian Dominican population. Rescued from the sea at a young age by a Dominican man who later adopts him, Chan Lee is a Chinese man who relates to life in the Dominican Republic. He remembers the country's pre-Trujillo past and is determined to bring about a politically free and stable Dominican society with the help of the people of his village in Los Llanos. In addition to this his character is special in that he occupies a marginal space among the marginalized. First as a man from the *campo* he represents the Dominican rural poor and on another level he represents the Other as a person of Asian descent, living in a Latin American country. José Colón, his

adoptive father brings little Chan as a young boy to town with him from their coastal village on a shopping trip where a man propositions José:

--I offer you this pouch for the boy, the man said, showing Don José a glimpse of the coins inside the small red pouch.

--I'm sorry but he's not for sale, Don José said and moved away from him in haste.

The man followed.[...]Don José did not know what was going on in the city with the occupation, but the selling of children?

The man persisted.[...]

--You see, I had a China boy myself and he died. It was not the best investment I made, he only worked for me for six years. You see, the China boys have a special skill for the work, and they're not lazy or cause trouble like the Haitians. No no, the China boys can go for hours and never say no to anything you ask. You should see what the China boys did in America. Built the railroad by hand practically. And when they're young like your China boy is, you can train them very well, the man said, waving his hands in the air as if he had told the story many times before.[...]

--He's not for sale. This boy is my son, Don José said, glaring at the man sternly, and for the first time in his life he could imagine killing a man. (Cruz 99, 100).

The man who tries to purchase little Chan is described as “untrustworthy” because of the “beard that hid his face” and as “small and round” and “red from too much sun” (Cruz 99), probable indication that the man is a European American living in the Dominican Republic during the U.S. Marines occupation in from 1916 to 1922. The man consistently refers to Chan as a “China boy” and despite José’s refusal to talk to him does not conceive of the possibility of the Afro-Dominican José’s adoption of Chan into his family because of his race, thus objectifying him. By extolling the “China boys” as hardworking and obedient he commodifies little Chan as a source of cheap labor. In this description of events Cruz manages to “Africanize” Chan through an early twentieth century Eurocentric point of view by seeing him solely as someone of whom the bearded man can take economic advantage. José’s anger toward the man is understandable; it is likely that he himself is about two generations removed from slavery and abhors the idea of someone trying to enslave his son, adopted or not. He teaches little Chan about the history of Toussaint L’Overture and José Martí, men who fought for their countries’ independence, ingraining a nascent patriotism in his young son. When he becomes self-conscious about the looks, pointing and whispers father and son receive on the way to the city, José tells little Chan that people are not laughing at him but that “they don’t understand how special [he is].” (Cruz 98) In doing this José sees Chan simply as his son and not his “Asian son” and through sharing the history of Caribbean nationals makes him a part of it, deeming him worthy to carry on the oral history of Afro- Caribbean peoples who fought for their freedom, a history that stays with him for the rest of his life. Race therefore for José Colón is a state of mind, or construct; it is more than skin color, it is associated with self-determination, a universal concept. Chan does not have to be black

in order to relate to the fundamental human right of freedom and this is the heritage he receives from José. Chan goes on to marry Caridad, his adoptive sister, an Afro-Dominican woman and lives in the *campo* of Los Llanos where he becomes a respected political organizer. When Miraluz, one of his fellow *campesinas* suggests that he run for president, Chan who would in truth welcome the opportunity, humbly refuses noting that “the people wouldn’t be able to look past his face” (Cruz 61). However, later in the novel it is Chan himself who becomes leads an armed group of *campesinos* in guerrilla warfare in Santo Domingo during the civil war of April 1965. This suggests that while race was a factor Dominican society, one’s class and socioeconomic origins took precedence when it came to the fight for political rights. Although Chan’s character is a racial minority in the Dominican Republic, in terms of class he was a member of the vast majority of poor *campesinos* and saw himself as such.

Don Chan’s character can be interpreted as a historical model of many *campesinos* and their struggle for autonomy both during Trujillo’s era and in the ensuing political chaos after the dictator’s demise. Just as the Mirabals of *In the Time of the Butterflies* and the historical Mirabals were influenced by the Cuban revolution, Don Chan and his fellow *campesinos* saw the possibility of freedom on the horizon:

It didn’t take long before Don Chan claimed the head of the dinner table and torched cigars in front of Santo in temptation. To smell one brought back the [...], loud talking, and backyard spitting of the men-only circles in the fields of Los Llanos; they sat around campfires, not shaving for days to show their solidarity to *los barbudos*, those bearded men, who seemed

to have done the impossible by overthrowing Batista and pushing out the Americans from Cuban soil. *Los barbudos*, who in 1959 organized a group of Dominican exiles and Cubans and landed in the D.R., [...] <sup>79</sup>  
(Cruz 27)

As previously discussed in the analysis of *Let it Rain Coffee*, despite the fact that the Dominican media was under strict censorship, there were ways in which the people were able to receive information through politically active undergrounds such as the fourteenth of June Movement. However, while it was the intention of the leadership of the fourteenth of June Movement to bring political freedom to all Dominican people, its principal leadership came from young members of the middle class who had been afforded the benefit of university education and at times the possibility to leave the island if necessary. In a similar manner, it was the combined leadership of two former traditional intellectuals, Castro and Guevara who were a lawyer and a doctor respectively, who felt empowered with the access to knowledge that they received during their professional studies to lead Cuba from unofficial U.S. protectorate to independent nation. Cruz's character Don Chan also finds a connection with his fellow Cuban and Argentinean leaders and is inspired to lead his local community. Again, this is exemplary of Gramsci's theory of effecting change through connecting traditional intellectuals with organic ones. Inspired by the Cuban success, Don Chan tells the group at one of the village's customary political meetings that he himself will go to the capital and take an object from the national palace, a symbolic gesture of the power of the "invisible ones," or the poor farming classes:

Don Chan touched the thick linens in the windows, the silks of the pillows of the chairs. The ceiling three, four times his height, with gold moldings around the wall edges. This is why people were assassinated? Why they go hungry? Don Chan almost yelled, Murderer for the three sisters who were killed because they spoke up against the dictatorship. They were young women. Women! He wanted to scream for their husbands, and every other courageous person who dared to speak up and lost his life because of it. What had he done with his own life but tell cowardly stories in his little village, waiting for things to change? It wasn't enough to talk. It was time to act. But first he had to show the people of Los Llanos that Trujillo could die like any other man. That while Trujillo's government had punished the east for their history of rebellions and rumors of his latest victim ran rampant, Don Chan had to convince them that if they lived in fear, they would never be free. (Cruz 40)

Don Chan's indignant reaction stems from the dramatic difference in freedom, lifestyle, and choices between those who represent the ruling classes or the RSA and the members of the poor and *campesinos*. His original desire to breach the security of the national palace in order to encourage the people of Los Llanos is met with shock; the idea of people dying, in particular young women, a reference to the Mirabal sisters, so that other people could live a life of ostentatious luxury was beyond belief and this shock propels Don Chan into action. His realization is that of an organic intellectual, a person from the lower classes who witnesses an injustice at the hands of the RSA and begins the task of organizing for reparations. Once the harsh reality of injustice becomes even clearer to Don Chan, he methodically decides to first convince his compatriots that Trujillo is

simply a figurehead of the RSA. This is significant because the RSA is much more than one person, rather it is a whole body of systematic oppression that a society has been made to fear; it cannot operate without the adherence of the masses. Organic intellectuals understand this reality, but at times need the help of more traditional intellectuals to bring about change as Gramsci espouses. Don Chan decides to steal an object and chooses what looks like a small knife. Later on upon his return to Los Llanos, he proudly shows the object to a group of his neighbors who ask what it is. Miraluz, one of the village's young literate women tells them it is an envelope opener. This is significant as few of the village's people are assumed to be at most functionally literate and so the envelope opener is not only special because it was stolen from the national palace, the seat of their oppression, but because it represented the national palace's power over all of them. As a letter opener, it represents the power of the communication of the written word, a system most of the rural poor do not have. Somatically its knife-like appearance is symbolic of the violence that the RSA of the Trujillo government has wielded against the poor, illiterate, and seemingly "invisible ones" whose voices, presence and needs go unheard during the regime.

Don Chan and Miraluz represent different political factions in the Dominican Republic after Trujillo's demise in May of 1961. Civil war broke out shortly afterwards with the small elite of the military and upper class *trujillistas* preferring a U.S. backed conservative government and other groups preferring a more leftist approach to ruling the country. As a young person who is knowledgeable about the history of her region, Miraluz represents a new generation of poorer Dominicans from the countryside who were eager to make Cuba's revolution their own:

Don Chan didn't know if he should be insulted or inspired. When Trujillo was alive it was easy to discern who the enemy was and gather the people of Los Llanos to spit at the dictatorship. Even easier to learn about the atrocities and know who to punch at. But now that Trujillo was dead, where would they start? The government was in flux. The people confused. Don Chan saw the flames grow with the evening breeze. Miraluz was waiting for an answer. He didn't want to disappoint her.

Haven't you read the news? Trujillo's men are taking over the office without asking the people what they want, Miraluz said.

Yes I know, but what can we do?

We can't just sit here, Miraluz urged.

But we're not politicians.

Who cares about politics? All over the world, people are fighting and we sit here and do nothing.

And you think it's so easy?

Then why do you bother and tell us stories about Toussaint, who fought for the freedom of his people or Martí, who died in battle for Cuba? If you want to sit here and do nothing, then talk about flowers and the stars that serve as an escape. (Cruz 51)

Miraluz's open challenge to Don Chan metaphorically asks whether he is now ready to use the sword as opposed to the pen; he and she have already made themselves known to their village as intellectuals of the people, a group ready to fight the oligarchy with their ideas. Now just like Toussaint and Martí before them, the people from the lower classes in

her opinion should take advantage of the Caribbean region's political climate and act promptly to ensure their freedom. She goes as far as reminding Don Chan about the arms that the people of Los Llanos found buried around the village, a reference to their past struggles against the United States Military Occupation from 1916 to 1922. This step from talking about change to actually using force is a dramatic one, one that some organic intellectuals at times see as necessary in order to topple an RSA such as the dictatorship. However, this is a Herculean task as RSAs are not easily destroyed; again, Althusser contends that Gramsci's traditional intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie who unknowingly support their RSA must first undergo a "radical revolution in their ideas" in order for the RSA to fail. (Althusser 12) In other words, the traditional intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie must become aware of how the RSA hurts them just as it does the lower classes. In the case of the *trujillato*, the *antitrujillista* traditional intellectuals had no illusions whatsoever about how the military and the SIM would treat them which always made revolution a plausible option during the regime. The death of the Mirabal sisters made it plain to all that there were actually two groups of people in the Dominican Republic: pro-military and anti-military or pro-RSA and anti-RSA. The people of Los Llanos represent the rural poor of the Dominican Republic who understood the country's polarization and that if they wished to hold on to the few rights they had, a struggle of some type was going to have to ensue. Trujillo or no Trujillo, there would always be a group of people willing to support the RSA if it promised them power. Miraluz's fervor ultimately influences Don Chan to encourage the people of the village to travel to vote in Santo Domingo, a decision that is non-violent but allows the people to collectively show their potential political power, the power of the pen.

The political climate of the Dominican Republic of 1961 was tumultuous. There was a concern on the part of many that Joaquín Balaguer, who can be considered one of the ultimate traditional intellectuals of the *trujillato*, would continue to uphold the old RSA and use the military to do so if necessary.<sup>80</sup> With Trujillo gone, his son Ramfis attempted to uphold the system but was unable to do so and by November of 1961, he and the rest of the family fled, stealing what money they could from the national treasury. Balaguer subsequently took power and under pressure from the U.S. allowed Dominican political exiles to return to the island and free elections. One of the exiles to return in July of 1961 was Juan Bosch. While he had already proven his patriotism through founding the Dominican Revolutionary Party while in exile as a result of taking a public stance against Trujillo in the early days of the regime, there were some who after so many years of tyranny were suspicious of anyone who they felt could not relate to them:

My name is Juan Bosch, he said not fazed by the emaciated mule, the clotheslines, the chickens eating grain, the smell of manure, tobacco and burning wood. Like one of them, he wiped the sweat from his brow with his shirtsleeve and took an empty seat where the men were having a drink.

You represent el pueblo and this country should serve you, Bosch said, his accent affected from the years he lived in exile. Don Chan listened to Bosch's ideas about cooperative stores, agrarian reform, ways to improve education and health facilities. Bosch denounced the Dominican rich who wore their Spanish ancestry like their true bandera and the gringos who wanted D.R. as their new stomping ground.

I leave you this transistor radio so you can follow what is happening in the city. I will win the presidency because el pueblo will support me. And I will do right by you all. I promise.

Everyone must vote. We'll vote twice if we have to, Don Chan told the crowds after Bosch's visit. This man would ensure their freedom.

Miraluz didn't trust a man whose hands looked like alabaster. And Juan Bosch, an intellectual, had lots of ideas, but what did he know about the way of the land?

It's a terrible idea, Miraluz said.—Even if this so-called man is sympathetic to the needs of el pueblo, he won't risk his life for it. (Cruz 62)

Cruz's decision to interject Juan Bosch, one of the most significant political figures of twentieth century Dominican politics into the novel at this point is not accidental. There were many other political groups, homegrown as well as those led by former exiles who were vying for a chance to dismantle the RSA of the *trujillato*, but it was Juan Bosch who would go on to win the presidency in December of 1962.<sup>81</sup> Cruz depicts a humble, amiable, affable and trustworthy Bosch, who was historically well liked throughout various socioeconomic strata. His offering the people a radio is a gesture of good faith, as well as symbol of his desire to be connected to the *pueblo* and his recognition of their necessity to win. However Miraluz's skepticism towards Bosch is emblematic of Gramscian theory concerning the uneasy relationship that sometimes exists between organic and traditional intellectuals. She sees Bosch as an outsider who in Gramsci's words "[...] can understand nothing of the collective life of the peasantry [...] if [he] does not take into consideration and examine concretely and in depth [their] effective

subordination to the [traditional] intellectuals” (14-15). Bosch’s “alabaster” skin, apparent ignorance of agriculture, strange accent and lofty ideals strike Miraluz as being completely untrustworthy, not because of the simple prejudices of a country girl, but because Bosch himself superficially resembles the traditional intellectuals who had distanced themselves the lower classes or “the Dominican rich who wore their Spanish ancestry like their true bandera” (Cruz 62).<sup>82</sup> Before Bosch appears, Miraluz suggests that Don Chan, who was becoming more known in the community and beyond as a political organizer, should run for the presidency because although she disagrees with his way of gaining freedom for the “invisible ones,” she trusts him as a fellow *campesino* who has the people’s interest at heart. She goes on to insist that the group “needs someone like [them,] who knows what it’s like to be poor. Someone like Toussaint. [As] [h]e wasn’t afraid to die for his people’s freedom” (Cruz 63). Although Bosch was born in La Vega, a rural area with landowners and *campesinos* alike, this was not enough to convince Miraluz that he was a traditional intellectual who had undergone the “endless external and internal struggle” (Althusser 12) to understand that his plight was that of the oppressed. This is an important aspect of a potential Gramscian political revolution; if organic intellectuals cannot work with traditional intellectuals because of class differences, then the RSA that both groups may wish to destroy is bound to continue to hold power over all groups in society. What Miraluz *does* trust and understand are the stories of Toussaint and *los barbudos*. A representation of the organic intellectuals from the lower classes, Miraluz trusts their political ideologies of those leaders because their results were eventual independence for their countries.

As an RSA, the *trujillato* was effective for two principal reasons: it promised social advancement or political power to those who would agree to its rule and it had the military power to intimidate those who would speak out against it through the legal and penal system which were completely corrupted as its members were beholden to the system. What made the member of the underground resistance able to stand up to Trujillo's army was the possession of firearms, which as previously discussed were smuggled into the country by Dominican exiles and their allies or in some cases were hidden from the authorities. The people of Los Llanos represent the rural poor in the Dominican Republic who did not have military or political connections; hence Juan Bosch's arrival and his promises to make sure their concerns will not be forgotten by those in the highest political offices in the country provide a hope for a better future. Months after his visit, the country elects Bosch and later a hurricane roars through Los Llanos destroying property and unearthing buried objects in the land, a metaphor for the positive changes that Bosch's election would supposedly bring to the nation. Don Chan is one of the villagers who happens upon a special find:

Don Chan had found an aluminum soup pot. The pot was sealed with cement. He looked for a machete and tried to pry it open but the pot rolled around as if it had a mind of its own. Don Chan took the pot and held it between his feet. He pressed his body against knife. Inside the pot was enough money to legalize the titles of the land that his family and many people of Los Llanos had worked on for many years. [...]

Now that we legally own our land, who can stop us from doing as we want? Don Chan said to all those who joined him in his vision of a country that is

owned by the people who work the land.—If we work the land, we should own the land. (Cruz 64)

It is significant that Don Chan chooses to use the money towards the community's benefit after Bosch's visit because it indicates that Don Chan truly believes that Bosch will make a difference, which symbolizes the Dominican people's trust in Bosch as president. The altruism of Don Chan's character further indicates his identity as an organic intellectual who wants genuine change to happen for every citizen.<sup>83</sup> After the people hear of his decision to purchase the land, he becomes even more celebrated but he "was afraid to admit that full bellies made the Invisible Ones as indifferent to the injustices of the world as the rich who he often criticized" (Cruz 65). It is this attitude that makes Don Chan a true revolutionary; he believes that everyone will not be free until *everyone* is free. He understands that the fight will have to continue whether it is through violence, which he does not advocate, or through political struggle.

Both political struggle and martial struggle are at times necessary when combating an RSA. Cruz's novel illustrates what can happen when traditional and organic intellectuals come together to dismantle RSAs. While change is in fact possible at times, it is even harder to ensure that that change remains. This is because the RSA was made possible by groups of people who benefited from its existence. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the *trujillato* did not die easily; after seven months in office, Juan Bosch's government was overturned by groups of *trujillista* military elite, businessmen, industrialists, the Church and latifundistas who were disinclined to Bosch's "general ideas on economic development," which were "reformist and populist" and which he had learned in Costa Rica and Cuba (Moya Pons 383). "Bosch was soon labeled a pro-

Communist and Communist,” (Moya Pons 383) although he denied their claims but “was reluctant to move against the very few Dominican communists whom he said should be tolerated” (Moya Pons 385). Eventually his opponents, who had been planning a coup d’état with the military, deposed him on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1963 and replaced him with “a triumvirate composed of corporate executives and lawyers, and whose cabinet was made up of rightist entrepreneurs and lawyers with ties to the Dominican business community” (Moya Pons 385). Cruz gives a fictional account of the effect this has upon the *campesinos* of Los Llanos:

-We’ll organize to bring Juan Bosch back into office. He can change the laws to protect us.

-Nobody follows the law in this country; Santo said—The law changes with the desires of the rich. The military acts as if the constitution doesn’t exist.

-I say let’s cage all of those people who make up the military, the politicians, and the rich—just like they did our ancestors—and then burn them alive. Maybe then they will let us live our lives in peace, Miraluz said.

Are you serious? Santo was surprised by her aggression. But something had her worked up.

Violence isn’t necessary. If we kill, we’re the same as the people we criticize. We can win by teaching the people and using the constitution said Don Chan.

And you think the military, Balaguer, and all the men who make money from the government, will allow for a fair reelection? Please Don Chan, Miraluz said rolling her eyes.—For someone so wise its crazy to think any government

will look after the best interests of the people over their wallets. When in history have we seen people like us win their freedom without some bloodshed?

Papá it's true. They're already coming after us. Two of the Invisible Ones have disappeared for three days. Their wives are worried. (Cruz 147)

Santo, Don Chan's son and Miraluz make poignant observations about the nation's political climate in the 1960's. The military, or the sword, was no longer beholden to the constitution, or the pen. After Bosch's exile to Puerto Rico in the fall of 1963, the triumvirate government of lawyers and businessmen assassinated young guerilla members of the 14th of June Movement, some of whom supported Bosch. Miraluz's suggestion to cage and kill the "military, the politicians and the rich" speaks to the frustration brought on by the injustices done to the poor during the *trujillato* that were fresh memories for families of the regime's victims (Cruz 147). Again, at this time in Dominican history it is the military that keeps the RSA of corrupt government in power and Miraluz sees violence as the ultimate solution to ridding the country of another *trujillista* dictatorship. The triumvirate government was very unpopular with the people who wanted to find a way to re-elect Bosch who had made attempts to bring democratic change to the nation. Ultimately, a schism arose between the members of the military who supported Bosch's return to office and members who simply wished to end the triumvirate's rule. On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1965, the Bosch supporters gave arms to civilians and a civil war broke out in the capital. This war was essentially between military members who represented the traditional intellectuals and militarized organic intellectuals who like the lower classes saw no other way out of the oppression that was sure to come if *trujillistas* once again gained control of the government. The fact that the organic

intellectuals had to resort to the use of violence at all to effect change is emblematic of the RSAs power; the organic intellectuals were unable to communicate their agenda on their own terms. This is because “just as there are dominant and dominated classes in society, so too there are the dominant and dominated ideologies” and “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. [...] [Therefore] [...] working-class protest against exploitation expresses itself *within the very structure of the dominant* [...] system” (Althusser 30). The ISA (ideological state apparatus) of the ruling class including politics, the economy, education and religion are upheld by its RSA, which is at its core violent. Since the poor derive their ideologies from the upper classes, it is at times inevitable, according to Althusserian theory, for the lower classes to resort to violence in order to attempt to establish their own state apparatuses. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the United States wanted to prevent Bosch from taking office again, as they did not want another viable communist government in the Caribbean and so they helped establish a rightist *trujillista* government headed by Joaquín Balaguer that lasted from 1966 to 1978. The military, it seemed, would go on to serve as a seat of power in the Dominican Republic and those intellectuals who wished to operate within military might did well to promote the necessity of martial law. However, as will be discussed shortly, there were other intellectuals who chose to struggle against the *trujillato* backed military in their own ways.

### **Roots Remembered, Freedom Regained**

State sponsored violence against a country’s citizens can come in many forms. For instance it can exist in police brutality, an unjust judicial or inhumane penal system. Marisela Rizik’s novel *El tiempo del olvido* is an historical novel similar in some ways to

*In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Let it Rain Coffee*. All three novels give a fictional account of Dominican historical events. However, *El tiempo del olvido* stands out from its sister works in that it is a veiled allusion to the Dominican Republic and Trujillo's dictatorship while the other works offer almost parallel accounts of Dominican history. Representations of traditional and organic intellectuals in *En el tiempo del olvido* are not as easily identified as those in *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Let it Rain Coffee*, but they do in fact exist upon examining them using Gramscian and Althusserian analysis.

*El tiempo del olvido* follows the lives of Lorenza Parduz, an older woman of African descent from the countryside, her daughter Herminia and Herminia's husband Abelardo Gutiérrez. In a broad sense, Lorenza can be conceived as an organic intellectual in that she recognizes the corruption of the country's government and tries to navigate it as discussed in the first chapter. Herminia, as an illegitimate daughter of Lorenza and middle class Pedro Casals, represents the traditional Gramscian intellectual who does not initially recognize that she must identify with the organic intellectuals in order to be free of the RSA of the dictatorship. Abelardo is an allusion to Trujillo and he can be seen as the military might of the RSA that abuses both Herminia, the traditional intellectuals as well as the lower classes. The novel features many other characters whose lives intersect with those of these three main protagonists as either traditional or organic intellectuals.

Herminia as an illegitimate child of Pedro Casals, a white landowner and Lorenza Parduz, a poor, black *campesina*, is not only a racial hybrid, but a class and social hybrid as well. Pedro reluctantly agrees to take her after Lorenza gives her to him, thinking Pedro is best able to provide for her and he gives her to his sister Florencia, a very religious woman to raise. Herminia grows up feeling contempt for Lorenza even though

Florencia takes the girl to visit her mother, yet she knows that she doesn't belong entirely to the upper classes:

Hermi quiso continuar la conversación con doña Faustina; pero doña Faustina se dirigía ahora a otra señora más de su categoría y edad. Hermi notó la mirada un tanto despectiva que doña Faustina y su amiga lanzaban al general. 'Son otros tiempos, Faustina. Hay que tratar a todo el mundo igual para no meterse en líos,' le oyó Hermi decir en voz muy baja a la acompañante de doña Faustina. Habiendo perdido la atención de doña Faustina, Hermi decidió salir a la terraza del club exclusivo donde ocurría la recepción. [...] A pesar de sentirse contenta, se sentía sola. Aunque odiaba el internado donde vivía desde que la tía Florencia murió, allí por lo menos las reglas se le hacían claras y definidas. En el mundo de la alta sociedad de su padre se sentía como una impostora. Era una contradicción que se le hacía difícil explicar. (Rizik 44)

Herminia's confusion is emblematic of the sector of the population that she represents. As a person of mixed racial heritage, specifically African and European, she is akin to a significant part of the Dominican population. However, the Dominican Republic of the 1930s, the early years of the dictatorship, was still ruled by a class system. Herminia is the illegitimate daughter of a latifundista who at times chooses to recognize her and so her position in the upper classes of society is somewhat tenuous. This is the same position that many citizens found themselves in when Trujillo was in power; a wrong word, or association with the wrong people could bring sudden socioeconomic disaster as Trujillo's system did not tolerate dissidents. Therefore, those of all social echelons, as noted at the beginning of this discussion could be the victims of violence at the hand of

the RSA. Doña Faustina's conversation is a faithful retelling of the attitudes of the most privileged circles towards Trujillo or General Abelardo in the novel. "[...] Trujillo was relentless in his attempts to gain acceptance into the select inner circles of the country's bourgeois elite. [...] Although [he] was admittedly one of the nation's wealthiest individuals, he nevertheless possessed neither the prerequisite family genealogy nor the racial stock nor the moral character that traditionally typified the composition of this exclusive sector" (Cambeira 183). As a perpetual outsider, Trujillo counted upon his military might to gain control of the country and established an RSA that could count itself mightier than any social class on the island. No longer could one hide behind correct bloodlines and family history to ensure success in society. In this aspect the RSA that was the *trujillato* was a social equalizer and nowhere was this fact emphasized more than in the military that allowed social advancement to the poor and working classes making men of the sword stronger than those who would be organic intellectuals of the pen.

An RSA's power comes from the ISA that supports it, meaning that ruling class ideologies must be adhered to by all in order for the RSA to be effective. Racial ideologies of the Trujillo era were predicated upon an imagined Indo-Hispanic rather than Afro-Hispanic phenotype to which many people could relate. In doing this Trujillo walked a political tightrope; by validating the country's mostly mixed race population, he attempted to gain their loyalty because the upper classes who favored Europeans were now under the power of the RSA he could ensure his place in power over them as well. Rizik illustrates this tactic through Abelardo's thoughts:

Cuando vio a Hermi entrar al despacho de la casa, el general supo que su indiferencia de aquella semana había dado los resultados esperados. La miró acercársele tímidamente. Sin decir nada fue a su encuentro y la sentó en sus piernas. La contempló complacido y pensó que había hecho muy buena elección. Hermi no solamente estaba relacionada con las llamadas familias aristocráticas del país, sino que era también la hija de una mujer del pueblo, lo cual él podía usar en un momento dado para demostrar que él no era un hombre que daba poca importancia a las clases sociales. Sonrió para sí, al recordar la cara de disculpa que había puesto Pedro Casals al confesarle el secreto sobre la madre de Hermi. (Rizik 80)

Ablelardo's shrewdness is in line with that of the historical Trujillo who understood that a mass manipulation of a national image or a national ISA would engender a justification of his government. Throughout his marriage to Herminia, he physically and verbally abuses her. A young girl of seventeen, she becomes the wife of the most powerful man in the nation but is emotionally manipulated and taken for granted just as the Dominican population were disempowered mainly because of their lack of arms. They like Herminia are initially unable to fight against the military but find a way through the union of both organic and traditional intellectuals who come into the lives of the characters. Again, Herminia is a socially and racially hybrid character who represents the lower and upper classes who suffer abuses at the hands of Trujillo's military, but she can also be seen as the traditional intellectual who comes to realize that they do not exist apart from the upper and lower classes, as Gramsci indicates.

Rizik illustrates the traditional intellectual's realization that they must join with organic intellectuals through several relationships in the novel. One such relationship is that between Herminia and her mother Lorenza. The two come from totally different worlds as Herminia is mixed race and has access to wealth while Lorenza is African and has lived the modest life of a *campesina*. As a young girl, Herminia would not speak to Lorenza when her aunt brought her to see her. Later on, after Herminia gives birth to Sara, Lorenza makes the trip from the country to see her in her grand house in the capital. Although it has been many years since mother and daughter have seen one another, they bond through the love they have for the baby. Despite the fact Abelardo abuses her to the point she eventually goes insane, Herminia continues to identify with the upper classes:

‘Soy una mujer de campo’—le decía Lorenza cuando doña Herminia insistía en corregir su manera de vestir y su modo de hablar. A doña Herminia le desesperaba la testarudez de su madre. Cada vez que llegaba una amiga a visitarla, Lorenza desaparecía. ‘Estoy aquí por tí. No tengo necesidad de ver a nadie más.’ Doña Herminia insistía que en que conociera a sus amigas, pero en verdad se sentía liberada del peso de tener que presentarla como su madre. El día que la había presentado a sus hermanas había notado cómo la apariencia tosca de su madre resaltaba frente el lujo con que se vestían sus hermanas. Poco a poco, sin embargo, a doña Herminia le fue molestando algo que no pudo identificar al principio. Descubrió que la empezaba a avergonzar no cómo se vestía su madre sino su propia cobardía. (Rizik 145)

Herminia's "cobardía" represents a pivotal turning point, specifically when the traditional intellectuals begin to identify with their organic counterparts. Herminia is the product of a

convent education, which in the novel's social order is considered to be superior to Lorenza's body of knowledge, which includes traditional medicine and healing. Her refusal to assimilate to Herminia's world symbolizes the difference between the two classes and reaffirms the importance of the organic intellectual in the social system. Abelardo, as military dictator of the island, has afforded Herminia all the creature comforts available at the time. She insists that Lorenza change her clothes and speech in an attempt to cover the poorer portion of Herminia's roots but Lorenza's refusal to do so only magnifies them. The pride her mother has in herself challenges Herminia's marriage to the general; if a poor marginalized woman can take pride in herself, how is it that Herminia as an upper class woman cannot do the same? According to the ideology of the Dominican Republic during the *trujillato*, Lorenza and all she represents should always occupy a place of subservience to the higher classes or complete marginalization. However, just as Don Chan, Miraluz and the people of Los Llanos refused to be oppressed by the dictatorship in *Let it Rain Coffee*, Lorenza's place as an organic intellectual who refuses to be intimidated by the trappings of women of a higher social class represents an opportunity to bridge the gap between the oppressed and those who are advantaged yet still under the power of the ISA and as such the RSA.

Abelardo as the dictator general of the island has the government at his disposal. The legal and political marriage to Herminia cemented his relationship with the poor and middle class alike because of her origins and it is over these two classes that he held power. In addition to his marriage, Abelardo carries on a brief affair with Mercedes, the mixed race daughter of Luisa, a washerwoman. Unlike his marriage to Herminia whose purpose was simply to keep up social appearances, Abelardo uses Mercedes to satisfy his

sexual appetites. This is in keeping with Trujillo's reputation, as he was known for his numerous affairs with young women throughout the island (Derby 112, 184). Mercedes does not love Abelardo and lives in fear for her life after she has a tryst with her true love José. Upon finding out about the two lovers Abelardo has them beaten and left for dead in a cemetery in the middle of the night, an allusion to suffering and murders of some 30,000 political dissidents who fought against the regime. Mercedes miraculously survives the brutality of Abelardo's soldiers and Dr. Collado finds and heals her. Their relationship can be conceived as the inverse of that of Lorenza and Hermi. Rather than a member of the lower classes inspiring one of the upper, it is Dr. Collado the traditional intellectual who identifies with the poor Mercedes who is at first reluctant to trust him, fearing that he too is an adherent of the country's violent RSA:

Mercedes se asustó. Pensó en el general y se imaginó que él la estaría buscando. Miró con ojos asustados al doctor Collado.

“La policía no.”

En la última semana el doctor Collado había oído varias veces en hospital público la misma súplica. Sabía bien lo que significaba. La figura diminuta de Mercedes y sus ojos asustados le hacían preguntarse en qué podría ella haberse metido para merecer el salvajismo de los golpes que le habían infligido. Trató de ganarse su confianza, pero Mercedes se negaba a hablar. Sólo lloraba, especialmente cuando se enteró de que el doctor la había encontrado junto a un hombre muerto. Supo que era José y desde ese momento no quería volver a vivir. Cuando el doctor le dijo la suerte que ella había tenido de estar viva, se echó a sollozar. (Rizik 141)

Mercedes's relationship with Abelardo is akin to his relationship with Herminia. Both women can be seen as representatives of the Dominican people, a people in a horrid relationship that they cannot leave. Abelardo specifically chose Herminia to publicly solidify his relationship with people of all classes, which is what Trujillo attempted to do by allowing men from mostly the lower classes to join the military to ensure their loyalty to him, thus creating a powerful separate class that was the backbone of the regime or RSA. Abelardo's relationship with Mercedes is a clear allusion to Trujillo's many affairs but Mercedes can also be seen as the thousands of Dominicans who lived in fear and then decided to unsuccessfully fight for their freedom in the same way she decided to risk her life by meeting José, her cherished childhood friend and later lover. The loss of José can further be likened to the hopelessness that many Dominican citizens felt after failed uprisings such as the '59 Luperón invasion, and the subsequent '69 fourteenth of June Invasion that once again showed the power of the Dominican armed forces over the will of the people. Like Mercedes many Dominicans went from feeling powerless against their government or trapped in their own homes in the same way she was made to stay at the house where Abelardo kept her, to feelings of empowerment towards the end of the 1950s when the international, ecclesiastical, and exile communities joined Dominicans in their fight for freedom. Dr. Collado's concern and care for his patients is a clear example of the Gramscian rural intellectual whose position in society serves as a link between the rural poor and the upper classes. In a manner much like the Virgilio Morales character of *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Dr. Collado's social position gives him an opportunity to see first hand the abuses the general populace suffers at the hands of a military class that is allowed to torture and murder with impunity. In his attempt to help Mercedes on her

road to mental and physical health lies the potential for the rural intellectuals to connect with organic intellectuals of the lower classes; the pen can come to the rescue of those trapped by the sword. As a poor, tortured mixed race woman, Mercedes's position in society is vulnerable in that she may present a problem to anyone to whom she tells of her pain at the hands of the RSA, but she finally opens up to Dr. Collado who like Abelardo provides her with a nice home in which to live and heal. This is a stark difference between Abelardo providing Mercedes a place where he can sexually abuse her and Dr. Collado's intentions of recognizing her vulnerability and deciding not to take advantage of it in the same way Abelardo did even though he had the power to do so. After having lived in Dr. Collado's summer house Mercedes "acostumbrada a que ningún hombre le diera nada por nada, se aseó cada día esperando [su] llegada [...]. Pero en todo el tiempo que la albergó en su casa, no le pidió nada" (Rizik 143). This turning point in Mercedes's life represents the potential of the rural intellectual; by showing her a completely different way of life, Dr. Collado, a rural intellectual positively influences Mercedes, a potential organic intellectual, who goes from being a victim to citizen who can possibly challenge the brutality of the RSA through her personal testimony.

Just as Mercedes forms a relationship with Dr. Collado after losing José, Herminia forms one with Antonio Figueroa, a young dissident lawyer and her brother's best friend. The two meet again at the same party where Abelardo meets Herminia, and it is at this party that Abelardo, the sword, claims Herminia for himself, taking her away from Antonio, the pen. Their relationship is marked with distance and lost time as Antonio is part of an underground movement. After Abelardo is kidnapped at the behest of his closest military men, Antonio returns from exile and although married is still

enamored of Herminia. The two have an uncomfortable but friendly relationship due to their initial mutual attraction in their younger years. As a lawyer who worked toward political freedom, Antonio's character is much like Dr. Collado's; however he is more of a Gramscian traditional intellectual who realizes the struggles of the marginalized are also his struggles. As the son of a high ranking military officer he leads a privileged life of the upper classes but as a young man is convinced that his silence and inaction facilitate the dictatorship. His relationship with Herminia can be likened to the relationship between Juan Bosch and the Dominican people who were trying to start life anew after the fall of Trujillo. The two characters become closer after Antonio's return:

‘Distnguida señora Casals, aquí le traigo el documento legal que la hace dueña total de su propiedad.’ [...] Antonio la miró con un poco de desesperación en los ojos. Notaba la fragancia del jazmín y oía los pájaros afuera. Mantener el tono general de la conversación se le iba haciedndo cada vez más difícil. Hermi lo miró de reajo como si supiera exactamente lo que él pensaba.

‘¿No te dieron ningún problema mis hermanas?’

‘Nadie les hubiera ofrecido tanto como les ofreciste tú.’

‘No me importa el dinero. Lo único que me importa es saber que nadie me quitará lo que tengo.’

‘Pues señora Casals, si sigue usted trabajando como trabaja, va usted a tener la finca más productiva de esta región.’ (Rizik 237)

At first glance the parallel between Antonio's character and Bosch are plain, however the one between Herminia and the *campesinos* of the Dominican Republic may not be as

lucid. In the act of making Herminia the sole legal owner of the land her aunt Florencia left to her and her half siblings, Antonio in essence gives her an autonomy she has not had until that point, which is what Juan Bosch attempted to do with his socio-democratic platform in 1963. Although Herminia's character is wealthy, she was not always so. An illegitimate daughter of a wealthy land owner, Herminia's father Pedro Casals has little to do with her until she draws the attention of Abelardo, thus becoming the lynchpin in the family's social advancement. Legally, she had no right to expect an inheritance from her paternal family, but it is Antonio's love and persistence that empower Herminia and she fully becomes her own person.

### **Conclusion**

*El tiempo del olvido* is similar to *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Let it Rain Coffee* as all three authors create characters that are both traditional and organic Gramscian intellectuals who come together to fight for political freedom in the Dominican Republic of the twentieth century. Rizik's novel stands apart from the group in that it leans completely toward the metaphorical and most of the intellectual characters are not armed and ready to take on the Dominican military if necessary, but they do realize that they too are victims of the RSA in which they live. All the novels serve as a platform for a discussion of power, particularly the abuse of power when it is in the hands of those who adhere to the ISAs that guarantee advantages for the few and marginalization of many. This discussion is not only pertinent to the colonial era of the Dominican Republic, it is also pertinent to contemporary political views on the island, which legitimizes the novels' relevance today. Although times change along with the

public faces of the ISAs and RSAs they support, the question remains: Are things really the same? Or has the pen really overcome the sword?

## Conclusion

Dominican and Dominican American women's literature is fertile ground for representing the marginalized and the power structures in which they live. Indeed, as the cradle of European colonization in the West, there have always existed groups of people who were considered outside of the mainstream, starting with the Taínos and later with Africans brought from the continent to perform labor to enrich a small but powerful class of Spaniards on the island, members of the nobility and the crown as well.<sup>84</sup> The Spanish *casta* system which was primarily predicated upon race also took into account class. So being Spanish born, male and free were not iron clad prerequisites for a privileged life; those who fit this description also fared better if they belonged to a small monied elite. In the colonies, Europeaness, Africaness and Indigenousness were all prescribed constructed performances. That is to say that friendships, families, business partnerships, food, language, religion and clothing were a significant part of being considered white black or "indio." These performances of race were carried out in order to survive in a world where one's life could easily end due to violence or disease.<sup>85</sup> Such was the case in the Dominican Republic where many Spaniards came to make their fortunes in sugar, coffee and later cattle ranching. As the Spanish colonial empire further expanded into present day Mexico, the United States, Peru, and Colombia, the Dominican colony fell into neglect with many whites leaving the island after failed attempts at running plantations because of the frequent successful slave rebellions due to the colony's majority African population. Slavery would continue until 1822 with the Haitian

occupation of the Dominican Republic when it was abolished in keeping with the Haitian revolution of 1804. Upon the manumission of Dominican slaves, more whites left the island, this time heading for their sister Hispano Caribbean colonies in Puerto Rico and Cuba. As most of the Taíno population was decimated due to smallpox in the early to mid-sixteenth century, this trajectory of Dominican history left the island with a predominantly African population. However, it is important to remember that those in power in the Dominican Republic after 1844, the year of its emancipation from Haitian rule, tended to be white or lighter skinned mixed race individuals who wished to differentiate themselves from all things Haitian, which they associated with blackness. A nascent Dominican Republic sought Spain, France and the United States's recognition and support as a sovereign nation, and part of this recognition and support at the time depended on an imagined whiteness, that is, even if the majority country's inhabitants were considered black and mixed-race, there was to be a cultural and mental identification with whiteness and ultimately an identification with Europe.<sup>86</sup>

As Dominicans looked to Europe as a source of racial and sociocultural identity in the mid nineteenth century in order to establish the nation, it became clear that the colonial hegemony never left the minds of the elite nor those of the lower classes who were subject to the dictates of the dominant ISA, principally, a Eurocentric view of the world. Indeed, the Dominican Republic shortly after declaring its independence from black Haiti, due to infighting among its leaders, became the only country in Latin America to revert to being a Spanish colony in 1861. While the country would go on to achieve its independence from Spain in 1865, the mother country had by then left an indelible mark upon the Dominican Republic's consciousness and national identity. This

same attitude survived until the early twentieth century in the Dominican Republic and reached its zenith during the Trujillato. The continued sense of Dominican sovereignty under Trujillo's rule depended heavily upon a constructed imagined community, the Dominican Republic as being the descendant and keeper of an Indo-Hispanic, Catholic tradition. Religion as an ISA played a prominent role in the lives of most Dominicans in the early twentieth century and it is the belief in alternative faith systems that gave marginalized Dominicans their own space within which they could try to protect Afrodescendants who believed differently from those in power. Religion is one of the most powerful ISAs and the attempts by characters in Dominican and Dominican American women's literature to believe in their own religion represent the need to be validated on their own terms rather than always adhering to a prescribed cosmology that fortified ISAs of national identity. However, it is important to understand that even though one has one's own belief system, it is still that, a belief system. This is because dominated subjects use the same ISA framework as the dominant groups to address the ISAs of the dominant classes (Althusser 30).

Marisela Rizik's *El tiempo del olvido*, represents challenges to society on many different levels through the Lorenza Parduz character. Of the works discussed in this book it is the archetype of the Dominican subaltern novel, a term I use to describe a narrative in which the subaltern characters are the focus of the book. Lorenza's attempts to survive within a military dictatorship by relying upon her own Afrosyncretic faith serve as examples of subjects trying to navigate the power systems in which they live despite the fact that those same power systems are trying to negate their existence. Because of the nature of the RSA or dictatorship, the subjects struggle to assert their own

identity which creates a history of its own, one that is running within the boundaries of the hegemony. It is difference between the subject's story and the mainstream that creates a space for the voice of the marginalized subject to be heard. Rizik's use of an Afrodescendant woman as one of the novel's main protagonists is an attempt to give a different history of the nation, one that is more Afrocentric and matriarchal, as Isabel Brown suggests (111-112). Writing a story where a black Dominican woman helps her family survive the cruelties of a military regime strives to return autonomy to this group in a way that has not been historically done in Dominican letters, as Néstor Rodríguez suggests. Lorenza is a brave, skilled, intelligent, new and necessary character in Dominican literature as she has the same roots as many contemporary Dominicans do today. She is important because she serves as a link to a relatively recent past in the lives of the forebears of Dominicans today, a reminder of Olivorio Mateo, a religious symbol of economic freedom during the United States's military occupation of the island. She is a *campesina* who wants the best for her child but does not forget her origins and reminds her daughter that those origins are significant and not to be marginalized as they are potential sources of strength when one cannot bear the oppression of the dominant RSAs and ISAs.

I see Angie Cruz's *Soledad* as a continuation of the story *El tiempo del olvido* tells in the United States. In no way do I wish to minimize the novels' individuality, rather I see ties between the two created histories that distinguish them in Dominican letters. Where Rizik creates a story to which Dominicans on the island, Caribbean peoples and people of the so called Third World can relate, Cruz's *Soledad* is a link between those on the island and in the Third World with their American relatives.

Principally, *Soledad* serves as a reminder that wherever a subject may be in the world, there is always a dominant system that marginalizes many and privileges a few. While Soledad's character stands out as a subject wanting to assimilate into the American mainstream just as Lorenza's daughter Herminia does in *El tiempo del olvido*, the women in Soledad's family represent the connection between the islands of Hispaniola and Manhattan. Again as in *El tiempo del olvido*'s Lorenza, there is the mysterious, green-eyed woman in the character of Olivia who is spiritually beaten. She is a member of a family that is poor but rich in spirituality. Like Lorenza, Gorda insists on trying to help others in her family survive despite the damages of the RSAs and ISAs that Olivia and the rest of the family have suffered. It is the attempt to stand up to the power that is constantly working against them through poverty, the insistence of the dominant culture's significance and the dominant culture's faith systems that make Gorda, Olivia and Soledad special in this novel. When Soledad starts to see the value of herself and her family's history she is finally able to understand her mother's and aunt's struggles and begin to help her mother recover from her spiritual coma. Through articulating the importance of holding on to one's own subaltern culture while living within in a dominant one, Cruz like Rizik suggests that even though RSAs and ISAs may not be overturned, one can find ways to survive within them.

Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home* is akin to *El tiempo del olvido* and *Soledad* in that it features spiritually and emotionally powerful women who use the systems of knowledge learned on the island to help their family members deal with the harsh realities of poverty, mental abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse that they suffer. In the novel, Aurelia and Illeana represent women with potential power due to their

forebear's teaching and encouragement. However, this novel is different from *El tiempo del olvido* and *Soledad* because it suggests that despite being in touch with one's own roots, there will always exist a power struggle between the dominant society and the subject over the subject's autonomy. Aurelia does help her children but she has abandoned her mother Bienvenida's spirituality for so long it seems that there is a limit to what she can do. In this regard the novel is somewhat more didactic in nature than *El tiempo del olvido* and *Soledad* as it seems to serve as a warning to those who would forget about their own spirituality in the face of mainstream religions. Once it is lost, it may not have as much potency as it might have if it had continued. *Geographies of Home* is the longest of the novels discussed in this work with the most characters and as such it offers additional insight into the representations of Dominican and Dominican Americans with the religious theme predominating. The novel stands out amongst its peers because both mainstream and Afrosyncretic religion are lived side by side at some points in the novel with Afrosyncretic beliefs offering solutions at times where mainstream religion might have failed. In the end of the novel, Aurelia's youngest daughter Ileana remembers being beaten by Papito as a toddler for wandering off and putting herself in potential danger, a fact Ileana still resents. She is upset at Papito for not realizing the possibility of her own nascent spiritual guidance, a guidance that kept her safe whenever she wandered away from home or unknowingly faced danger. What Pérez's novel seems to suggest is that mainstream religion, specifically the rules of the religion and lack of spirituality are what cause many of the subjects' problems in the novel: there is no relationship to the Divine, therefore it is even more difficult to deal with the various ISAs and RSAs that can affect one's life.

If the Divine can be thought of as an omniscient omnipresence, so to can the cultural industry that is fueled by the media. Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the psyches of men and women in modern societies are now under the control of a system that mass produces what is culturally acceptable and what is not. The media and culture play an integral part of the everyday lives of many people in the West where the primary culture is that of consumption. Advertisements, movies, and television constantly bombard subjects with images of commodities that the subjects may not necessarily want, yet are led to believe that if they do not possess them, that they cannot be part of the mainstream. The desire of the masses lies in the hands of the few who now not only serve as superego, but can also direct the ids of those who succumb to the attraction of media outlets. As this reality becomes more and more universal it is important to discuss its effects in the so called Third World, a category into which the Dominican Republic has often been placed. In the late nineteenth century, in the Dominican Republic as well as in the United States the home was chief environment for the subject and the parents served as the superegos, as Jessica Benjamin suggests (44,45). Later, as the father became less and less able to provide for his family through producing his own work at his own time, it is the wider society that began to have influence on the subjects in the home. The father's influence began to wane by the early twentieth century in both the Dominican Republic and the United States as young people became attracted to larger cities in their respective countries that promised more material goods and the work necessary to attain them. No longer did one have to remain at home and depend upon the land that the father owned; it was now possible to make one's own way in the world without parental supervision or support. This new "independence" seemed authentic but in reality it became a

dependence upon a greater power structure that categorized individuals in its own way, and these same people agreed to these classifications especially if it meant leaving marginalized spaces. Dominican and Dominican American women's literature addresses these issues that are specific not only to the island but to life in the United States as well.

Angie Cruz's *Soledad*, Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints* and Marta Rivera's *He olvidado tu nombre* address the idea of mass culture as an ISA that is powerful enough to affect the lives of everyday subjects in a way that can lead to their detriment. It is my belief that these novels, if analyzed as they are here, can be seen as containing themes somewhat similar to those in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells' *1984*, specifically mass psychological control and manipulation of the subjects' desires. In *Soledad*, this manipulation is at play in Soledad, who looks down upon her urban immigrant upbringing and aspires to having what she feels is the archetypical American dream, which for the character demands assimilation into the mainstream and a complete abandonment of those things Dominican in her life, including separation from her family members. Soledad's young cousin Flaca represents a young first generation Dominican American who feels that there are specific cultural norms that one should follow to show pride in one's Dominican heritage, a constructed formula whose end results guarantee acceptance into an imagined community of Dominicans living in the United States. Here, there are external influences that are controlling the desires of the subjects, namely a constructed American dominant culture and a constructed Dominican culture that must be protected at all costs lest the subject lose her identity. Richie, a young man from the neighborhood is the object of both Soledad and Flaca's desire and represents a hybrid subject, that is, one that adheres to the cultural

norms of the United States as well as those of the Dominican immigrant community in which he still lives. Both female subjects see some of what dominate cultures value in Richie and this attests to the fact that subjects simply respond to the cultures in which they live; if either Soledad or Flaca had chosen a character that represented a way of life that was completely distinct from what they knew, this would have indicated a break with the system in which they lived. However, ultimately all three characters in the novel, Soledad, Flaca and Richie continue to live prescribed identities.

Due to the nature of cultural hegemonies it is typical to see subjects navigate their respective power systems within given boundaries, that is to say, that the hegemonies in which subjects live often respond to their interpellation as Althusser suggests. Although a subject may wish to no longer be marginalized once it becomes evident to the subject that they are, this does not mean a complete break from the dominant system. Indeed, marginalized subjects such as those represented by Soledad's character often wish to become part of the mainstream or even more like the accepted norm of the dominant classes. This is the case in *The Song of the Water Saints*'s Graciela, who, tired of life in the *campo* goes on a journey through the early twentieth century Dominican Republic with the desire to "sip the juice from this life" (Rosario 43). Nelly Rosario's novel tends towards warning about the subject being dominated by an external desire that can lead to self-destruction. While Angie Cruz's *Soledad* encourages the subject to find its cultural roots at the risk of losing touch with what is really important, family, Rosario's work takes the warning even one step further, suggesting that if the journey to find oneself is rooted in the dominant society's promises to the marginalized, that not only will one wander far from home but ultimately will bring disaster upon oneself through a slow

death. Rosario underscores the link between illicit sex and death in the novel with Graciela the family matriarch dying from syphilis she contracts from a German tourist and with her teenage great granddaughter Leila possibly contracting HIV from a married man. Mercedes and Amalfi, Graciela's daughter and granddaughter respectively, however, represent the older, more conservative Dominican ways of life. Mercedes becomes a firm Catholic believer while Amalfi decides to stay on the island when the rest of the family moves to New York. For Rosario, it is the familiarity with a dominant system symbolized by malicious sexual relationships that promises commodities, wealth and membership in the mainstream that is the potential problem: Her novel can be interpreted as a call to return to the more "Dominican" way of life as it provides the protection and provision of the family network. In this regard, *The Song of the Water Saints* can be understood as counter culturally anti-establishment.

If *Soledad* and *The Song of the Water Saints* are subtle reminders to return to Dominican roots then *He olvidado tu nombre* rings clearly as a bell. While the former novels were written by Dominican American women, *He olvidado tu nombre*'s author Marta Rivera grew up in the Santo Domingo she chronicles in the novel and so it is perhaps even more alarming that United States's culture began to encroach upon the capital in the 70s and 80s. The problem with identifying with American culture in the novel is not the potential loss of family or the security of the Dominican community; it is the loss of oneself to a completely different set of cultural norms that have been widely appropriated in the capital as the United States became the Dominican Republic's chief economic partner in the late 60s and early 70s. Rivera illustrates the subject's feeling torn between two selves, a double consciousness that arises through the character of María/

Rain. María, who has a common Hispanic name, emblemizes the Dominican subject's fervent attempt to hold onto a constructed Dominican identity in the face of an American neo-colonization that encourages the subject to find herself in American movies, art, history, music, education. Rain on the other hand, whose name I interpret as an allusion to her being mentally soaked through and through with all things American, suffers from being in controlling relationships, suffers drug abuse, depression and is ultimately dissatisfied with what the focus of her world, Santo Domingo, has become after years of American influence. Again, there is an allusion to Jessica Benjamin's suggestion that once the parental influence has diminished in the subject's life, there exists a power vacuum that is filled by a dominant society. In the case of the María/Rain character, this is evident in the death of her father, after which nothing is the same for the character as she goes on a life journey to find herself through traveling to the United States, Europe and through other parts of the Caribbean, only to commit suicide on New Year's Eve. This "death" is a necessary one as Rain, María's alter ego, is in a constant state of mental turmoil and anguish. It is her death that sets María free, allowing her to embrace the Dominican that she is instead of searching for an external source of validation and identity. Rain's character is perhaps the most telling of the three novels discussed in the "Domination and Desire" chapter for several reasons. First, she exists completely in the mental plane in the novel, and it is precisely this area of the mind that is the birthplace of all cultural norms and constructions. As an alter ego, yearning to break from María she represents the internal struggle of the Dominican subject to succumb completely to what the broader dominant society expects her to be. At the time in which the novel is set, Rain is an archetype of what the "new" Dominican Republic would come to be, a place where

American culture and Dominican culture do not coexist but fight to establish dominance in a relatively small physical and cultural place. Secondly, Rain's manner of death, suicide, is a powerful statement; the alien cultural hegemony in which the Dominican subject is forced to live can only have a negative outcome. In order not to be *entirely* consumed, for it is impossible to avoid the dictates of the dominant culture, one must deaden oneself to the outside influences that negate María's identity. Thirdly, Rain as alter ego is also partly María's id, an id that is controlled not by what María wants but by whatever the dominant American culture is perpetuating in Dominican society at the time. What Rain finds, however, is that the United States way of life offers her nothing in the way of her satisfaction, leading to disillusion and depression.

Althusser's view of culture as an ISA elevates it to a powerful status. That is because, as Althusser indicates, those who do not comply with the dominant cultures in their respective hegemonies are punished, that is, they may not receive the same education, may be shunned from religious ceremonies, consume inferior food products, be prosecuted unfairly in courts of law, or have less or no access to capital (Althusser 138) Thus subjects are coerced to comply with cultural norms and to seek what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural capital, that is, a set of knowledge that is valued by the dominant culture such as language, history, education and religious practices that allows the subject access to social and economic mobility. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the *trujillato* was an ISA which in Althusser's terms used judicial, penal and legal maneuvers to enforce compliance with the ISAs which violated the civil and human rights of Dominicans in their own country. The *trujillato* promoted a military culture where the practices of the armed forces were propagated throughout Trujillo's thirty year

rule. This military culture was more insidious; in a country where many people were marginalized it promised food, a profession, membership to the mainstream, power and financial security. In the early twentieth century, a modern Dominican Republic could be helped by military projects as proven by the United States Marines presence. Although the U.S. imposed its own dictatorship of sorts over the Dominican populace it also provided infrastructure by building roads, medical centers, elementary schools and providing Dominicans with a structure that seemed to promise improvement. However, this improvement came at a cost, as previously discussed, where the United States forcibly disarmed the Dominican populace, making it ripe for takeover by one of the U.S. military's own protégés, Rafael Trujillo himself, who upon ascending to power had no significant armed opposition. While Trujillo's rise to power raised alarm for some in the country, many of the poor welcomed the chance at becoming soldiers because of all of the aforementioned benefits. This allowed for a military composed of members loyal to Trujillo who was at odds with the small and former ruling elite of *criollos* who had denied him acceptance into their inner circles due to his lack of pedigree and wealth despite his seemingly successful career in the military. Although it was the backbone of the dictatorship, the Dominican armed forces were a living breathing ISA, one that replaced the *latifundista* families, creating a new power order in the country from which many benefitted.

While the religious and cultural ISAs are ingrained in dominated subjects, RSAs require violence or at the very least an unveiled threat of violence in order to maintain order. Thus in *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *Let It Rain Coffee* and *El tiempo de olvido* the created subjects are faced with the very present menaces of death, incarceration,

torture or at times with all three at the hands of their own countrymen under the behest of one man. Whereas in the former chapters, the novels featured characters that represented religious and cultural polemics which can be potential causes for armed conflict, in the last chapter of this discussion the armed forces principally terrorize the citizenry they are supposed to be defending from foreign aggression. This is one of the aspects that makes Dominican and Dominican American women's literature so compelling; what is to be done when the other with whom the subject is fighting comes from the same place, and shares the same history, language, culture and religion but differentiates primarily in the possession of weaponry? What has occurred in the case of the *trujillato* is that colonial chickens have come home to roost, that is, armed men have taken over the lives of unarmed men. In the early sixteenth century the racial divide dictated who was at the top of the social structure and who was marginalized. In the case of the twentieth century, the Dominican Republic had managed to replicate and superimpose a form of militarized colonialism upon itself.

RSA and ISAs work together to maintain the ideologies and power of the ruling classes (Althusser 138). *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *Let It Rain Coffee* and *El tiempo del olvido* all represent those in the subjugated classes attempting to develop an RSA of their own with which to battle the ruling RSA. However, it is to be remembered that this newly created RSA is still a product of the ISAs of the ruling classes as the lower classes present their cases against the ruling classes using the terms of ISAs of the ruling classes (Althusser, 90). This is because the lower classes have been educated in the ways of the ISAs of the ruling classes so that even when the lower classes argue their points it is often with a ruling class's ISA context. In the novels discussed in this section Antonio

Gramsci's traditional and organic intellectuals work together first attempting to create or learn from alternative ISAs and then ultimately using arms in an attempt to overthrow the dictatorship. In *In the Time of the Butterflies*, there is more of a focus on what Lenin describes as the "internal struggle" of the traditional bourgeoisie intellectual, which is to recognize herself as someone who plays a role in supporting the ruling classes by adhering to and upholding their ideologies even if she is not one of them. Once a member of the bourgeoisie or traditional intellectual comes to the realization that she is a part of the ruling class's domination because of her position as teacher, doctor, lawyer, religious, she can reach across constructed class divides to connect with members of the oppressed classes and the organic intellectuals among them; Gramsci argues that it is possible to conceive of destroying RSAs. This is evident in *In the Time of the Butterflies*, a beautifully told fictionalized account of the Mirabal sisters who as traditional intellectuals come into contact with other traditional intellectuals at the university and work together to mobilize people of all groups to fight against the regime. It would seem then that Dominican and Dominican American women's literature questions the notion of class through novels about the dictatorship but also in novels about transnationals adjusting to new American class ISAs. Whether it is the fight for political freedom or the fight to be included in the cultural mainstream, some of the stories told by Dominican and Dominican American women represent the attempt at gaining power in societies where they are often the marginalized subjects. The role of the marginalized is magnified in *Let It Rain Coffee* where protagonist Chan Lee, a Chinese Dominican, first attempts to organize the people in his town of *Los llanos* and then uses armed struggle against the government after the *trujillato* falls and *trujillistas* attempt to wrest power from hands

and votes of member of the lower classes, a centuries old struggle in the Dominican Republic between and amongst the Spanish, African, French and English. Angie Cruz's choice of Don Chan as protagonist allows for an *outsider's* outsider's view of class and power in the country in the mid-twentieth to early twenty-first centuries. An orphaned Asian adopted by a poor Afro-Dominican family, his position as a minority within a marginalized group at times gives him significant observations. For example, when Miraluz, a young revolutionary from near *Los llanos* suggest killing those in power in order to bring about peace, he reminds her that such an act would make them no better than their oppressors. This fact is sometimes lost among those who have been marginalized for a long time, but as a person who could still be among the potentially marginalized after the lower classes came to power based upon his race, he stands as a reminder in the novel. I feel that this particular aspect, the idea of a minority view within a minority is a powerful stance. In writing a character that reminds the reader of the ability of the oppressed to become the oppressor, Cruz makes a valid point. Dominant systems reproduce similar dominant systems so that sometimes if armed revolutions are necessary to upend a repressive government it may also be easy to assume the need for similar violent oppression of the former ruling class.

*El tiempo del olvido*, the last novel discussed in the last chapter of this work, serves as an allegorical relation of the *trujillato* with the plot of the novel taking place on a Caribbean island under the dictates of a cruel general who physically and mentally abuses his wife. As with *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Let It Rain Coffee*, there is a corrupt military elite with traditional and organic intellectuals who fight symbolically against the regime in their own ways. The title *El tiempo del olvido* or "Of Forgotten

Times” suggests that it is possible to forget the hardships that the lower classes have endured in the past. I further suggest that the novel indicates that this is only possible if the traditional intellectuals join with the organic intellectuals or take on the responsibility of caring for the dispossessed without a violent revolution. It is easy to forget bad times if the descendants of those who suffered at the hands of the former RSA are now living relatively peaceful and prosperous conditions where there are no oppressed peoples of any kind to remind them of what their ancestors went through. *El tiempo del olvido*, as discussed in this last chapter, focuses more upon the humanity of the oppressed and the lack thereof in members of the military elite who are depicted as hyper-violent, cold, sadistic, authoritarian and unfeeling. This suggests that RSAs, while the products of human construction are at their core anti-humanity, best symbolized by the frequent use of cold steel weaponry that only warms when fired, possibly maiming someone or taking a life. The antidote to this problem in *El tiempo del olvido* is the people’s return to a connection with older religious systems (as discussed in the second chapter as well) as a return to forming human relationships regardless of class not to gain political favor and therefore political power as General Abelardo does in the novel. Instead it is a return to an even more forgotten and perhaps utopian time when the relationships among people were not so governed by class, wealth and status. The relationship that best depicts this idea is that between Dr. Collado and Mercedes whom he rescues after she and her lover José suffer brutal beatings at the hands of a married Abelardo and his fellow officers. As a mixed race poor woman, Mercedes represents a marginalized population in Dominican society that suffers the abuses of the military dictatorship. It is up to Dr. Collado, who enjoys a privileged traditional intellectual position as a medical doctor, to not only heal

Mercedes's physical wounds but also her spiritual ones. It is through their friendship and later love affair that the Mercedes begins to trust others again, a special part of the character's humanity.

Dominican and Dominican American women's literature occupies a special place in Latino and Latin American letters because it illustrates the lives and voices of the marginalized in those communities. When considered within Althusser's context the novels discussed in this work show characters living within different hegemonies but surviving within them or attempting to understand how to navigate them. Religion and culture as ISAs are effective mainly because the subjects who live within them have internalized them to the point where they are no longer questioned. These novels examine what happens in the lives of those who try to create what they see as their own ISAs in response to the ones of the ruling classes. This is not to say that theirs necessarily becomes the stronger of the two but that knowing about one's own religious and cultural practices acknowledges alternate systems of knowledge and values. In doing so the literature of this study engenders a dialogue about what is traditionally understood as being culturally and religiously correct or worthy of study and this in turn precipitates a closer look the Other. This Other that can be female, Afro-descendant, poor, an organic intellectual, an advocate for Dominican culture in the face of its disappearance and an adherent to an alternate cosmology. Members of these groups, whom Angie Cruz's character Don Chan calls "the invisible ones," are allowed to live lives within their respective hegemonies as long as they remain in their designated religio-cultural spaces. It is when those who are not in power begin to question an RSA such as the *trujillato* that results in the use of force, the law, imprisonment and torture. This is precisely why

literature with subaltern roots must always have a place in the canon; it serves as a reminder of forgotten times that can in fact at any time be relived if there is no history of the atrocities that can occur when ideological differences become the justification for the subjugation of other human beings.

## Appendix

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*

<sup>2</sup> See *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, pg. 137.

<sup>3</sup> See Althusser's *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists and Other Essays*, pg. 29.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the influence of the ruling classes on society see *The German Ideology* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, pgs. (67-71).

<sup>5</sup> The *trujillato* refers to the 31 year dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina from August sixteenth, 1930 until his assassination in May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1961. This regime has shaped much of the culture and history of the Dominican Republic and the aftereffects of the violence that came to characterize the period are still felt by Dominicans on the island as well as abroad today.

<sup>6</sup> A *servidor* in *gagá*, or a Dominican form of voodoo, is a medium born with extrasensory perception, in particular the ability to be possessed by spirits and to communicate with them. *Servidores* are chosen by a particular African deity in *gagá* to use their spiritual gifts to aid others and believers often consult them for help. For more see Martha Ellen Davis' *La otra ciencia* 265-303.

<sup>7</sup> A *cofradía* is a local brotherhood of *gagá* believers. In the Dominican Republic there are two types of *cofradías*, stationary and pilgrimage. Pilgrimage *cofradías* have traditionally tended to have a closer relationship with the Catholic Church since their primary devotions are to Catholic saints such as to *La Altagracia*, *San Juan* or to *San Antonio* as well as to Christ. Stationary *cofradías* on the other hand, are devoted to syncretized deities "which [are] in turn related to the relationship between the *cofradía* and the African "nation." These particular African nations include the Congo, Angolan, Dahomey, Guinea, Zape and Yoruba nations among others, ethnic groups from whence many of the Africans were brought to the Americas. Each *cofradía* has a patron saint on whose day believers celebrate with dance and music. For more see Davis, 87.

<sup>8</sup> In or around 1908 a hurricane that lasted for eight days brought incessant rain to the central western province of San Juan. Since Mateo was an itinerant farmer and fence builder, no one was alarmed at first when he disappeared. The rising rivers in the area caused Mateo's brother Carlitos to go searching for him. After others joined the search, Mateo's family and friends stopped and celebrated his *velorio* or *novena*, which is a nine-day prayer ritual on behalf of the recently deceased. On the ninth day Mateo reappeared, having allegedly gone to heaven on a horse, met God and given a divine mission to preach and to heal the sick. For more see Lundius and Lundahl, 33, 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> *Baron del cementario* or baron of the cemetery is a *gagá* deity. He is spirit of the first person who was buried in the local cemetery and is called upon in his capacity as a mediator between the physical world and the spiritual world. In addition to this he is believed to aid the living in their transition to death. For more on this, see Davis 132.

<sup>10</sup> In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson defines the concept of the nation as "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." He goes on to say that it "is imagined as a *community* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." (6-7)

<sup>11</sup> Joaquín Balaguer Ricardo was one of the intellectual architects of the *trujillato*. A lawyer who would go on to become a professional politician, he served one term as Trujillo's puppet president and later served three terms after the dictator's assassination in May of 1961. He is the best known of Trujillo's aides during the dictatorship.

<sup>12</sup> Positivism was the belief that positive knowledge is based on natural phenomena and their properties and relations as verified by the empirical sciences. José Vasconcelos' *The Cosmic Race*, and José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* are two examples of positivist Latin American essays. In addition Nancy Stepan's *The Hour of Eugenics* addresses popular racial discourses in Latin America during this period.

<sup>13</sup> The Taínos were the Indigenous people of Hispaniola. They called the island by its Taíno name “Quisqueya” which means “the mother of all lands.”

<sup>14</sup> In addition to other privileges, “In 1936 the company of Jesus was permitted to return to the country for the first time since the Spanish king Charles III had forced it to leave in 1767,” and after the Concordat “[s]tudents in the public schools were to receive religious instruction and state education was to be ‘guided by the principles of Catholic doctrines and morals.’ The state guaranteed the Church autonomy in the creation and alteration of parishes, ecclesiastical benefices, and offices as well as appointments to them. All religious institutions and groups had the right to acquire, own and administer real and personal property, which remained tax exempt. Catholic associations having religious, social or charitable aims were guaranteed freedom to organize and function. All these directives were implemented by measures subsequently passed by the congress.” (Wiarda 239-240) For more see Howard Wiarda’s “The Changing Political Orientation of the Catholic Church in the Dominican Republic.”

<sup>15</sup> In “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” Silvio Torres Saillant indicates “the Trujillo regime outlawed participation in Voodoo ceremonies with Law 391 of September twentieth 1943, which imposed a penalty of up to one year in prison plus a fine of 500 pesos on anyone convicted of the crime either by direct commission or indirect collusion.” For more see page 133.

<sup>16</sup> *Trujillista* in this sense is used to describe those who are pro-Trujillo. A *trujillista* is an advocate of Trujillo and the *trujillato*.

<sup>17</sup> In *Trujillo and the Roman Catholic Church in Santo Domingo* Vertullio Alfau Durán writes: Trujillo has justly been called the “Benefactor of the Church.” Truly he is the Benefactor of the Church in as high a degree as he is that of the country. For this reason, as well as for his boundless generosity in protecting and promoting the progress of Catholicism in Santo Domingo, the grateful sons of the one and eternal Church, who wisely seek to be gathered in one flock, under the guidance of one Shepherd, beg that the blessings of heaven. p 17

<sup>18</sup> For more on Pittini see Emilio Betances’ *The Catholic Church and Power Politics in Latin America: The Dominican Case in Comparative Perspective* pp.35-39, Frank Moya Pons’ “Notas para una Historia de la Iglesia en Santo Domingo” and Jan Lundius and Mats Lundhal’s *Peasants and Religion: A Socioeconomic Study of Dios Liborio and the Palma Sola Movement*, p. 586.

<sup>19</sup> The word *maniel* is specifically Dominican. The Spanish used the word to refer to the mountains in the north of the Neiba Valley in the southwestern part of the country and many of the first *manieles* were located in such inaccessible locations. It is here that the *cimarrones* or maroons would re-establish their own cultural ties with the various African nations from which they came, through religious practices, food, etc.. Life in the *manieles* closely resembled African village life, was structured and well organized with a respect for African traditions. As such the *manieles* became living symbols of resistance against Spanish colonial rule, consequently causing fear and hatred among the European population. Many of the *manieles* were in effect military training grounds for those members who carried on guerrilla warfare against their former *ingenios* or sugar plantations. For more on this see Alan Cambiera, 74-75.

<sup>20</sup> Enriquillo, Lemba and Diego de Ocampo are important figures in Dominican colonial history. Enriquillo was a Taíno *cacique* chieftain who led Indigenous and African rebellions against Spanish colonial rule in Maguana from 1513 to 1533. The Spanish signed a peace treaty with the Taínos granting them greater autonomy but by this time, European diseases had decimated most of the Indigenous population. Among the Africans who fought were the *cimarrones* Lemba, Diego de Ocampo, Diego Guzmán and Juan Vaquero who were known for their superior military tactics. Of these men Lemba is perhaps the best known for his battles in the eastern town of Higüey. For more, see Lundius and Lundahl 341-342, Moya Pons 37-41 and Alan Cambiera’s *Quisqueya La Bella*, 72-78.

<sup>21</sup> A *santiguador/a* is a folk healer primarily known for his knowledge of herbs and their effort on physiological disorders. For more see Ana Paulino’s “Death and Dying Among Dominican Immigrants,” pg. 93.

<sup>22</sup> *Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia* or Our Lady of the Highest Grace, one of the names of Mary, the mother of Jesus and the patron saint of the Dominican Republic.

<sup>23</sup> Juan Bosch served as president of the Dominican Republic from February of 1963 to September of the same year. An outspoken *antitrujillista*, he lived in exile in Cuba during the *trujillato*. While there he worked with the *Partido Revolucionario Cubano* or the Cuban Revolutionary Party and was one of the founders of the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* or Dominican Revolutionary Party and later founded the *Partido de la Liberación Dominicana* or Dominican Liberation Party in 1973 after the former became

more conservative in ideology. In addition to being a politician he was an author and educator. For more see Moya-Pons.

<sup>24</sup> A *campesino* is a person from the countryside, usually a farmer.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the Patoral letter see Wiarda's article pg. 140-141

<sup>26</sup> The fourteenth of June Movement was lead by Manolo Távarez and the Mirabal sisters who would go on to lose their lives in the fight against the *trujillato*. The group, which consisted of young educated middle class citizens, named themselves in honor of the attempt by Dominican exiles to invade the island for a second time on June fourteenth, 1959.

<sup>27</sup> A *cacique* was a chief in the indigenous Taíno communities of the Dominican Republic.

<sup>28</sup> For much more on this see Lundahl and Lundius 325-342.

<sup>29</sup> My translation.

<sup>30</sup> Magical realism is a genre of Spanish Literature first attributed to the works of Alejo Carpentier. It is characterized by descriptions of everyday life mixed with elements of the unreal or of the spirit world. Prominent authors include Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, and Juan Rulfo.

<sup>31</sup> In "The End of Internalization Adorno's Social Psychology" Jessica Benjamin discusses the wider society's control of the subject: "Now that impersonal, extra familial forms of authority hold sway over the individual, 'the mediating agency of the ego' is unnecessary to insure compliance. Rather, [...] the direct manipulation of unconscious drives by external forces perpetuates social domination. Adorno explained both the fascist movement in Germany and conformist culture in America as 'the appropriation of mass psychology of the oppressors': the replacement of the conflict between the ego and id by direct manipulation of the id. Given the persistence of individual isolation and competitiveness in late capitalism, an external semblance of individuality and 'automated ego' remains—but this is understood as 'individualism without the individual'." (45)

<sup>32</sup> Luke Ferretter's discussion of Althusserian interpellation indicates that: "The concept of the subject is one in which an individual human being is believed to be the independent origin of her own thoughts, actions and emotions." (88) However, "individuals do not determine the interacting social practices in which they live, rather the practices and their relationships determine the lives of the individuals within them. The concept of a free and self-determining subject is therefore an ideological concept. In reality, each human being exists as an individual inserted into the complex set of practices ([...]) by which her society produces the material conditions of its members' lives. Nevertheless, this is not how we think of our lives. We think of ourselves in the terms with which philosophy has described subjects. We think that we have an identity, a personality, even a soul or a spirit, and that this constitutes our most fundamental reality. Why? Althusser's answer: ideology. It is ideology that causes individuals whose lives are in reality determined by their insertion in a complex series of social practices to believe that they are free subjects, the origin and source of their thoughts, emotions and actions." (88-89)

<sup>33</sup> Althusser argues that in order for the subject to accept the interpellation or hailing of an ideology, it is easiest for the subject to believe she is doing so of her own volition. See *Lenin and Philosophy* (170-186).

<sup>34</sup> Luke Ferretter notes: "To be precise Althusser adds, it can be said that, in developed capitalist societies, the school-family couple has replaced the church-family couple as the dominant group of ideological institutions. Althusser means that from the age of about four to that of about sixteen, every child in contemporary capitalist society is instructed for several hours a day, in the dominant discourses, techniques and customs of that society. They are taught the ruling ideologies directly, in the form of morals, religion and philosophy. They are also taught a variety of technical disciplines, including literary criticism. This occurs until the age of about 16 for most students who leave to become workers, until about 18 for most who leave to become lower and middle managers, and until about 21 for most who leave to become finance capitalists, managers, politicians and 'professional ideologists' like priests and teachers. Each group Althusser argues, is educated in terms of the ideology that fits it best to its role in class society." (86)

<sup>35</sup> In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* Pierre Bourdieu defines taste as: "the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, [and] the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing language or body hexis... It transforms objectively classified practices, in which a class condition signifies itself (through taste), into classifying practices, that is, into a symbolic expression of class position, by perceiving them in their mutual relations and in terms of classificatory schemes. (173, 175)

<sup>36</sup> In the work "Writing New York City: A Study on Transnational Dominican Literature" Sinita Molina suggests: Writing the city is writing the life of the immigrant, she or he who could only "belong" in a place

where no one really belongs, a place that no one can possess entirely or partially: the modern metropolitan city. It is this space that allows the enunciation of the hybrid, the juxtaposition of the new and the old, the palimpsest of the histories. Pg. 232. For more on Dominicans and transnationalism, see Molina's work and *Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives*.

<sup>37</sup> See footnote 12 in the Powerful Priestesses chapter about Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. In this case, Flaca's character feels this same fraternal comradeship with other Dominican Americans as well as national pride due to their common heritage. At the same time she is proud of her actual physical community where she resides and shares everyday activities with those in the neighborhood.

<sup>38</sup> See Joseph LaVoie's *Ego Identity Formation in Middle Adolescence* pg. 131-132.

<sup>39</sup> In particular there is a direct link between the self-esteem of minority adolescents and how they perceive their respective ethnic groups. Oftentimes, these adolescents will go through several stages of perceptions of their groups, first taking on that of the dominant social group, later valuing their own ethnic group and then attempting to become what they feel embodies those who belong to that group. For more see French, Seidman, Allen and Aber's "The Development of Ethnic Identity During Adolescence" (1-4, 8-10)

<sup>40</sup> Adorno and Max Horkheimer suggest in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" that the mass media produces movies, film, radio shows, et cetera with the intention of pacifying the masses so that they remain content within their prescribed social classes. These forms of entertainment are not very controversial nor do they challenge established social boundaries. Concerning the effect of films upon the subject the authors propose that, "the whole world is made to pass through a filter of the culture industry. The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world outside as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent upon reproducing the world of everyday perceptions), is now the producer's guideline. The more intensely and flawlessly his techniques duplicate empirical objects, the easier it is today for the illusion to prevail that the outside world is the straightforward continuation of that presented on the screen. [...] From every sound film and every broadcast program the social effect can be inferred which is exclusive to none but shared by all alike. The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product." (126-127)

<sup>41</sup> Frank Moya Pons' *The Dominican Republic: A National History* provides an account of events that occurred during the U.S. military occupation of the island from 1916 to 1924. Since the time of president Ramón Cáceres' assassination in 1911 by General Luis Tejera's supporters, the United States was able to continuously intervene in matters of Dominican state due a tumultuous political atmosphere rife with civil war and dissension within congress. Initially, president William Taft sent a pacification commission of 750 Marines to settle the war in 1911. By 1916 however, after several failed attempts at autonomy ending with president Francisco Hernández y Carvajal's refusal to concede to the Americans' "demands concerning the appointment of a comptroller" and "the establishment of a national guard commanded by U.S. military officers" (Moya Pons 318), president Woodrow Wilson commissioned Captain Henry S. Knapp to head the U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic in November of that year. Although they continued the public works projects that Cáceres had begun in 1911 and established the Dominican National Guard during their rule, the U.S. Marines also disarmed the general populace, forbid any public manifestations against the occupation, allowed foreign investors to remove farmers from their lands, imprisoned and tortured innocent civilians and burned their residences. In response to this, an armed group of rural Dominican nationalists, the *gavilleros* carried out a four-year guerrilla campaign against the U.S. forces that was finally detained after members of the Dominican National Guard were able to suppress them in 1921. (Moya Pons, 303,306,307,318,319,327,328)

<sup>42</sup> Ferreter indicates in *Althusser* that Althusser likens RSAs to ISAs as they both are used to maintain the status quo. The fundamental differences between the two are the fact that RSAs, (the army, police, prisons, administrations, courts, governments) function primarily by violence, whereas ISAs (religion, education, family, law, politics, trade union, media, culture) function primarily by ideology. (83)

<sup>43</sup> As mentioned in the previous footnote, the *gavilleros* were a movement of nationalist peasant guerrillas who fought against the U.S. occupation of the island. Many of the *gavilleros*' roots were in the eastern part of the island, particularly the province of El Seibo. Among their leaders were Vicente Evangelista, Ramón Natera and Martín Peguero. The group came into existence as a result of the U.S.' disarming of the populace and their losing their lands to foreign interests. One of the reasons that the group was successful is because it enjoyed the support and protection of the people in their part of the country. It was not until the Dominican National Guard, who knew the territory and were familiar with native guerilla methods assisted the U.S. that the *gavilleros* were suppressed. For more see *The Dominican Republic a National History* pages 328-329.

<sup>44</sup> For more on the economic situation in the Dominican Republic during the U.S. occupation and the *gavilleros*, who fought against it see “Caudillos and Gavilleros versus the United States Marines: Guerrilla Insurgency during the Dominican Intervention, 1916-1924” by Bruce J. Calder.

<sup>45</sup> In April 1918, the U.S. military government created the National Council of Education, which was “in charge of the general supervision of public instruction in the country. From 1917 to 1920, the military government constructed several hundred schools, both large and small, in the cities and in the countryside. The number of students enrolled rose from some 20,000 in 1916 to 100,000 in 1920.” (Moya-Pons 326)

<sup>46</sup> See Moya-Pons page 337.

<sup>47</sup> On October 2, 1937, Trujillo officially ordered the murder of all Haitians living in the border communities of the Dominican Republic while at a party given in his honor in the town of Dajabón. This was the culmination of anti-Haitian sentiment that Trujillo promoted in favor of “whitening” the country’s population in an attempt to rid the Dominican Republic of what was deemed a malicious racial and cultural influence. Haiti was seen as the Dominican Republic’s Other: it was a Black, Voodoo, French speaking country, while the Dominican Republic was mixed race, Catholic and Spanish speaking. Therefore, Trujillo reasoned, in order to maintain a distinctly superior national identity, the attempt to destroy all things Haitian became necessary. During the Parsley Massacre, which Dominicans refer to as *el corte* (the cutting), some tens of thousands of Haitians and Dominicans were murdered at the Dajabón River. Since it is difficult at times to distinguish Dominicans from Haitians based on phenotype alone, the Dominican military made suspected Haitians say the word *perejil* or parsley as Creole speakers had trouble pronouncing the Spanish r, thus supposedly allowing Haitians to be identified. For more on this see Pedro San Miguel’s *The Imagined Island: History Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola*, 52-66.

<sup>48</sup> See Alan Cambiera’s *Quisqueya La Bella*, page 184 and Pedro San Miguel’s *The Imagined Island: History Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola*, pages 52-66.

<sup>49</sup> See Jessica Benjamin’s “The End of Internalization Adorno’s Social Psychology” (45).

<sup>50</sup> The *trujillato* was strongly pro-ecclesiastical, with Trujillo reinstating and expanding Church rights immediately after his rise to power in 1931. Catholicism was promoted as being a quintessential part of an imagined Dominican identity. Although religious freedom existed officially during the regime, those persons and institutions affiliated with the Roman Catholic church enjoyed more favor from the government. For more on this see the previous chapter and Howard Wiarda’s “The Changing Political Orientation of the Catholic Church in the Dominican Republic.”

<sup>51</sup> Leila’s character can be understood in Freudian terms. She has authority figures or super-egos in her life in the form of her grandparents and uncle but it is her mother that she wants to relate to the most and this super-ego figure is absent. When “the criticism of the super-ego is silent, the ego is rehabilitated and again enjoys all the rights of man [... it] finds itself in a blissful state of intoxication, it celebrates a triumph, as though the super-ego had lost all its strength or had melted into the ego; and this liberated, manic ego permits itself a truly uninhibited satisfaction of all its appetites.” (Freud, 61) Because she does not have Amalfi’s maternal authority, her desires or id is given even more freedom because the ego that controls it is under the influence of one less super-ego. For more see Freud’s *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (60-80).

<sup>52</sup> For more about Dominican American family dynamics see chapter 4 of Patricia Pessar’s *A Visa for a Dream*.

<sup>53</sup> prostitute

<sup>54</sup> Cultural capital is a form of assimilation through education, taste, speech, dress, etc., with the intention of social mobility. It exists in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., those cultural practices taught in the home and learned over a period of time such as taste in food and speech; in the *objectified* state i.e., in the forms of books, music, art used as a way to indicate cultural capital and in the *institutionalized* state i.e., formal education. Institutional cultural capital becomes profitable “as conferring institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any given agent makes it possible to [...] establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital. This product of the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital establishes the value, in terms of cultural capital, of the holder of a given qualification relative to other qualification holders and, by the same token, the monetary value for which it can be exchanged on the labor market (academic investment has no meaning unless a minimum degree of reversibility of the conversion it implies is objectively guaranteed).” For more, see Pierre Bourdieu’s, “The Forms of Capital” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* 243-248.

<sup>55</sup> A capitaleña/o is a person from the capital, in this case Santo Domingo.

<sup>56</sup> The faro a Colón is a modern lighthouse and mausoleum that was constructed to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World in 1492. Each night, lights shine from the lighthouse into the sky in the shape of a cross, a symbol of the Americas' Christian heritage.

<sup>57</sup> On June fourteenth 1959, the Dominican Liberation Movement a group formed by Dominicans living in exile primarily in Cuba attempted to overthrow the Trujillo but were found out. The men were massacred in a series of bombings along the northern coast, the site of the invasion. Although the invasion failed, it was the beginning of the end of the *trujillato*. Later, a group of young Dominicans headed by Manolo Tavárez, Pipo Faja and Leandro Guzmán, decided to continue the struggle against Trujillo and began to organize political dissidents within the country. They named themselves the fourteenth of June Movement in honor of those who died fighting against Trujillo's forces. On January 10<sup>th</sup> 1960, their group was discovered leading to the arrest of hundreds who were later freed due to international pressure. Tavárez and Guzmán were the husbands of Minerva and Teresa Mirabal of the Mirabal sisters who would be assassinated at the behest of Trujillo on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1960. For more see *Tres heroínas y un tirano* by Miguel García Aquino.

<sup>58</sup> For more on this see Horkheimer's "Authority and the Family" chapter in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*.

<sup>59</sup> See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (6-7)

<sup>60</sup> Antonio Guzmán was president of the Dominican Republic from 1978 until he was assassinated while in office in 1982. Many Dominicans were initially in his favor, due to Balaguer's attempts to remain in power and felt that he would fulfill his promise to the people to be the candidate of change. However, from the beginning of his administration, he appointed his family and their friends to high ranking government positions causing a schism in the Dominican Revolutionary Party. In addition to this, Guzmán began to take steps to ensure his reelection by creating thousands of government positions. Soon the majority of the country's revenue went to government administration, which left few funds for investment such as public works. In addition to this Guzmán oversaw the printing of additional monies in order to offset the public sector deficit, which led to inflation. Ultimately with the country facing one financial crisis after another also created by Guzmán's mismanagement of national energy and agricultural companies, the people faced a sharp rise in the cost of living with no apparent relief in sight. Fearing increasing accusations of corruption even after he had been voted out of office, Guzmán shot himself on July 3 1982.

<sup>61</sup> A Rubaiyat is a quatrain in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century Persian literary tradition.

<sup>62</sup> The words poetry, poem, and poet come from the Greek word poiweo, which has several meanings some of which are "I make it so," "I make it my own" and "I bring about." This is in keeping with Rain's search for her the power to "create" herself and not look to an outside source of power.

<sup>63</sup> Althusser contends that "proletarians have a 'class instinct' which helps them on the way to proletarian 'class positions'. [Traditional] intellectuals, on the contrary, have a petty-bourgeois class instinct which fiercely resists this transition. A proletarian *class position* is more than a mere proletarian 'class instinct'. It is the consciousness and practice which conform with the *objective* reality of the proletarian class struggle. Class instinct is subjective and spontaneous. Class position is objective and rational. To arrive a proletarian class positions, the class instinct of proletarians only needs to be *educated*; the class instinct of the petty bourgeoisie, and hence of [traditional] intellectuals, has on the contrary, to be *revolutionized*. This education and this revolution are, in the last analysis, determined by proletarian class struggle conducted on the basis of the principles of Marxist-Leninist *theory*. As the *Communist Manifesto* says, knowledge of this *theory* can help *certain* [traditional] intellectuals to go over to working-class positions.

<sup>64</sup> For more on the military's privileges and character during the *trujillato* see Valentina Peguero's *The Militarization of Culture in the Dominican Republic* pages 61-2, 81-3, 92-3, 108-9 and 119-135.

<sup>65</sup> Military uprisings did exist during the *trujillato* by the mid 40s, however Trujillo ended them quickly, publicly and brutally. Each uprising within the military or from the exile community caused Trujillo to further expand military and paramilitary forces. For more see Peguero, 164-167.

<sup>66</sup> Juan Bosch is one of the most important figures in twentieth century Dominican politics and a staunch *antitrujillista*. He founded both the Dominican Liberation Party and the Dominican Revolutionary Party. Like the Mirabal sisters he was a rural intellectual who was born in La Vega and had was raised around farmers and landowners and his father ran a small business. He went into exile in 1938, returned in 1961, was president from February 1963 until September 1963, went into exile in that same month, returned in 1965, went into exile in 1966 and returned in March of 1970.

<sup>67</sup> A *campesina/o* is someone from the countryside, usually a farmer or member of a farming family.

<sup>68</sup> Most of the population had been disarmed during the U.S. military occupation from 1916-1922. For more see Frank Moya-Pons' *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (328, 357). Although the first university of the New World, Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino now known as Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo was founded in 1538, many Dominicans still did not have access to university education during the *trujillato*. The Programa de Alfabetación Nacional or National Literacy Program, "a program to teach basic reading and writing to adult citizens" was not established until the 1950s. For more see Peguero's *The Militarization of Culture in the Dominican Republic* (93-100).

<sup>69</sup> The SIM or Servicio de Inteligencia Militar was Trujillo's secret police. Its most notorious leader, Johnny Abbes García, who worked undercover as a diplomat for Trujillo's espionage system in Mexico and in Central America, officially oversaw the murder and torture of Dominican citizens from 1957 until 1960. For more on Abbes and the SIM see Peguero (106) and Miguel Aquino García's *Tres heroínas y un tirano: la verídica historia de las hermanas Mirabal y su asesinato por Rafael Leónidas Trujillo* (119-140).

<sup>70</sup> Althusser argues that "to become 'ideologists of the working class' (Lenin), 'organic intellectuals' of the proletariat (Gramsci), intellectuals have to carry out a radical revolution in their ideas: a long, painful and difficult re-education. An endless external and *internal* struggle." In this case the "radical revolution" in the ideas of the Dominican elite came through experiencing a violence against which their presumed class was powerless.

<sup>71</sup> Some of the members of the military's families were the very ones who began to work against Trujillo and were tortured for doing so. For more see Peguero (106).

<sup>72</sup> The character Sinita is most likely a reference to two people: Daisy Ariza, a primary school friend of Minerva's whose father General Daniel Ariza was killed when his involvement in a plot to kill Trujillo in 1934 was discovered and Tomasina Cabral, also known as Sina, a university friend of Mate's who was incarcerated with she and Minerva in 1960. For more see Aquino García (123-125).

<sup>73</sup> Elsa is most likely a reference to Enma Rodríguez a school roommate of Minerva's whose grandfather Rafael Rodríguez was an outspoken *antitrujillista*. For more see García Aquino (27).

<sup>74</sup> Althusser contends that "Marx showed that 'the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.' This simple phrase puts us on the path to understanding that just as there are dominant and dominated classes in society, so too there are dominant and dominated ideologies. [...] What do we mean when we say, with Marx that bourgeois ideology dominates other ideologies, and in particular working class ideology? We mean that working-class protest against exploitation expresses itself *within the very structure of the dominant bourgeois ideology*, within its *system*, and in large part with its representations and terms of reference." For more see Althusser's *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, pg. 30.

<sup>75</sup> *El Foro Público* was a daily section of the El Caribe newspaper that libeled those citizens who were known or suspected enemies of the state. During the *trujillato*, "'Salir en el Foro Público' podía significar 'caer en desgracia,' lo que a su vez debía ser traducido como cancelado del empleo; mal visto por los espías, los vecinos, los amigos y hasta los familiares cercanos; interrogado, reducido a prisión y hasta enjuiciado. Y podía significar la muerte misma por desaparición o por 'accidente automovilístico'" (Collado, 11). For more see *El Foro Público en la era de Trujillo* by Lipe Collado.

<sup>76</sup> These men founded the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD) or Dominican Revolutionary Party in 1939 and it is still influential in Dominican politics today. The Caribbean Legion's members included leftist leaning presidents Juan José Arévalo of Guatemala, Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela, José Figueres of Costa Rica, and later Fidel Castro. The legion worked together to launch the Cayo Confites expedition and the Luperón invasion. For more see Charles Ameringer's *The Caribbean Legion* pgs. (27-60, 95-116).

<sup>77</sup> For more on the Cuban Revolution of 1959, see Ernesto "Che" Guevara's *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria*.

<sup>78</sup> The group named themselves in honor of those who died fighting during the second underground invasion on the fourteenth of June 1959.

<sup>79</sup> *Los barbudos* or the "bearded ones," were the men who were part of the Cuban underground. For more see Ernesto Guevara's *Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria*.

<sup>80</sup> For more on Joaquín Balaguer, see the previous chapter "Domination and Desire."

<sup>81</sup> For more see Moya Pons, pgs. 381-403.

<sup>82</sup> During the *trujillato*, Trujillo in the fashion of nationalist and positivist governments of the time, promoted an imagined national identity. Although the Dominican Republic, is a country with a majority mixed race population, a national propaganda promoted the ideology of a Spanish speaking, Indigenous, and Catholic identity in contrast with an Creole speaking, black African, and Voodoo that was seen as

Haitian. Although not all of the small white Dominican elite espoused this ideology, it was still common for the group to take pride as the few who actually fit the preferred racial identity. By referencing the rich's pride in the Spanish *bandera* or flag, he hints that they are less patriotic than the people of the *campo* who are ready for a return to a free Dominican Republic. For more on this see Pedro San Miguel's *The Imagined Island: History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola*, 52-66.

<sup>83</sup> Don Chan's actions can be likened to Olivorio Mateo or "Liborio," a non-violent religious leader of the rural poor in the early twentieth century during the U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic as discussed in the first chapter. Liborio quickly became known for his healing miracles, sermons and advice. "The most tangible program attributed to Olivorio was that of a just distribution of land. [...] through his way of life—the communal tending of the plots and the egalitarian distribution of food—he indicated how things had to be [...]" (Lundius, Lundahl, 78). In the same manner Don Chan avoids violence for as long as he can. He becomes well known for his decision to purchase the land of Los Llanos for the people who begin to give he and his family agricultural products to show their gratitude and ask Don Chan's advice on life's problems. For more on Olivorio Mateo see Lundius and Lundhal's *Peasants and Religion: A socioeconomic study of Dios Olivorio and the Palma Sola Movement in the Dominican Republic*.

<sup>84</sup> See *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* pg. 3,4.

<sup>85</sup> See *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* pg. 4.

<sup>86</sup> See Silvio Torres Saillant's "The Tribulations of Blackness" pgs. 127-129.

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